

To: Councillor Gavin (Chair)
Councillors Davies, Cresswell, Ennis, Goss,
Hornsby-Smith, Leng, Lovelock, Moore,
Rowland, Tarar and Yeo

Direct  : 0118 9372112

24 December 2024

Your contact is: **Nicky Simpson - Committee Services (nicky.simpson@reading.gov.uk)**

NOTICE OF MEETING - PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE 8 JANUARY 2025

A meeting of the Planning Applications Committee will be held on Wednesday, 8 January 2025 at 6.30 pm in the Council Chamber, Civic Offices, Bridge Street, Reading RG1 2LU. The Agenda for the meeting is set out below.

AGENDA	ACTION	WARDS AFFECTED	PAGE NO
1. MINUTES	-		9 - 12
2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST	-		
3. QUESTIONS	-		
4. POTENTIAL SITE VISITS FOR COMMITTEE ITEMS	Decision		13 - 16
5. PLANNING APPEALS	Information		17 - 18

PLANNING APPLICATIONS TO BE CONSIDERED

6. PL/23/0107(FUL) & PL/23/0108(LBC) - 10 GUN STREET	Decision	ABBEY	19 - 76
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CIVIC OFFICES EMERGENCY EVACUATION: If an alarm sounds, leave by the nearest fire exit quickly and calmly and assemble on the corner of Bridge Street and Fobney Street. You will be advised when it is safe to re-enter the building.

Proposal: PL/23/0107(FUL) – Application for Full Planning Permission: Proposed partial change of use from offices (Class E) to provide an expansion to existing entertainment venue (Sui Generis use) at 9 Gun Street (Purple Turtle) with erection of rear extensions and internal alterations. Detached 3-storey ancillary building to rear boundary with yard over Holy Brook.

Recommendation: Permitted subject to Legal Agreement

Proposal: PL/23/0108(LBC) – Application for Listed Building Consent: Proposed extensions and internal alterations associate with partial change of use from offices (Class E) to provide an expansion to existing entertainment venue (Sui Generis Use) at 9 Gun Street (Purple Turtle) with erection of rear extensions and internal alterations. Detached 3-storey ancillary building to rear boundary with yard over Holy Brook

Recommendation: Permitted subject to Conditions

7. PL/24/1392 (REG3/VAR) - THE HEXAGON, QUEENS WALK Decision ABBEY 77 - 114

Proposal: Application under s.73 - Variation of condition 2 (approved plans) of planning permission PL/24/0063 for Demolition of some of the existing back of house areas and erection of an extension of the existing Hexagon Theatre to provide a new studio auditorium, flexible rehearsal space, community studio with workshop space and back of house space, along with improved public realm by providing a new podium connection between the new proposed extension and Queen's Walk, along with other associated works.

Recommendation: Permitted subject to Conditions

8. PL/24/1257 (REG3) - 1, 3, 5, 7,10, 13, 19, 20, 23, 37, 39, 45 AND 47 LYNDHURST ROAD, TILEHURST Decision KENTWOOD 115 - 126

Proposal: Retrospective application for Phase 4 of Estate Improvement Project including; installation of triple glazed uPVC windows; renewal of flat roof coverings; external structural repairs; renewal of pitched roof tiles; and installation of external wall insulation (amended)

Recommendation: Permitted subject to Conditions

9. PL/24/1499 Decision NORCOT 127 - 130
MISCELLANEOUS/PROJECT
WORK - DEED OF VARIATION TO
S106 - SITE OF 103 DEE ROAD,
TILEHURST

Proposal: Vary the existing S106 agreement ref 221130 as follows:

Affordable Housing: To secure 30% of the dwellings on-site as affordable housing as shown on the Affordable Housing Plan 092102-BEL-TV-04 revision G dated 12 September 2024 to be annexed to the agreement and consisting of sixteen units (five one-bedroom flats, four two-bedroom flats and seven three-bedroom houses), all to be let at Reading Affordable Rent tenure. The seven houses to be delivered prior to first occupation of the 11th market dwelling, and the remaining nine affordable flats to be delivered prior to first occupation of the 26th market dwelling. To be secured as such in perpetuity.

Recommendation: Approve variation to S106

Recommendation: Approve variation to S106

10. PL/23/0909 (REG3) - 56 Decision REDLANDS 131 - 136
BAMBURGH CLOSE

Proposal: Retrospective installation of 18 No. air source heat pumps located externally and distributed around full perimeter.

Recommendation: Permitted subject to Conditions

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Please speak to a member of staff if you have any queries or concerns.

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Agenda Annex

GUIDE TO PLANNING APPLICATIONS

1. There are many different types of applications processed by the Planning Service and the following codes are used to abbreviate the more common types of permission sought:
 - FUL – Full detailed planning permission for development or change of use
 - OUT – Principal of developing a site or changing a use
 - REM – Detailed matters “reserved matters” - for permission following approval of an outline planning application.
 - HOU – Applications for works to domestic houses
 - ADV – Advertisement consent
 - APC – Approval of details required by planning conditions
 - VAR – Significant change to a planning permission previously granted
 - NMA – Insignificant change to a planning permission previously granted
 - ADJ – Consultation from neighbouring authority on application in their area
 - LBC – Works to or around a Listed Building
 - CLE – A certificate to confirm what the existing use of a property is
 - CLP – A certificate to confirm that a proposed use or development does not require planning permission to be applied for.
 - REG3 – Indicates that the application has been submitted by the Local Authority.

2. Officer reports often refer to a matter or situation as being “a material consideration”. The following list tries to explain what these might include:

Material planning considerations can include (but are not limited to):

- Overlooking/loss of privacy
- Loss of daylight/sunlight or overshadowing
- Scale and dominance
- Layout and density of buildings
- Appearance and design of development and materials proposed
- Disabled persons' access
- Highway safety
- Traffic and parking issues
- Drainage and flood risk
- Noise, dust, fumes etc
- Impact on character or appearance of area
- Effect on listed buildings and conservation areas
- Effect on trees and wildlife/nature conservation
- Impact on the community and other services
- Economic impact and sustainability
- Government policy
- Proposals in the Local Plan
- Previous planning decisions (including appeal decisions)
- Archaeology

There are also concerns that regulations or case law has established cannot be taken into account. These include:

- Who the applicant is/the applicant's background
- Loss of views
- Loss of property value
- Loss of trade or increased competition
- Strength or volume of local opposition
- Construction noise/disturbance during development
- Fears of damage to property
- Maintenance of property
- Boundary disputes, covenants or other property rights
- Rights of way and ownerships disputes over rights of way
- Personal circumstances

Glossary of usual terms

Affordable housing - Housing provided below market price to meet identified needs.

Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) - Area where air quality levels need to be managed.

Apart-hotel - A use providing basic facilities for self-sufficient living with the amenities of a hotel. Generally classed as C1 (hotels) for planning purposes.

Article 4 Direction - A direction which can be made by the Council to remove normal permitted development rights.

BREEAM - A widely used means of reviewing and improving the environmental performance of generally commercial developments (industrial, retail etc).

Brownfield Land - previously developed land.

Brown roof - A roof surfaced with a broken substrate, e.g. broken bricks.

Building line -The general line along a street beyond which no buildings project.

Bulky goods – Large products requiring shopping trips to be made by car:e.g DIY or furniture.

CIL - Community Infrastructure Levy. Local authorities in England and Wales levy a charge on new development to be spent on infrastructure to support the development of the area.

Classified Highway Network - The network of main roads, consisting of A, B and C roads.

Conservation Area - areas of special architectural or historic interest designated by the local authority. As designated heritage assets the preservation and enhancement of the area carries great weight in planning permission decisions.

Control of Major Accident Hazards (COMAH) Competent Authority - The Control of Major Accident Hazards Regulations 1999 (COMAH) and their amendments 2005, are the enforcing regulations within the United Kingdom. They are applicable to any establishment storing or otherwise handling large quantities of industrial chemicals of a hazardous nature. Types of establishments include chemical warehousing, chemical production facilities and some distributors.

Dormer Window - Located in the roof of a building, it projects or extends out through the roof, often providing space internally.

Dwelling- A single housing unit – a house, flat, maisonette etc.

Evening Economy A term for the business activities, particularly those used by the public, which take place in the evening such as pubs, clubs, restaurants and arts/cultural uses.

Flood Risk Assessment - A requirement at planning application stage to demonstrate how flood risk will be managed.

Flood Zones - The Environment Agency designates flood zones to reflect the differing risks of flooding. Flood Zone 1 is low probability, Flood Zone 2 is medium probability, Flood Zone 3a is high probability and Flood Zone 3b is functional floodplain.

Granny annexe - A self-contained area within a dwelling house/ the curtilage of a dwelling house but without all the facilities to be self contained and is therefore dependent on the main house for some functions. It will usually be occupied by a relative.

Green roof - A roof with vegetation on top of an impermeable membrane.

Gross floor area - Total floor area of the house, including all floors and garage, measured externally.

Hazardous Substances Consent - Consent required for the presence on, over, or under land of any hazardous substance in excess of controlled quantity.

Historic Parks and Gardens - Parks and gardens of special historic interest, designated by English Heritage.

Housing Association - An independent not-for-profit body that provides low-cost "affordable housing" to meet specific housing needs.

Infrastructure - The basic services and facilities needed for the smooth running of a community.

Lifetime Home - A home which is sufficiently adaptable to allow people to remain in the home despite changing circumstances such as age or disability.

Listed building - Buildings of special architectural or historic interest. Consent is required before works that might affect their character or appearance can be undertaken. They are divided into Grades I, II and II*, with I being of exceptional interest.

Local Plan - The main planning document for a District or Borough.

Luminance - A measure of the luminous intensity of light, usually measured in candelas per square metre.

Major Landscape Feature – these are identified and protected in the Local Plan for being of local significance for their visual and amenity value

Public realm - the space between and within buildings that is publicly accessible, including streets, squares, forecourts, parks and open spaces whether publicly or privately owned.

Scheduled Ancient Monument - Specified nationally important archaeological sites.

Section 106 agreement - A legally binding agreement or obligation entered into by the local authority and a land developer over an issue related to a planning application, under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

Sequential approach A method of considering and ranking the suitability of sites for development, so that one type of site is considered before another. Different sequential approaches are applied to different uses.

Sui Generis - A use not specifically defined in the use classes order (2004) – planning permission is always needed to change from a sui generis use.

Sustainable development - Development to improve quality of life and protect the environment in balance with the local economy, for now and future generations.

Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS) - This term is taken to cover the whole range of sustainable approaches to surface water drainage management.

Tree Preservation Order (TPO) - An order made by a local planning authority in respect of trees and woodlands. The principal effect of a TPO is to prohibit the cutting down, uprooting, topping, lopping, wilful damage or wilful destruction of trees without the LPA's consent.

Guide to changes to the Use Classes Order in England.

Changes of use within the same class are not development.

Use	Use Class up to 31 August 2020	Use Class from 1 September 2020
Shop - not more than 280sqm mostly selling essential goods, including food and at least 1km from another similar shop	A1	F.2
Shop	A1	E
Financial & professional services (not medical)	A2	E
Café or restaurant	A3	E
Pub, wine bar or drinking establishment	A4	Sui generis
Takeaway	A5	Sui generis
Office other than a use within Class A2	B1a	E
Research & development of products or processes	B1b	E
For any industrial process (which can be carried out in any residential area without causing detriment to the amenity of the area)	B1c	E
Industrial	B2	B2
Storage or distribution	B8	B8
Hotels, boarding & guest houses	C1	C1
Residential institutions	C2	C2
Secure residential institutions	C2a	C2a
Dwelling houses	C3	C3
Small house in multiple occupation 3-6 residents	C4	C4
Clinics, health centres, creches, day nurseries, day centre	D1	E
Schools, non-residential education & training centres, museums, public libraries, public halls, exhibition halls, places of worship, law courts	D1	F.1
Cinemas, theatres, concert halls, bingo halls and dance halls	D2	Sui generis
Gymnasiums, indoor recreations not involving motorised vehicles or firearms	D2	E
Hall or meeting place for the principal use of the local community	D2	F.2
Indoor or outdoor swimming baths, skating rinks, and outdoor sports or recreations not involving motorised vehicles or firearms	D2	F.2

Agenda Item 1

PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES - 4 DECEMBER 2024

Present: Councillor Gavin (Chair);

Councillors Davies (Vice-Chair, in the Chair for Item 62), Cresswell, Ennis, Goss, Hornsby-Smith, Leng, Lovelock, Moore, Rowland, Tarar and Yeo

RESOLVED ITEMS

58. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 6 November 2024 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

59. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Yeo declared a pecuniary interest in Item 60 as one of the applications listed for consideration at a future meeting of the Committee related to his property.

Councillor Gavin declared a pecuniary interest in Item 62 on the grounds that she was a Governor of Caversham Primary school. An objection to the application by Brighter Futures for Children Limited had stated that it would threaten the sustainability and financial viability of other schools in North Reading including Caversham Primary school.

60. POTENTIAL SITE VISITS FOR COMMITTEE ITEMS

The Committee considered a report setting out a schedule of applications to be considered at future meetings of the Committee to enable Councillors to decide which sites, if any, they wished to visit prior to determining the relevant applications. The report also listed previously agreed site visits which were yet to take place.

Resolved -

That no additional site visits be arranged.

(Councillor Yeo declared a pecuniary interest in this Item as one of the applications listed for consideration at a future meeting of the Committee related to his property. He left the meeting and took no part in the debate or decision.)

61. PLANNING APPEALS

The Committee received a report on notifications received from the Planning Inspectorate on planning appeals registered with them or decisions made and providing summary reports on appeal decisions of interest to the Committee.

Appendix 1 to the report set out details of three new appeals lodged since the last Committee. Appendix 2 to the report set out details of three appeals decided since the last

PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES - 4 DECEMBER 2024

Committee. It was noted that Appendix 2 now included brief comments from officers on each appeal decision.

Resolved –

- (1) That the new appeals, as set out in Appendix 1, be noted;
- (2) That the outcome of the recently determined appeals, as set out in Appendix 2, be noted.

62. **PL/23/1023 (FUL) - THE HEIGHTS PRIMARY SCHOOL, 129 UPPER WOODCOTE ROAD, CAVERSHAM**

Use of existing 2FE primary school for up to 420 pupils.

The Committee considered a report on the above application. An update report was tabled at the meeting which set out further responses received to the consultation and an update on transport matters.

Comments and objections were received and considered.

Councillor Davies took the chair for this item as Councillor Gavin had declared a pecuniary interest. In accordance with Standing Order 28 Councillor Gavin addressed the Committee on this application as Caversham Ward Councillor before leaving the meeting. Caversham Heights Ward Councillors Isobel Ballsdon and Sam Juthani also addressed the Committee on this application.

Objectors Hilary Smart and Elisa Miles, representing WADRA, Hayley Harrison representing the applicant, and Mike Ibbott the applicant's agent, attended the meeting and addressed the Committee on this application.

Resolved –

- (1) That application PL/23/1023 (FUL) be refused planning permission;
- (2) That the Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection Services, in consultation with the Vice-Chair of the Committee, be authorised to finalise the reasons for refusal, to include the following issues raised by the Committee: that there was no proven unmet need for school places in the North Reading area, that the application would not increase choice of school places, and could diminish choice if it had a negative impact on the viability of other schools in the North Reading area, and that the application was therefore contrary to paragraph 99 of the NPPF (December 2023) and Policy OU1 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

(Councillor Gavin declared a pecuniary interest in this item on the grounds that she was a Governor of Caversham Primary school and an objection to the application by Brighter Futures for Children Limited had stated that it would threaten the sustainability and financial viability of other schools in North Reading including Caversham Primary school. Councillor

PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES - 4 DECEMBER 2024

Gavin made a statement as Ward Councillor then left the meeting and took no part in the debate or decision.)

63. **PL/24/1441(REG3) - 1 MONKS BARN**

Installation of 3.6m x 2.4m storage shed.

The Committee considered a report on the above application. An update report was tabled at the meeting which explained that no further representations had been received during the consultation period and that the application was therefore recommended for approval.

Comments were received and considered.

Resolved –

That, pursuant to Regulation 3 of the Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1992, the carrying out of the development PL/24/1441(REG3) be authorised, subject to the conditions and informatics as recommended in the report.

(The meeting started at 6.30 pm and closed at 8.24 pm)

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Planning Applications Committee

08 January 2025



Title	POTENTIAL SITE VISITS FOR COMMITTEE ITEMS
Purpose of the report	To make a decision
Report status	Public report
Report author	Julie Williams, Development Manager (Planning & Building Control)
Lead Councillor	Councillor Micky Leng, Lead Councillor for Planning and Assets
Corporate priority	Not applicable, but still requires a decision
Recommendations	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> note this report and any officer recommendations for site visits. confirm if there are other sites Councillors wish to visit before reaching a decision on an application. confirm if the site(s) agreed to be visited will be arranged and accompanied by officers or can be unaccompanied but with a briefing note provided by the case officer.

1. Executive Summary

1.1. To identify those sites where, due to the sensitive or important nature of the proposals, Councillors are advised that a Site Visit would be appropriate before the matter is presented at Committee and to confirm how the visit will be arranged. A list of potential sites is appended with a note added to say if recommended for a site visit or not.

2. The Proposal

2.1. A site visit helps if a proposed development and context is difficult to visualise from the plans and supporting material or to better understand concerns or questions raised by a proposal.

2.2. Appendix 1 of this report provides a list of, mainly major, applications recently received that may be presented to Committee for a decision in due course. Officers have marked some with * to indicate those that Members would benefit from visiting to inform their decision making. Appendix 2 then lists those sites that have previously been agreed should be visited before considering the officer report.

2.3. Often it is during consideration of a report on a planning application that it becomes apparent that Councillors would benefit from visiting a site to assist in reaching the correct decision. In these instances, Officers or Councillors may request a deferral to allow a visit to be carried out.

2.4. Accompanied site visits are appropriate when access to private land is necessary to appreciate matters raised. These visits will be arranged and attended by officers on the designated date and time. Applicants and objectors may observe the process and answer questions when asked but lobbying is discouraged. A site visit is an information gathering opportunity to inform decision making.

2.5. Unaccompanied site visits are appropriate when the site can be easily seen from public areas and allow Councillors to visit when convenient to them. In these instances, the

case officer will provide a briefing note on the application and the main issues to assist when visiting the site.

2.6. It is also possible for officers to suggest, or Councillors to request, a visit to a completed development to assess its quality.

3. Contribution to Strategic Aims

4.1 The processing of planning applications contributes to creating a healthy environment with thriving communities and helping the economy within the Borough, identified as the themes of the Council's Corporate Plan.

4. Environmental and Climate Implications

4.1. The Council declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 26 February 2019 (Minute 48 refers).

4.2. The Planning Service uses policies to encourage developers to build and use properties responsibly by making efficient use of land and using sustainable materials and building methods.

5. Community Engagement

5.1. Statutory neighbour consultation takes place on planning applications.

6. Equality Implications

6.1. Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to—

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

6.2. It is considered that an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is not relevant to the decision on whether sites need to be visited by Planning Application Committee. The decision will not have a differential impact on people with the protected characteristics of; age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex (gender) or sexual orientation.

7. Legal Implications

7.1. None arising from this report.

8. Financial Implications

8.1. The cost of site visits is met through the normal planning service budget and Councillor costs.

9. Timetable for Implementation

9.1. Site visits are normally scheduled for the Thursday prior to committee. Planning Administration team sends out notification emails when a site visit is arranged.

10. Background Papers

10.1. There are none.

Appendices

Appendix 1

No majors or other applications without delegations to officers submitted since 4 December 2024 at time of preparing this report.

Appendix 2

Previously Agreed Site Visits with date of PAC when requested:

- PL/23/1041 (FUL) Portman Road – unaccompanied agreed by PAC 06.09.23.
- PL/23/0822 (OUT) Forbury Retail Park (west) – accompanied agreed by PAC 24.07.24.
-
- PL/24/0846 (FUL) Napier Court, Napier Road – accompanied agreed by PAC 24.07.24.

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Planning Applications Committee

08 January 2025



Title	PLANNING APPEALS
Purpose of the report	To note the report for information
Report status	Public report
Report author	Julie Williams, Development Manager (Planning & Building Control)
Lead Councillor	Councillor Micky Leng, Lead Councillor for Planning and Assets
Corporate priority	Inclusive Economy
Recommendations	The Committee is asked: 1. To note the report.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. To advise Committee on notifications received from the Planning Inspectorate on planning appeals registered with them or decision made and to provide summary reports on appeal decisions of interest the Planning Applications Committee.

2. Information provided

- 2.1. Please see Appendix 1 of this report for new appeals lodged since the last committee.
- 2.2. Please see Appendix 2 of this report for appeals decided since the last committee.
- 2.3. Please see Appendix 3 of this report for new Planning Officers reports on those appeal decisions of interest to this committee.

3. Contribution to Strategic Aims

- 3.1. Defending planning appeals made against planning decisions contributes to creating a sustainable environment with active communities and helping the economy within the Borough as identified as the themes of the Council's Corporate Plan.

4. Environmental and Climate Implications

- 4.1. The Council declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 26 February 2019 (Minute 48 refers).
- 4.2. The Planning Service uses policies to encourage developers to build and use properties responsibly by making efficient use of land and using sustainable materials and building methods

5. Community Engagement

- 5.1. Planning decisions are made in accordance with adopted local development plan policies, which have been adopted by the Council following public consultation. Statutory consultation also takes place on planning applications and appeals, and this can have bearing on the decision reached by the Secretary of State and his Inspectors. Copies of appeal decisions are held on the public Planning Register.

6. Equality Implications

6.1. Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to—

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

6.2. It is considered that an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is not relevant to the decision on whether sites need to be visited by Planning Application Committee. The decision will not have a differential impact on people with the protected characteristics of; age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex (gender) or sexual orientation.

7. Legal Implications

7.1. Public Inquiries are normally the only types of appeal that involve the use of legal representation. Only applicants have the right to appeal against refusal or non-determination and there is no right for a third party to appeal a planning decision.

8. Financial Implications

8.1. Public Inquiries and Informal Hearings are more expensive in terms of officer and appellant time than the Written Representations method. Either party can be liable to awards of costs. Guidance is provided in Circular 03/2009 “Cost Awards in Appeals and other Planning Proceedings”.

9. Timetable for Implementation

9.1. Not applicable.

10. Background Papers

10.1. There are none.

APPENDIX 1 - Appeals Lodged:

WARD: Tilehurst
APPEAL NO: APP/E0345/W/24/3356573
CASE NO: PL/24/0660
ADDRESS: 19 Ogmore Close, Tilehurst
PROPOSAL: Erection of a 2 storey 3 bedroomed dwelling
CASE OFFICER: Anthony Scholes
METHOD: Written Representation
APPEAL TYPE: REFUSAL OF PLANNING PERMISSION
APPEAL LODGED: 16/12/2024

APPENDIX 2 - Appeals Decided:

None

APPENDIX 3 - Planning Officers reports on appeal decisions

None.

08 January 2025



Reading
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Working better with you

Title	PLANNING APPLICATION REPORT
Ward	Abbey
Planning Application Reference:	PL/23/0107(FUL) & PL/23/0108(LBC)
Site Address:	10 Gun Street, Reading, RG1 2JR
Proposed Development	<p>PL/23/0107(FUL) – Application for Full Planning Permission: Proposed partial change of use from offices (Class E) to provide an expansion to existing entertainment venue (Sui Generis use) at 9 Gun Street (Purple Turtle) with erection of rear extensions and internal alterations. Detached 3-storey ancillary building to rear boundary with yard over Holy Brook.</p> <p>PL/23/0108(LBC) – Application for Listed Building Consent: Proposed extensions and internal alterations associate with partial change of use from offices (Class E) to provide an expansion to existing entertainment venue (Sui Generis Use) at 9 Gun Street (Purple Turtle) with erection of rear extensions and internal alterations. Detached 3-storey ancillary building to rear boundary with yard over Holy Brook</p>
Applicant	PDR Ltd
Report author	Matt Burns - Principal Planning Officer
Deadline:	Originally 11/05/2023, but extensions of time have been agreed with the applicant for both applications until 31/01/2025
Recommendation	<p>PL/23/0107(FUL) – Grant full planning permission, subject to conditions</p> <p>PL/23/0108(LBC) - Grant listed building consent, subject to conditions</p> <p>Delegate to the Assistant Director for Planning, Transport and Public Protection Services (ADPTPPS) to make such minor changes to the conditions and informatics, as may be reasonably required to issue the planning permission and listed building consent</p>
Conditions	<p>To include:</p> <p><u>PL/23/0107FUL</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Time Limit – 3 years. 2. Approved plans.

3. Pre-commencement (including demolition) submission and approval of demolition and construction method statement (including Transport, EP and Holy Brook based requirements)
4. Pre-commencement submission and approval of a design stage BREEAM Certificate demonstrating that the development would meet a minimum BREEAM Very Good standard
5. Pre-occupation submission and approval of a final, as built, BREEAM Certificate demonstrating compliance with the BREEAM standard approved under condition 6 above
6. Compliance condition for the development to be carried out in accordance with the energy measures achieved in the Energy Statement hereby approved
7. Pre-occupation submission, approval and provision of cycle parking space details
8. Pre-occupation submission, approval and provision of bin stores and measures to prevent pests and vermin accessing bin stores
9. Pre-occupation submission and approval of refuse collection strategy
10. No mechanical plant to be installed unless a noise assessment and mitigation scheme has been submitted and approved
11. Compliance condition relating to hours of demolition/construction works (0800-1800hrs Mondays to Fridays and 0800-1300hrs Saturdays, and not at any time on Sundays and Bank or Statutory Holidays)
12. Pre-commencement (barring demolition) submission and approval of a detailed hard and soft landscaping scheme and implementation within the first planting season following occupation of the development
13. Pre-commencement (including demolition) submission and approval of Natural England License for works that could impact bats
14. Pre-commencement (barring demolition) submission and approval of habitat enhancement and management scheme, including bat and bird boxes and tiles
15. Implementation of the development only in accordance with the submitted archaeological written scheme of investigation.
16. Implementation and use of the development only in accordance with the approved flood risk assessment
17. The Class E(a) café use hereby permitted shall not operate outside the hours of 0800-0000 each day
18. The Sui Generis nightclub/entertainment use hereby permitted shall not operate outside the hours of 11-0400 each day
19. The Sui Generis nightclub use of the site shall not take place within the parts of the site shown for café (and associated areas) use
20. The use of any external area at the site shall not operate outside the hours of 0800-2300 hours each day
21. First floor external terrace area to be for café use only
22. No amplified live or recorded music to be played within the green room at any time
23. Pre-occupation submission and approval of deliveries and servicing management plan to include a requirement that

	<p>deliveries, collection of empty bottles and waste collections shall not be carried out between the hours of 20:00 to 08:00 Monday to Saturdays and 20:00 to 10:00 on Sundays and Bank Holidays.</p> <p>24. Pre-occupation submission and approval of a premises management plan for use of the nightclub extension and café areas</p> <p>25. Pre-occupation submission and approval of a scheme of external lighting</p> <p>26. No burning of waste on site</p> <p>27. No hot food cooking to occur unless an odour assessment is submitted and approved</p> <p>28. Development not to be undertaken other than in strict accordance with the submitted noise assessments (by Apex Acoustics and Stantec). All noise mitigation measures to be installed prior to first occupation/use of the development</p>
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PL/23/0108LBC

1. Time Limit – 3 years
2. Approved Plans
3. No works to the listed building hereby permitted shall be carried out other than in strict accordance with submitted heritage statement and conservation management plan
4. Pre-commencement submission and approval of a scheme of external works for restoration, repair and refurbishment of:
 - (i) cleaning and repointing of defective brickwork
 - (ii) cleaning and repainting of iron railings
 - (iii) cleaning and repainting of timber shopfront windows
 - (iv) repair and repainting of sash windows
 - (v) repair, replacement and repainting of rainwater goods
 - (vi) repair and repainting of stucco band
 - (vii) repair and repainting of doorcase
 - (viii) damp proofing
5. Pre-commencement submission and approval of a scheme of internal works for restoration, repair, refurbishment and whereby necessary replacement of:
 - (i) Internal walls, ceilings and floors
 - (ii) exposed timber beams, dado panelling, open-well staircase and other decorative features
 - (iii) Fireplaces
6. All works of making good to match existing in terms of colour, face bond, texture and pointing
7. Pre-commencement submission and approval of samples and detailed schedule and specification of materials to be used in construction of all external surfaces of the development
8. Pre-commencement submission and approval of details of all new windows and doors including details of reveals, heads, sills and lintels
9. Pre-commencement submission and approval of details of all new services and plant equipment (hoist, extractors, pipework and wiring) to include installation methodology

	<p>10. No other works to features of architectural or historic interest, without written approval.</p> <p>11. Adequate protection and support shall be given to the host and adjacent listed buildings during all construction works</p>
Informatics	<p>To include:</p> <p><u>23/0107FUL</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Positive and Proactive Statement 2. Damage to the highway 3. Works affecting highways 4. Associated listed building consent ref. PL/23/0108 5. Pre-commencement conditions 6. Terms 7. Building Control 8. Complaints about construction 9. Community Infrastructure Levy – not liable 10. Ongoing information conditions <p><u>23/0108LBC</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Building Control 2. Associated full planning permission ref. PL/23/0107 3. Pre-commencement conditions 4. Terms 5. Ongoing information conditions 6. Positive and Proactive Statement 7. No other works to the listed building are hereby approved

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 The proposals would provide a series of tangible benefits, including bringing a long term vacant grade II listed building back into viable use, facilitating expansion of The Purple Turtle a popular town centre entertainment, leisure and cultural facility, and short and long term economic benefits resulting from construction and subsequent operation of the proposed café and nightclub uses. The proposals also incorporate a series of internal and external repair and restoration works to the host grade II listed building as well as a number of sustainable energy efficiency measures. Whilst the proposals do not include de-culverting of the section of the Holy Brook that crosses the site to the rear, other on-site landscape and biodiversity enhancements are proposed.

1.2 Having regard to all matters raised, it is concluded that combined environmental, economic and social benefits of the proposals would, on balance, outweigh the identified low level of 'less than substantial' harm to the host Grade II Listed Building and surrounding St Marys Butts/Castle Street Conservation Area, that would result from the scale and appearance of the proposed extensions and extent of internal alterations proposed to the host building. Therefore, when applying an overall critical planning balance of all material considerations presented, these applications for full planning permission and accompanying listed building consent are considered to comply with the relevant policies of the Development Plan and are recommended for approval subject to conditions.

2. INTRODUCITON

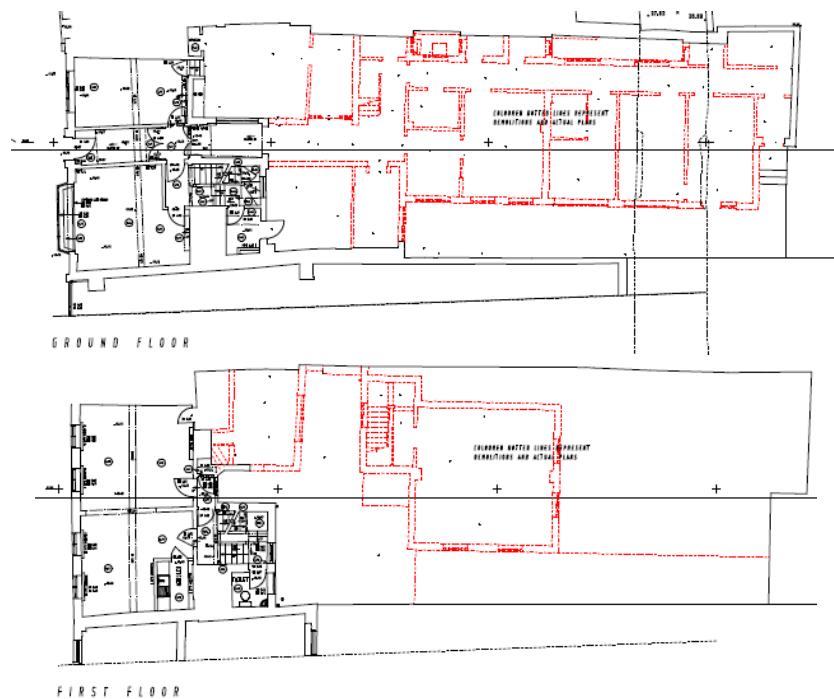
2.1 The application site comprises an early 18th century Grade II Listed Building located on the south side of Gun Street (List entry Number: 1321918). The site is within St Mary Butts / Castle Street Conservation Area and adjacent to other Grade II listed buildings fronting onto Gun Street.

2.2 The site is located within Flood Zones 1 and 3 and, like adjoining properties, the culverted Holy Brook runs under the southernmost part of the rear yard. The site also lies in an archaeological potential area, an Air Quality Management Area and the Reading Central Area. Within the Central Area the site is located within an existing active frontage, the Primary Shopping Area and the Central Core. St Mary's Churchyard is an identified important area of open space directly opposite. The application site has been vacant for over two decades since the NHS left their offices at the building in 2004. Nearby uses include a number of restaurants, bars and nightclubs, and the immediate area of Gun Street constitutes a central focus of Reading's night-time economy. Next door at 9 Gun Street is the long-standing Purple Turtle bar and late-night music venue, which is also under the ownership of the applicant. As with elsewhere in the locality, there are existing residential units located on the upper floors of buildings (e.g. 11-12 Gun St).

2.3 The building itself is of red brick construction, with grey diaper-work, a stucco string course to the second floor and moulded wooden eaves cornice. The roof is of plain tiles with a tile hung gable and four ranges of cross glazed sash windows. The early 19th century shop front has glazing bars to the right and an 18th century door with architrave surround, together with a bracketed pediment hood and a modern three-light window on ground floor. Internally there is an 18th century stair with turned balusters and short moulded pendants. The building is in a very poor state of repair with some elements unsafe structurally, as witnessed on the officer site visit. Following the granting of planning permission and listed building consent under Applications 151281 and 151282 (see planning history below), large single and two storey rear extensions to the building were demolished in 2017 and the cleared rear yard area is currently overgrown.

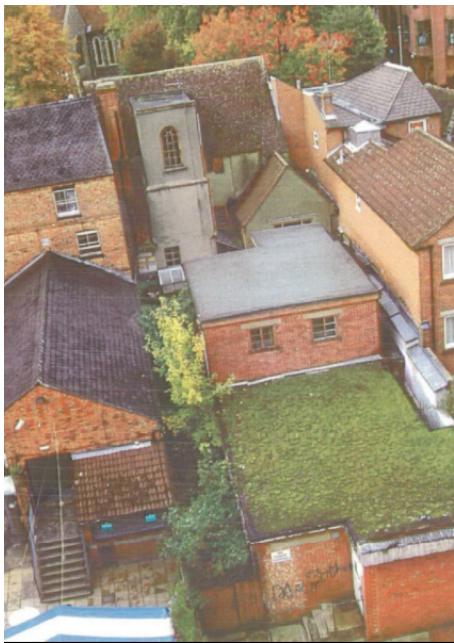


Application site (red line) and other land owned by the Applicant (blue line)



Existing ground and first floor level plans with previously demolished extensions outlined in red





Rear of no. 10 before demolition of previous two and single storey rear extensions



Rear of no. 10 as existing following demolition of previous two and single storey rear extensions

2.3 The applications have been called in to Planning Applications Committee by Abbey Ward Councillor Rowland on the basis that there are important local issues relating to the treatment of the Holy Brook, nearby residential neighbours and heritage matters that require consideration.

3. PROPOSAL

3.1 The proposal seeks full planning permission for a change of use from offices (Class E) to provide an expansion to existing bar/nightclub/entertainment venue (Sui Generis Use) at 9 Gun Street (Purple Turtle), together with erection of part two-part single storey rear extension and the enlargement of the existing basement. A detached 3-storey ancillary building to the rear (south) boundary, with yard over the Holy Brook is also proposed. Listed building consent is also sought in relation to the proposed internal and external alterations to the building and proposed rear extensions and outbuilding.

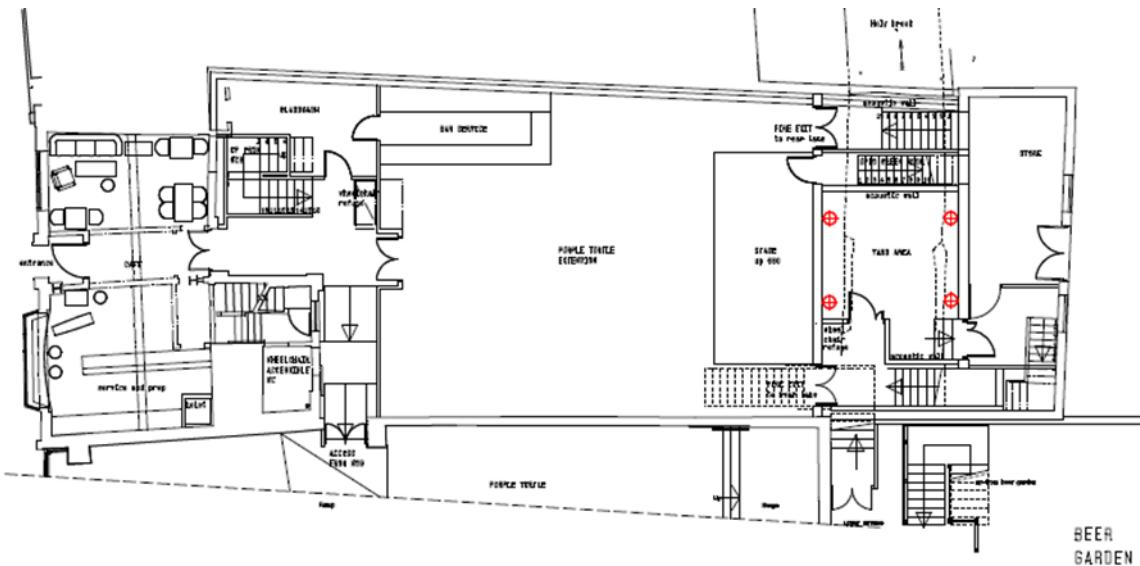
3.2 More specifically, the proposals incorporate:

- Conversion of the existing ground and first floor rooms from former office accommodation to a café with servery, food preparation and seating areas at ground floor and additional seating areas at first floor level. Both the proposed café and former office use of the building are both within Class E of the use classes order and therefore the change of use alone is not development requiring planning permission. The café would be accessed via the existing front entrance door from Gun Street, albeit it is proposed to set the door back from the Gun Street pavement to provide a recessed entrance and small covered entrance porch area. The entrance door currently provides access to an internal corridor off of which are two principal rooms. It is proposed to remove the corridor rooms to create a single open plan café and seating area.



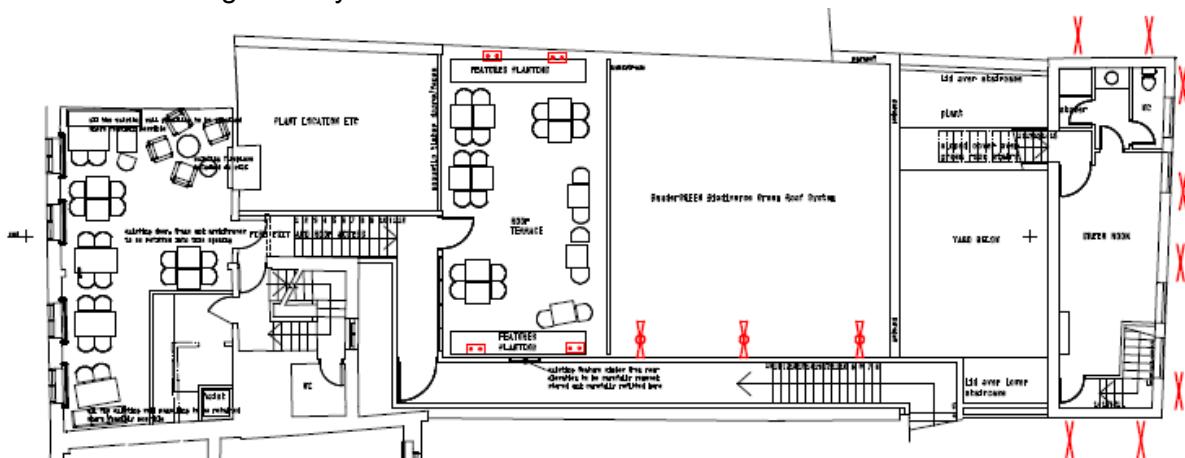
Proposed Front Elevation

- It is proposed to retain the existing staircase leading up to first floor level. At first floor level the building is already set out as one single room and this arrangement is proposed to be retained to create an open plan café seating space. An existing fireplace in this room is to be retained.
- The existing staircase leading from first to second floor level is also to be retained with a small kitchen and food preparation area proposed at second floor level. It is also proposed to install a hoist between ground, first and second floor areas to pass food/drinks between the different floors of the café.
- To the rear of the building, it is proposed to construct a part two, part single storey extension. The single storey element of the extension would project 16m from the rear of the existing building, would span the full width of the site and would be finished in white stucco render. The single storey extension would terminate at the north edge of the culverted section of the Holy Brook which crosses the rear of the site. The extension is proposed to provide a new large event space room/hall. The single storey extension would have a high ceiling height to accommodate the events space with the flat roof extension having a parapet height of 5.2m and incorporating an acoustic ceiling. The event space/hall would be accessed at ground floor level from the rear of the proposed café area where there would be a new circulation area and stair core which would also lead to the first floor part of the proposed rear extension. It is proposed that the event space room/hall would be used to provide additional space for the adjoining Purple Turtle bar/nightclub/entertainment venue use at no. 9 Gun Street, which is also under the ownership of the Applicant. To this effect a single new internal access door between no. 9 and no. 10 Gun Street is proposed to be provided through the shared walls of the two properties. The Applicant advises that the proposed event space/hall would be used flexibly for a variety of u18 events, business and community events during the day and as an entertainment space during evening/nighttime hours, as an expansion to the Purple Turtle for club nights and live performances such as music or comedy (Sui Generis Use).

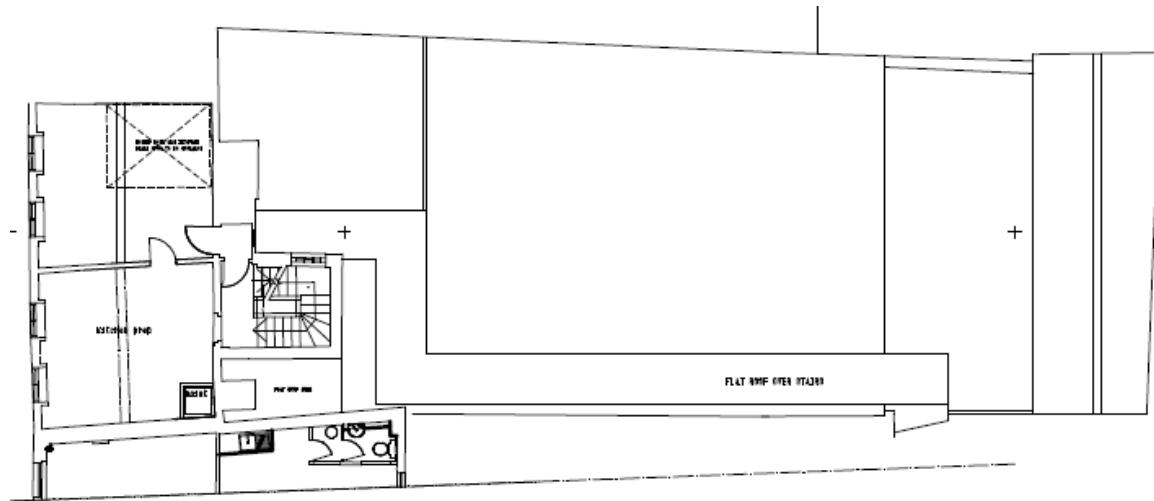


Proposed Ground Floor Plan

- The proposed two storey element of the proposed extension would project 4.2m from the existing rear elevation of the building and would be 5.8m wide, spanning just over half the width of the building. The two storey extension would have a flat roof and would be finished in white stucco render and would have full height glazing and glazed entrance door to its rear elevation. The extension would facilitate provision of a new stair core and corridors connecting the existing part of the building to the extended rear elements and would provide access to a first floor level external terrace area to the flat roof of the large single storey rear extension. The terrace area would be 5m x 9.2m and would be used for the proposed café use only. A decorative black metal rail balustrade would enclose the terrace, overlooking a green biodiverse roof proposed to the rest of the flat roof of the single storey rear extension. A first floor level external stair is also proposed to run along the western edge of the roof of the single storey rear extension, which would also provide a first floor level link passageway between the first floor extension and external terrace area and the elevated rear terrace area at the adjacent Purple Turtle.
- Adjacent to the proposed extension at first floor level across the other half of the building would be a plant enclosure bounded by a timber acoustic fence and gate set on the flat roof of the single storey extension.



Proposed First Floor Plan



Proposed Second Floor Plan

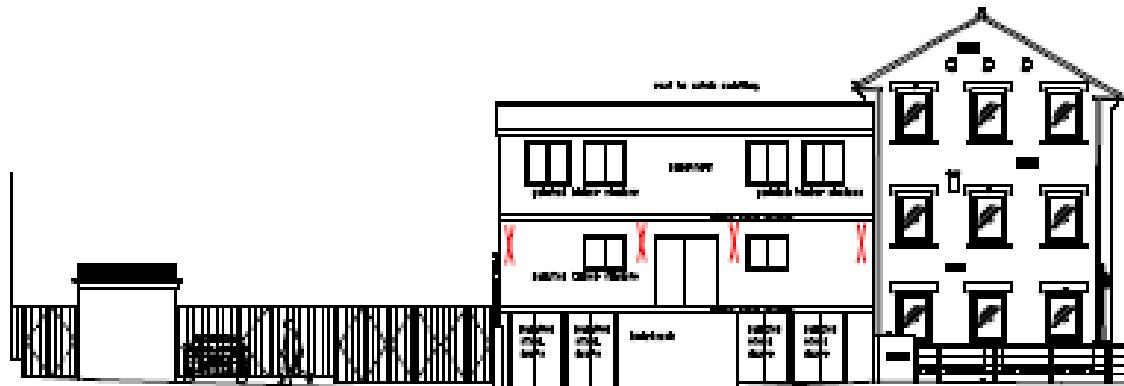


Proposed Rear Elevation Section (showing proposed rear extensions)

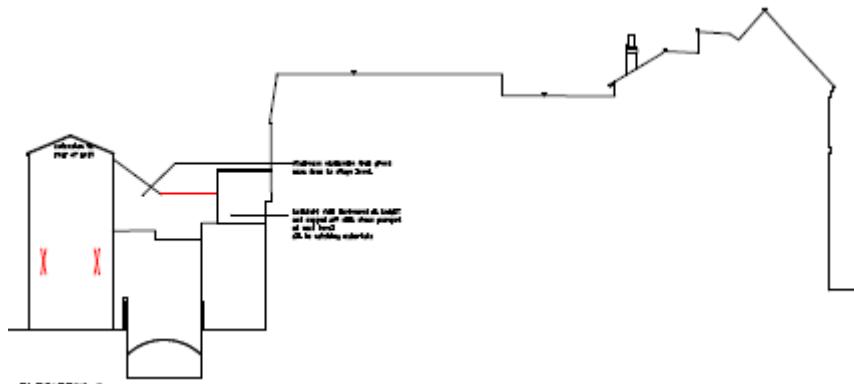
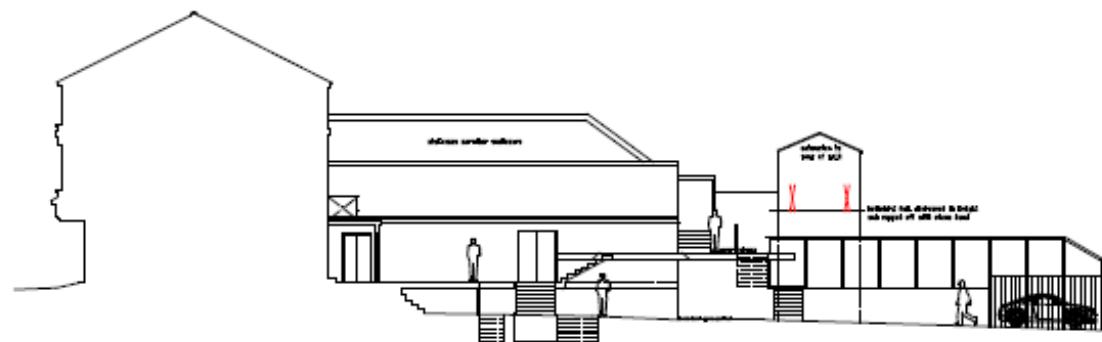


Proposed Rear Extensions Detailed Elevation

- To the other (south) side of the culverted section of the Holy Brook it is proposed to erect a three storey ancillary building which would extend up to the rear boundary of the site. Beyond the rear of the site is a pedestrian route connecting Bridge Street and The Oracle. The ancillary building would be between 3.2m and 3.8m in length and would span the full width of the site. The ancillary building would have a shallow gable pitch roof with a ridge height of 8.2m and eaves height of 7.3m. It would be finished in red brick, red roof tiles and white painted timber windows to reflect the host listed building. The ancillary building is proposed to be used as a refuse and general store at lower and upper ground floor level with a small green room for performers at the entertainment venue to the upper floor.



Proposed Rear Elevation (showing proposed ancillary building)

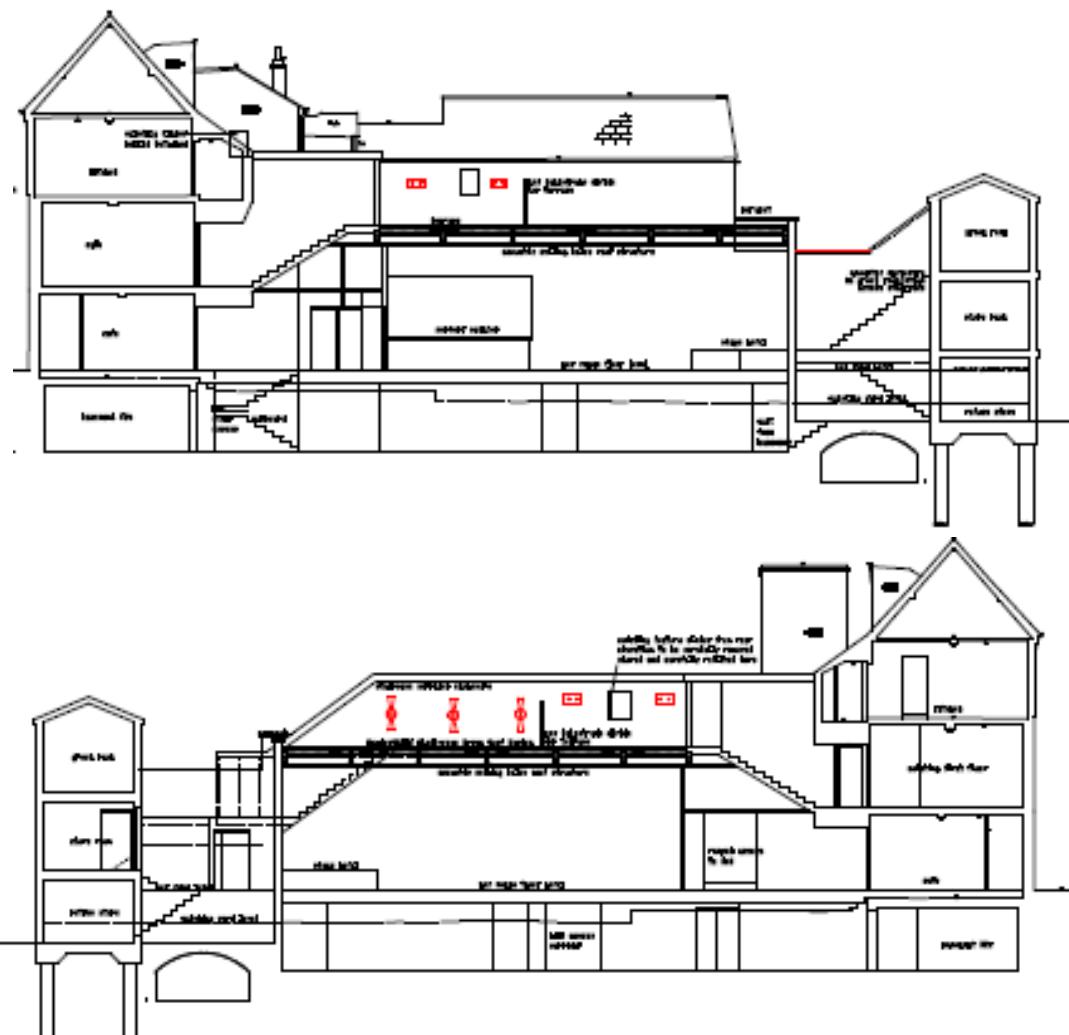


Proposed Side Elevation

- There are changes in levels within the existing building at ground floor level and across the site which steps down twice from front to rear (north to south). The proposals seek to remove this level change by raising the level towards the rear of the site to provide a consistent ground floor level throughout the building and proposed extension. The site level would not be changed to the very rear of the site on the south side of the culverted

Holy Brook channel where the proposed three storey ancillary building would be located. As such, whilst this is a three storey building, the ground floor level of the building would be midway between the basement and ground floor of the extended building to the north side of the culverted Holy Brook channel. This means that the roof ridge of the ancillary building would be set at the same height as the flat roof of the proposed two storey rear extension.

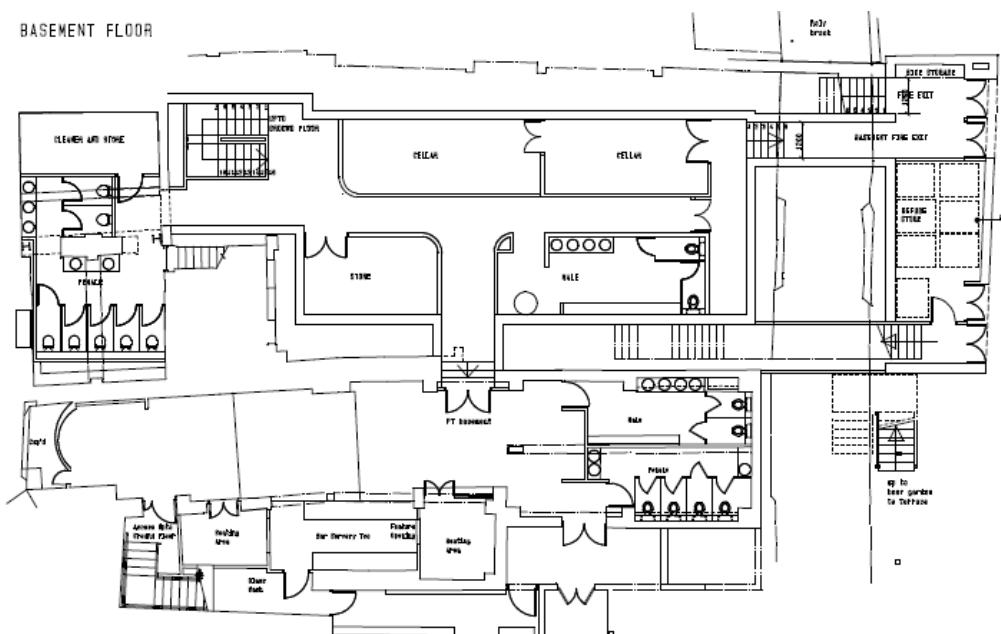
- It should be noted that there would be no substantive built development within the area between the proposed ancillary building and rear extension to the building, which sits directly above the culverted Holy Brook channel. This would be used as an external yard area, which is the existing use for this part of the site. It is not proposed to de-culvert this section of the Holy Brook. The only built development in this part of the site is the introduction of two lightweight external staircases, which would be used to provide elevated access between the rear extension and ancillary building.



Proposed Side Elevation Sections

- It is also proposed to significantly enlarge the existing basement at the application site. The existing basement is small and lies underneath the two existing principal rooms to the building which sit adjacent to Gun Street and currently contain storage areas. It is proposed to extend the basement to be under the entirety of the proposed single storey rear

extension up the north edge of the culverted Holy Brook channel. The proposed enlarged basement would contain toilet facilities to the front within the existing part of the basement and then large cellar, store rooms and further toilets within the enlarged part. A new stair core within the proposed two storey rear extension would provide access down to the basement. Similar to the proposed event space/hall at ground floor level the basement facilities are also proposed to be used as part of the expanded Purple Turtle use. A single new entrance door is proposed at basement level which would provide access from the basement level of the Purple Turtle to the enlarged basement of no. 10 Gun Street. To the rear of the basement a small stair case leading up to the yard area over the culverted section of the Holy Brook is proposed to provide an emergency and fire exit through the proposed rear ancillary building on to the footway to the rear of the site.



Proposed Basement Floor Plan



Proposed Visual of First Floor Rear Terrace and Green Roof

3.3 It is pertinent to note that there have been previous approved planning permission and listed building consents granted at the site for similar developments, albeit these have not been implemented and have now lapsed. The previous permissions are referenced in the relevant history section of this report below and are also summarised (with plans) at Appendix 1 at the end of this report.

Community Infrastructure Levy

3.4 In relation to the community infrastructure levy, the applicant has duly completed a CIL liability form with the submission. In accordance with the Council's adopted CIL Charging Schedule, the uses proposed are not liable for CIL and therefore there would be no levy due for this application.

3.5 Plans and Documents Considered:

Plans

- Drawing no. 201 - 114 – Existing Plans pre demolition
- Drawing no. 203 - 1114 – Existing Elevations pre demolition
- Drawing no. 205 - 1114 – Existing Site Plan
- Drawing no. 206 – 1114 - Proposed Site Plan Rev A

Received by the Local Planning Authority on 30th January 2023

- Drawing no. 201-1114 – Existing Plans with demolitions Rev D
- Drawing no. 103 Rev D – Existing Elevations with demolitions
- Drawing no. 02-1114 Rev C – Proposed Plans
- Drawing no. 204-1114 Rev E – Proposed Elevations Sections

Received by the Local Planning Authority on 16th March 2023

- Drawing no. 210-1144 – Rear Sectional View through Terrace

Received by the Local Planning Authority on 8th November 2024

Supporting Documents

- Planning, Design and Access Statement (JWPC Ltd)
- Heritage Statement (ADL Architecture)
- Flood Risk Assessment (Stantec)
- Noise Impact Assessment (Stantec)
- Ecology Assessment (Future Nature)
- Archaeology Written Scheme of Investigation (Thames Valley Archaeological Services)

Received by the Local Planning Authority on 30th January 2023

- Sustainability Statement (Scott White and Hookins)
- Exterior Lighting Specification (Alan Brown Design)
- Air Conditioning & Ventilation Specification (WM Air Conditioning)

Received by the Local Planning Authority on 16th March 2023

- River Condition Assessment (Future Nature)

Received by the Local Planning Authority on 15th December 2023

- Addendum to Planning, Design and Access Statement (JWPC Ltd)
- A Conservation Plan for Historic Fabric (Ridgeway Heritage Consultancy)

Received by the Local Planning Authority on 8th November 2024

4. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

10 Gun Street (application site)

08/1139FUL & 08/01677LBC - Works relating to the change of use from offices to A1 at ground floor with offices above to include demolition of existing extensions and erection of new extension and internal alterations. Withdrawn 16/2/09.

01676-FUL & 08/1187LBC - Change of use from offices to A1 at ground floor with offices above to include demolition of existing extensions and erection of new extension and internal alterations. Withdrawn 16/2/09.

09/00928FUL & 09/1230LBC - Change of use from offices to A1 at ground floor with offices above to include demolition of existing extensions and stair enclosure, replacement extensions, replacement stair enclosure, minor internal alterations (Resubmission of 08/01676/FUL). Granted 14/8/09.

09/0612FUL & 09/00929LBC - Works associated with the change of use from offices to A1 at ground floor with offices above to include demolition of existing extensions and stair enclosure, replacement extensions, replacement stair enclosure and internal alterations. (Resubmission of 08/01677/LBC). Granted 14/8/09.

09/02111FUL & 09/1741LBC - Change of use to A3. Demolition of late extensions and stair enclosure (stairs retained), replacement extensions and stair enclosure. Granted 28/1/10.

09/0085FUL & 09/02154LBC - Works associated with the change of use to A3. Demolition of late extensions and stair enclosure (stairs retained), replacement extensions and stair enclosure. Granted 28/1/10.

10/01343FUL & 10/0759LBC - Change of use of first, second, attic floors from B1a (offices) to A1 (retail) in association with permitted ground floor conversion and extension (ref: 09/00928/FUL). Granted 9/9/10.

12/00939EXT & 12/0577LBC - Application for an extension of time limit for implementation of permission 09/00928/FUL for change of use from offices to A1 at ground floor with offices above to include demolition of existing extensions and stair enclosure, replacement extensions, replacement stair enclosure, minor internal alterations. Granted 7/8/12.

12/0578FUL & 12/00940LBC - Application for an extension of time limit for implementation of permission 09/00929/LBC for works associated with the change of use from offices to A1 at ground floor with offices above to include demolition of existing extensions and stair enclosure, replacement extensions, replacement stair enclosure and internal alterations. Granted 7/8/12.

12/01308FUL & 12/1736LBC - Change of use to A1 (Retail) or A3 (Restaurant). Refurbishment and alterations including single storey rear extension. Granted 15/10/12.

12/1737FUL and 12/01309LBC - Works Associated with the change of use to A1 (Retail) or A3 (Restaurant). Refurbishment and alterations including single storey rear extension. Granted 15/10/12.

15/1281FUL & 151282/LBC - Change of use from office (Class B1) to café/restaurant (Class A3) at basement to second floor level, including replacement ground and first floor rear extension; Excavation of basement to rear as extension to existing nightclub (Sui Generis) at No. 9 Gun St; Erection of replacement two storey building to rear for micro-brewery (Sui Generis) with associated access, part de-culverting of brook, external open area and various internal and external alterations. Granted 16/08/2016.

19/1243FUL & 19/1244LBC - Change of use from office (Class B1) to café / restaurant (Class A3) at ground to second floor level, including ground and first floor extensions following removal of previous. Erection of building to rear for microbrewery (Sui Generis) with associated access, external open area and various other internal and external alterations - scheme almost identical to previous Consent 151281 but without basement nightclub extension and no de-culverting of brook. Granted 29/06/2020.

9 Gun Street (Purple Turtle) Adjoining

95/00677FUL & 95/0935LBC - Change of use from retail shop (Class A1) to premises for the sale of food and drink (Class A3). Granted 19/10/95.

10/1474FUL / 10/00615FUL & 10/1475FUL / 10/00616LBC - Internal refurbishment, minor new build and garden refurbishment. Granted 29/07/2010 & 30/07/2010.

5. CONSULTATIONS

5.1 Environment Agency – Object. It is understood that the site is constrained however Readings Local Plan Policy EN11 specifically highlights developments should “Pursue opportunities for de-culverting of watercourses” Furthermore the Holy Brook itself is specifically referenced in paragraph 4.2.48 which states:

“In addition to the two main rivers, the Holy Brook contains a unique character and links to the town’s ancient history. Development should seek to increase the prominence of the Holy Brook, and open up the brook for public access, as well as consider any opportunities for de-culverting it, which will provide ecological and potentially flood risk benefits. There are also a number of other small tributaries within Reading Borough, with their own character, and there may again be opportunities to enhance these as well as investigate de-culverting.”

We do not believe the option of de-culverting has been considered in this application therefore we maintain our objection on this basis. We understand that de-culverting at this point in time may not be an option therefore if the applicant were to keep the area above the currently culverted Holy Brook free from development, so it can be de-culverted at a later date, we would also consider that acceptable.

5.2 RBC Conservation Officer – No objection, subject to conditions to secure the following:

- Pre-commencement submission and approval of a full external materials schedule, accompanying samples and detailed drawings and specifications of works, including details of cleaning and repointing of decorative brickwork, cleaning and repainting of iron railings, cleaning and repainting of timber shopfront windows, repair and re-painting of timber sash windows, repair replacement and repainting of rainwater goods, repair and repainting of stucco band and door casement.
- Pre-commencement submission and approval of detailed drawings and specifications for the all internal repair and restoration works to the listed building including a specification for full repair and making good of internal walls, ceilings and floors, details of how exposed timber beams, dad panelling, open-well staircase (including balusters, string, newel and handrails) and other decorative features will be retained and restored and a programme and methodology of investigation and conservation treatment for all fireplaces
- All making good shall be toned to match existing in colour, face bond, texture and pointing.
- Pre-commencement submission and approval of details of all new internal window and door joinery, including depth of reveal, details of heads, sill and lintels.
- Pre-commencement submission and approval of details of all new services (including kitchen and toilets), including position type and method of installation and relates fixture (including hoist, extractors, pipework and communication services).
- Pre-commencement submission and approval of details of water proofing and damp treatment, including methodology and justification.
- Unless specifically referred to within the approved plans and documents no features of architectural or historic interest shall be altered, replaced or removed.

The proposed alterations and extension to the rear of the property is similar in detail to the previously consented applications ref. 151281 and 191244.

5.3 Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee (CAAC) – Object. The proposed applications (ref. 23/0107 for full planning permission and ref. 23/0108 for full planning permission are considerably similar to previously consented applications ref. 19/1243FUL & 19/1244LBC. Reading CAAC did not comment on those applications or the earlier proposals for the site such as under consents ref. 15/1281FUL and 15/1282LBC which were before the formation of CAAC (2016). All the applications predated the RBC Shopfronts Design Guide SPD and consideration of the potential of Reading's High Street Heritage Action Zone Project (HSHAZ) which began in March 2020 (now ended) and includes Gun Street within its area of interest. Summary of reasons for objection:

- The façade of the property on Gun Street is the exterior view that most people see and has been least affected by the ravages of past uses. Alterations to the front door to open outwards will have a harmful impact on the listed building.
- Creation of a basement route between the two properties destroys the integrity of the curtilage of the listed buildings at 10 Gun Street (1321918) and 9 Gun Street (1155899).
- The curtilage of 10 Gun Street includes a section of Holy Brook in a culvert and a piece of land beyond this. This area is visible at the rear of the Oracle and from the access road off

Bridge Street. The proposed new buildings to the north and south of Holy Brook will have a negative and overly dominant impact on the listed building and the setting of Holy Brook.

- Negative impact on listed property at No 9 Gun Street.
- Materials, paint colour should be secured by condition.
- This proposal does not comply with policies EN1 Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment, EN3 Enhancement of Conservation Areas and EN6 New Development in a Historic Context as described in more detail below.

5.4 RBC Transport – No objection subject to a condition to secure submission and approval of a construction and demolition method statement prior to the commencement of development and pre-occupation provision of cycle and bin stores.

5.5 RBC Natural Environment Team – No objections, subject to a condition to secure submission and approval of full details of the proposed green roof.

5.6 RBC Environmental Protection – Raised initial concerns regarding the impact of noise from loud music and performance events at the proposed expanded Purple Turtle nightclub/entertainment venue on the occupiers of the adjacent flats at no. 11-12 Gun Street. Following submission of additional information from the applicant regarding the acoustic specification of the proposed extension are satisfied that the proposals are not likely to adversely impact on neighbouring occupiers of the flats when windows are closed. However, noise from the proposed development is very likely to still be audible to occupiers of the flats when windows are open during the night time and when loud music or performance events are taking place.

Are satisfied that significant efforts have been made to acoustically address noise related issues from the development but advise that given the nature of the use proposed and closeness of the adjacent flats, it is unlikely to be able to completely mitigate against noise from the development to the extent that it would be inaudible. Based upon the submitted noise assessment and given the existing nighttime noise environment at the site and along Gun Street, where there are already a number of noise producing uses, the impact on the neighbouring properties would likely be towards the low end of the scale but still with the potential to result in annoyance to occupiers of the flats when windows are open.

Notwithstanding the above, should planning permission be granted conditions to secure the following are considered necessary:

- No amplified live or recorded music to be played within the proposed green room at any time
- No use of the proposed external terrace after 2300 hours each day
- Development not to be carried out other than in strict accordance with the submitted noise assessment and mitigation details. All mitigation measures to be implemented in full prior to first occupation/use of the development.
- No installation of any plant equipment until full details and specifications, including noise assessment have been submitted and approved.
- Pre-commencement submission and approval of a construction and demolition method statement including measures to control construction noise, dust and vibration.

- No construction, demolition or associated deliveries shall take place outside the hours of 0800hrs to 1800hrs Mondays to Fridays, and 0800hrs to 1300hrs on Saturdays, and not at any time on Sundays and Bank or Statutory Holidays
- No burning of waste on site at any time
- Pre-occupation submission and approval of details of bin stores including measures to protect the stores against pests and vermin
- Pre-occupation submission and approval of premises management plan for the proposed café and nightclub/entertainment venue uses

5.7 RBC Ecology Adviser – Object given the proposal does not incorporate de-culverting of the section of the Holy Brook to the rear of the site. However, if planning permission is granted, recommend conditions to secure pre-commencement submission and approval of evidence that a Natural England licence for works that could impact bats has been obtained, details of a habitat enhancement scheme including bat bricks and tiles and details of an external lighting scheme to demonstrate how all external lighting has been designed to be wildlife friendly.

5.8 RBC Archaeology - No objection, subject to a condition to secure that the development is undertaken in full accordance with the submitted written scheme of investigation and that not part of the development is occupied until the site investigation and post investigation assessment has been completed in accordance with the programme set out in the approved written scheme of investigation.

5.9 RBC Licensing – No objection, a license for similar development has been granted at the property previously.

5.10 The Canal and River Trust – No comments.

Public consultation

5.11 Notification letters that the applications had been submitted were sent to the following nearby properties:

- No. 1, 2, no. 3-4, no. 5, no. 6, no. 7, no. 8, no. 9, no. 11-12, no. 14, no. 15 Gun Street
- Flats 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 no. 11-12 Gun Street
- No. 11, No. 11A Bridge Street
- Flat 1, 2 no. 15 Bridge Street
- The Oracle, Bridge Street
- Flats 1 to 9 Turtle Towers Bridge Street

5.12 A site notice for each application was also displayed outside the application on Gun Street on 26th April 2023.

5.13 No letters of representation have been received.

6. RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY AND GUIDANCE

6.1 Section 16(2) and 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the local planning authority to have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of special interest which it possesses.

6.2 Section 72 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the local planning authority in the exercise of its functions to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.

6.3 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (December 2024) which also states at Paragraph 11 “Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development”.

6.4 The following relevant planning policy and guidance is applicable to the assessment of this application. The following national policy, local policies and supplementary guidance is relevant in the considering of this application:

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (December 2024)

Section 2 - Achieving sustainable development
 Section 4 - Decision-making
 Section 6 - Building a strong, competitive economy
 Section 7 - Ensuring the vitality of town centres
 Section 8 - Promoting healthy and safe communities
 Section 9 - Promoting sustainable transport
 Section 11 - Making effective use of land
 Section 12 - Achieving well-designed places
 Section 14 - Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change
 Section 15 - Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
 Section 16 - Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

Reading Borough Local Plan 2019

CC1: PRESUMPTION IN FAVOUR OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
 CC2: SUSTAINABLE DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION
 CC3: ADAPTATION TO CLIMATE CHANGE
 CC5: WASTE MINIMISATION AND STORAGE
 CC6: ACCESSIBILITY AND THE INTENSITY OF DEVELOPMENT
 CC7: DESIGN AND THE PUBLIC REALM
 CC8: SAFEGUARDING AMENITY
 EN1: PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT
 EN2: AREAS OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE
 EN3: ENHANCEMENT OF CONSERVATION AREAS
 EN5: PROTECTION OF SIGNIFICANT VIEWS WITH HERITAGE INTEREST
 EN6: NEW DEVELOPMENT IN A HISTORIC CONTEXT
 EN11: WATERSPACES
 EN12: BIODIVERSITY AND THE GREEN NETWORK
 EN15: AIR QUALITY
 EN16: POLLUTION AND WATER RESOURCES
 EN17: NOISE GENERATING EQUIPMENT
 EN18: FLOODING AND DRAINAGE
 EM3: LOSS OF EMPLOYMENT LAND

EM4: MAINTAINING A VARIETY OF PREMISES
TR1: ACHIEVING THE TRANSPORT STRATEGY
TR3: ACCESS, TRAFFIC AND HIGHWAY-RELATED MATTERS
TR5: CAR AND CYCLE PARKING AND ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING
RL1: NETWORK AND HIERARCHY OF CENTRES
RL2: SCALE AND LOCATION OF RETAIL, LEISURE AND CULTURE DEVELOPMENT
RL6: PROTECTION OF LEISURE FACILITIES AND PUBLIC HOUSES
OU5: SHOPFRONTS AND CASH MACHINES
CR1: DEFINITION OF CENTRAL READING
CR2: DESIGN IN CENTRAL READING
CR3: PUBLIC REALM IN CENTRAL READING
CR4: LEISURE, CULTURE AND TOURISM IN CENTRAL READING
CR5: DRINKING ESTABLISHMENTS IN CENTRAL READING
CR7: PRIMARY FRONTAGES IN CENTRAL READING

Supplementary Planning Documents

Sustainable Design and Construction (2019)
Revised Parking Standards and Design (2011)
Design Guide to Shopfronts (2022)

Other relevant documents

St Mary Butts / Castle St Conservation Area Statement
Reading Borough Council Tree Strategy (March 2021)
Reading Biodiversity Action Plan (March 2021)
Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 2: Managing Significance in Decision-Taking (Historic England, 2015)
Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: 3 (2nd Edition) The Setting of Heritage Assets (Historic England, 2017)
Reading Historic Area Assessment (Feb 2023)

Local Plan Update

- 6.5 The current version of the Local Plan (adopted in November 2019) turned five years old on Tuesday 5th November 2024. The Local Plan was reviewed in March 2023 and around half of the policies in the plan are considered still up to date. However, the rest need to be considered for updating to reflect changing circumstances and national policy. A consultation version of the draft updated version of the Local Plan was published on 6th November 2024.
- 6.6 Although there is a five-year period for carrying out a review of a plan after it is adopted, nothing in the NPPF or elsewhere says that policies automatically become “out of date” when they are five years old. It is a matter of planning judgement rather than legal fact whether a plan or policies within it are out-of-date. This will depend on whether they have been overtaken by things that have happened since the plan was adopted, either on the ground or through changes in national policy, for example.
- 6.7 Officer advice in respect of the Local Plan policies pertinent to these applications listed above is that they remain in accordance with national policy and that the objectives of those policies

remains very similar in the draft updated Local Plan. Therefore, they can continue to be afforded weight in the determination of this planning application and are not considered to be 'out of date'.

7. APPRAISAL

7.1 The main issues are considered to be:

- A) Principle of development – land use matters
- B) Flood risk, the water environment and natural environment matters
- C) Design and heritage matters
- E) Amenity matters
- F) Transport matters
- G) Archaeology matters
- H) Sustainability matters

A) Principle of development – land use matters

7.2 In terms of the proposed Class E(a) cafe use to the ground first and second floor of the principal part of the building (fronting Gun Street), this would involve the loss of an existing (in lawful use terms at least) Class E(g)(i) office use at the site. Given both the existing and proposed uses of this part of the development are within use Class E (commercial business and service) planning permission to change between these sub-sections of the same use is not required. Nonetheless, with regard to policy EM3 (Loss of Employment Land), also having regard to the various previous permissions in the recent past for similar Class E uses (previously referred to as Class A1 shop and Class A3 restaurant uses under the 2020 superseded version of the Use Classes Order) at the site, no issues are raised with the loss of the existing (lawful) office use. In particular, it is noted that the building has been vacant for over two decades. The principle of the proposed Class E(a) café use in this location, within an existing active frontage, the primary shopping area and central core of the Reading Central Area) would also accord with Policies CR1 (Definition of Central Reading) and CR7 (Primary Frontages in Central Reading) in terms of where such uses are sought to be located within the town centre.

7.3 The proposals also seek that parts of the enlarged premises at no. 10 Gun Street would also, at times, be used as an extension of the existing Sui Generis nightclub/bar/entertainment venue use at the adjoining premises at no. 9 Gun Street (Purple Turtle). A series of openings are proposed to link the two buildings internally and externally from the rear yard areas of both buildings and the provision of a hall/multi-purpose performance space within the proposed ground floor rear extension to no. 10. It is understood that this would allow greater flexibility and capacity for club nights and live performances at the premises. As can be seen from the planning history section of this report above, a similar extension of the Purple Turtle nightclub use into no. 10 Gun Street and internal and external links between the two buildings were granted under planning permission ref. 151281 (and listed building consent ref. 151282). It is proposed that the now sought space would be used flexibly with the applicant advising it would be used for a variety of u18 events, business and community events during the day and as an entertainment space during evening/nighttime hours, as an expansion to the Purple Turtle for

club nights and live performances such as music or comedy. The proposed basement area would instead be used to provide an additional cellar, storage space and toilets.

7.4 In land use principle terms, the proposals seek an extension to an existing town centre Sui Generis use at the Purple Turtle which would comply with the principles of Policies CR1 (Definition of Central Reading), CR4 (Leisure, Culture and Tourism in Central Reading), CR5 (Drinking Establishments in Central Reading) which support such night time economy uses within the town centre as long as they would not give rise to adverse impact on the amenity of nearby residents and other town centre uses, and that the location of such uses is accessible to current and proposed night-time public transport services. The amenity and transport sections of this report below will consider these impacts of the proposals in more detail in terms of the intensification of the use proposed. Subject to no unacceptable impacts being identified in respect of these matters no overriding land use concerns are identified in relation to the proposed development.

B) Flood risk, the water environment, landscaping, ecology and biodiversity

7.5 The majority of the site is located within Flood Zone 1 which are defined as areas having the lowest risk of flooding. The rear part of the site is also located over a culverted section of the Holy Brook, which the Environment Agency (EA) classify as a main river and therefore within Flood Zone 3, which are areas at high risk of flooding. The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) sets out that a sequential test should be applied to development proposals within flood zones 2 and 3 in order to identify and direct development to alternative sites at a lower risk of flooding if available. In this instance the proposals do not seek to substantially build directly over the culverted section of the Holy Brook (land within Flood Zone 3) where, as is existing, a small yard area is proposed. Two external light weight and non-structural stair cases would cross over the land and connect the proposed rear extension with the proposed ancillary building either side of the culverted channel. Given the land above the culvert would remain as a yard area as existing and free from built development the sequential test is not considered to need to be applied in this instance. All parts of the site where new built development is proposed are within flood zone 1.

7.6 The NPPG classifies the café use proposed as 'less vulnerable' in terms of flood risk, while drinking establishments and nightclubs are classified as 'more vulnerable' and identifies that both uses are appropriate within flood zone 1. The NPPG also sets out that new development within the vicinity of a watercourse should be constructed such that it does not detrimentally impact on flow routes or reduce available floodplain storage which could increase flood risk on-site or elsewhere. However, in this instance given this section of the Holy Brook is culverted it has no flood plain outside of the culverted channel. The height of the culvert walls either side of the channel mean that the flow of water is contained within the canalised concrete channel up to the predicted 1 in 100 year plus an allowance for climate change flood level and therefore flooding at the worst predicted level for this location would be fully contained within the culvert. Therefore, the proposed extensions and outbuildings would not impinge upon floodplain land and no flood plain compensation or mitigation works are required or proposed as part of the development to accommodate the proposed Sui Generis use.

7.7 The submitted FRA also demonstrates that continuous safe access and egress for the development is available from the front door of the building on to Gun Street and pedestrian route running past the rear of the site which are both within flood zone 1. Due to floor levels

the FRA identifies that during a 1 in 100 year rainfall event (plus an allowance for climate change) surface water could flow into the basement via the internal stairs from Gun Street at the front of the site. The basement is proposed to include stores and toilets for customers, therefore the risk of flooding to occupants of the basement would only occur if they were in the basement during opening hours and surface water enters the building via the open doors at the front entrance at the peak of an extreme rainfall event. Officers concur with the findings of the submitted FRA, that in such an event there would be sufficient warning of this happening for occupants to safely exit the basement to higher ground via exits to the front and rear of the site.

- 7.8 In terms of drainage, it is proposed that rain and surface water rainwater would be collected and discharged directly into the Holy Brook to the rear of the site, which is an existing arrangement. There would be no worsening of drainage at the site which is covered entirely in built form and hardstanding. The proposed green roof would ensure an improvement in the drainage conditions at the site.
- 7.9 In overall terms the proposals are considered to be acceptable from a flood risk perspective, subject to a condition to ensure the development is carried out full in accordance with the submitted flood risk assessment.
- 7.10 Whilst the Environment Agency do not object to the proposals on the flood risk grounds, they do object to the planning application on the basis that it is not proposed to de-culvert the section of the Holy Brook that crosses the rear of the site. Therefore, as per section 5 above, the EA considers that the proposal fails to restore the ecological value of the Holy Brook to its condition prior to culverting and fails to provide the opportunity for de-culverting to take place in the future.
- 7.11 In this respect it is noted that a previously consented scheme for a similar development from 2016 (ref. 151281) included part de-culverting of the Holy Brook through the rear of the site. This aspect of the scheme was strongly supported by both the EA and LPA from an environmental perspective. However, a different scheme for another similar development was then given planning permission in 2020 (ref. 191243) which did not include de-culverting of the Holy Brook. The EA objected to this previous application at that time for the same reasons as now, but planning permission was granted for the development. This was on the basis that the benefits of the development, most notably in terms restoration and re-use of a listed building currently in a poor condition, were considered to outweigh the environmental harm that would result from maintaining the poor environmental condition of this small section of the Holy Brook as a result of its culverted form.
- 7.12 The applicant's justification for not proposing to de-culvert this section of the Holy Brook is the same now as was given under the 2020 permission (ref. 191243). More specifically, the cost involved in these works for such a small section of the Holy Brook would be disproportionate and would mean the development, as a whole, would not be viable. The applicant's state that this is the reason why the 2015 scheme (ref. 151281) was not progressed. The EA, and RBC Ecology Adviser, are of the view that, as per the 2020 permission (ref. 191243), such rationale is insufficient that de-culverting has not been adequately explored or considered as part of the current application.

7.13 Engineered river channels have little ecologically valuable habitat and there would clearly be benefit in this respect from opening up (de-culverting) and enhancing the Holy Brook. The restoration and enhancement of such watercourses is an objective of Policy EN11 (Waterspaces) of the RBC Local plan. This is also supported by paragraph 187 of the NPPF (December 2024) which recognise that the planning system should conserve and enhance the environment and site of ecological and biodiversity value.

7.14 In this instance, given the culverted Holy Brook is an existing situation, the proposal itself cannot be said to be worsening the condition of the Holy Brook, rather it is not taking this opportunity to de-culvert this section of the channel and provide the associated ecological improvements to the Holy Brook that this could result in. A River Condition Assessment report has been submitted with the application which concludes that the current culverted section of the watercourse running through the site provides very limited biodiversity value in its current state, noting that DEFRA identify culverted watercourses as being habitats of low distinctiveness and that no aquatic or emergent vegetation is evident within this section of the culvert. The report sets out that this section of the Holy Brook is only of current value ecologically in terms of species commuting through it, such as fresh water invertebrates but that there are negligible sheltering and foraging opportunities within the culvert.

7.15 Whilst the 2015 proposals (ref. 151281) for the site, which included de-culverting, are clearly preferable and are referenced by the EA in their objection, the LPA are unable to withhold planning permission on the basis that a current proposal no longer contains elements that a previous 'more desirable' proposal contained in the past, hence the granting of the 2020 permission (ref. 191243) which did not include de-culverting. Every planning application must be considered on their own merits, against the Local Plan and the existing use of the land at the time of the application.

7.16 Policy EN11 (Waterspaces) states that Reading's waterspaces will not only be protected but enhanced but that development in the vicinity of watercourses will pursue opportunities for deculverting of watercourses (Officer emphasis). In addition, supporting paragraph 4.2.48 of Policy EN11 states that 'Development should seek to increase the prominence of the Holy Brook, and open up the brook for public access, as well as consider any opportunities for deculverting it, which will provide ecological and potentially flood risk benefits' (Officer emphasis). Policy EN12 (Biodiversity and the Green Network) is also relevant and states that '*the green network which includes all of the Thames tributaries, shall be maintained, protected, consolidated, extended and enhanced*'. Point c) states that '*On all sites, development should ... provide a net gain for biodiversity wherever possible.*'

7.17 The current applications have been under consideration for some time with much of this spent awaiting further advice from the EA and officers pressing the applicant to consider incorporating de-culverting within the proposed development. The applicant has been consistent throughout the process that the works involved to de-culvert such a small section of the Holy Brook would make the development unviable. Therefore, the current proposal would effectively maintain the status quo position at the site whereby this section of the Holy Brook remains culverted and covered by hardstanding. In this respect it cannot be said that the proposals would result in harm to the Holy Brook in terms of its ecology and biodiversity but that it would not result in the ecological and biodiversity benefits to the watercourse that Policies EN11 and EN12 aspire to achieve. Notwithstanding this, the development would still provide for a net gain in biodiversity at the site as whole through the provision of the proposed

green roof and also a series of bat and bird boxes and tiles and therefore satisfy the requirements of Policy EN12, as was the case with the 2020 permitted scheme (ref. 191243) which also did not include de-culverting.

7.18 Officer's consider that the proposals would still allow for de-culverting to occur in future given the part of the site directly above the culverted channel is proposed to be retained as a hardstanding yard area free from ground based built form, with just two light weight non-structural staircases proposed above and crossing the land to connect the proposed rear extension and outbuilding either side of the culverted watercourse channel. Therefore, it is not considered that the proposals would preclude the environmental benefits of de-culverting this section of the Holy Brook from being pursued in future, as sought by Policy EN11.

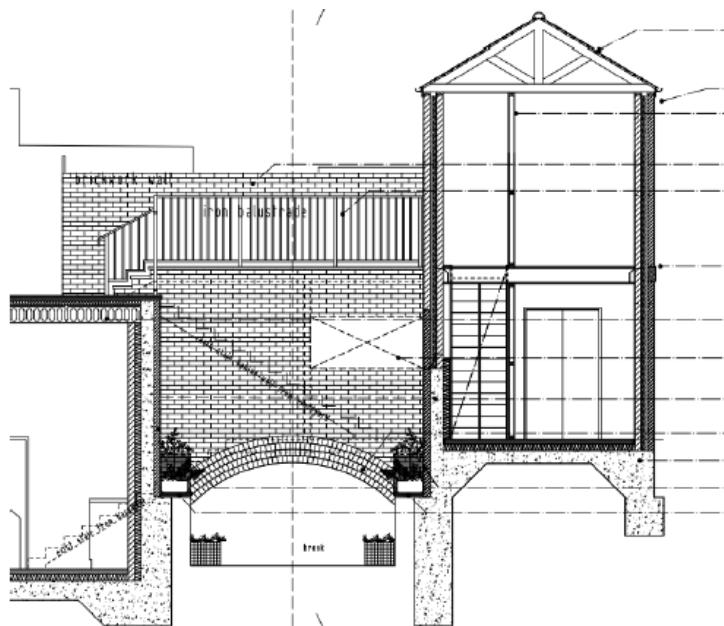
7.19 In addition to ecological and biodiversity matters, Policy EN11 (Waterspaces) also requires that development in the vicinity of watercourses should enhance the visual relationships of buildings, spaces and routes to the watercourse and make positive contributions to the character and appearance of watercourse. In this respect the culverted nature of the section of the watercourse crossing the site is such that it is entirely covered over with hardstanding. Therefore, it is not visible from within or from outside of the site and is of no discernible character. The wider site is also long term vacant and in poor condition, meaning it itself does not contribute positively to the character of the watercourse. It is therefore difficult, given the existing context at the site, to argue that the proposals would result in any significant visual harm to the watercourse. Whether in its current permitted use as Class E office use or the proposed Class E/Sui Generis use, there is also no restriction on the land above the water course being used in connection with the main use of the building, as it can be at present.

7.20 The culverted section of the watercourse is also not located adjacent to the rear boundary of the site such that even if de-culverting did occur development or boundary treatment (such as for security reasons) beyond the southern edge of the channel directly adjacent to the rear boundary of the site and the pedestrian route to the rear of The Oracle could still occur. This would mean the Holy Brook would still not be visible from public areas. This was the case for the 2016 permission (ref. 151281), where part de-culverting was proposed but a two storey outbuilding was also approved beyond the southern edge of the channel, meaning the development, if carried out, would have provided visual benefit to views from within the site on privately owned land, but not from public areas. Therefore, whilst providing some visual enhancement and improvement of the watercourse's relationship with surrounding buildings, this provided limited wider public benefit. Given the 3 most recent applications at the site have included a 2 or 3 storey ancillary buildings adjacent to the rear boundary which would screen views of the location of the Holy Brook, it cannot be assumed that de-culverting would result in significant improvement in terms of the visibility and visual relationship of this section of the Holy Brook with the character of the surrounding area.

7.21 It is also pertinent to note that the relationship of the current proposal with the culverted channel is different than that which was proposed and considered to be acceptable under the 2020 permission (ref. 191243). Under the 2020 permission (not implemented and now lapsed) the area directly adjacent to and over the culverted brook was proposed as an outdoor seating area associated with the proposed ground floor café use. This meant that there was a 6m set back from the proposed ground floor extension to the north edge of the culverted channel, albeit a 3 storey outbuilding was permitted directly abutting the southern edge of the culverted channel. Under the current proposals it is proposed to build right up to both edges of the

culverted channel but has removed the previously permitted outdoor seating area. The applicant explains that this is to provide the amount of indoor space required for the hall/performance space proposed with the ground floor rear extension and make this proposed venue viable. As per the 2020 permission (ref. 191243) a 3 storey outbuilding to the southern edge of the culverted channel is proposed to be replicated as part of the current application.

7.22 Officers consider this change to the proposed development and removal of the previously proposed outdoor seating area and set back of the single storey rear extension from the north edge of the culverted channel to be disappointing. The Officer view is that this would have provided a pleasant outdoor space next to the channel, that should de-culverting occur in the future, would have provided a nice waterside seating area. However, in response the Applicant has advised that such a seating area was also proposed for the 2016 permission (ref. 151281) where de-culverting was proposed, but that the difference in ground levels between the site and the lower level of the Holy Brook are such that the channel itself would not have been readily visible from the seating area. Instead, it would have been a dark cavern and sudden drop to the water level, such that in reality the relationship with the channel would have been of limited visual benefit to persons using the outdoor seating area and viewing the Holy Brook from within the site.



Section from 2016 consented scheme showing high level of rear yard amenity area compared to part de-culverted section of the Holy Brook

7.23 In respect of the above and requirements of Policy EN11, the LPA and the owner of the site have 'pursued opportunities' for de-culverting of this watercourse over a number of years, as part of various development proposals on the site. In respecting the applicant's decision not to pursue de-culverting, additional options were explored to improve biodiversity on the site given the site's current level of hardstanding, including provision of a large area of green roof and additional of bat and bird boxes and tiles. Therefore, whilst the LPA would of course have preferred de-culverting to be pursued, the tests required by Policy EN11 and EN12 of the Local Plan, namely to 'pursue' and 'consider' any 'opportunities' for de-culverting, have been adequately discharged.

7.24 Separate to the planning regime, the land owner would be required to obtain an environmental permit from the Environment Agency for any activities which will take place on or within 8 metres of a culvert (Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2016). Therefore, the EA would need to be satisfied that the proposals are acceptable within the context of their own environment rules and regulations in order for the owner to obtain such a permit.

7.25 The application is accompanied by an Ecology Report, including bat survey, which identifies the presence of four existing pipistrelle roosts to the roof of the existing building and that the existing rear yard area is used by foraging bats and birds. The applicant would therefore be required to obtain a license from Natural England prior to commencement of development to ensure that suitable mitigation is put in place during construction works to protect the identified bats and roosts. The River Condition Assessment submitted with the application also recommends a number of measures to be included within a construction method statement to protect the Holy Brook from pollutants, including dust and mud controls, constriction stage drainage strategy and for chemicals and fuels to be stored within secure and bunded containers and that spill kits are provided on site at all times.

7.26 The development is considered acceptable from a flood risk, water and natural environment perspective, with compliance with the relevant tests of the Local Plan and with due regard to all other material considerations. Conditions are recommended to secure to secure implementation of the development in accordance with the submitted flood risk assessment, submission and approval of a scheme of biodiversity enhancements (including bat and bird boxes and tiles), detailed landscaping scheme relating to the proposed green roof, a detailed external lighting scheme, details of Natural England licence for works that could impact bats and measures to be included within a construction method statement to protect the Holy Brook from pollutants.

C) Design and Heritage matters

7.27 As detailed in paragraph 2.3 the application site comprises an early 18th century Grade II Listed building in a very poor state of repair with some elements unsafe structurally as witnessed on the officer site visit.

7.28 The building sits centrally within a wider terrace of two and three storey grade II listed buildings fronting Gun Street (no.s 7 to 15). The buildings are all dated from the 19th century, consisting of timber shopfronts with red brick and timber sash windows to upper floors (except no. 15), but have all been subject to variety of modern alterations, particularly to the shopfronts and addition of modern rear extensions. The grade I listed St Marys Church and grounds are located opposite the application site on Gun Street.

7.29 The application site also sits within the St Marys Butts/Castle Street Conservation Area. The RBC St Marys/Butts/Castle Street Conservation Area Appraisal (2008) identifies that elements of this part of the conservation area that contribute to its significance include St Mary's Church as a local landmark building, traditional shop frontages in Gun Street; The Holy Brook which links the rears (albeit partly in a listed culvert) of the properties in Castle Street and Gun Street on their south sides (culvert to the rear of no. 10 Gun Street is not listed) and also railings at the front of several properties on the south side of Gun Street and Castle Street. The Conservation Area Appraisal also identifies negative features of this part of the conservation

area including noise and pollution from traffic, modern highway and street furniture, non-traditional shopfronts to Gun Street and the proximity and scale of The Oracle, which dominates the rear of the properties to Gun Street.

7.30 Local Authorities are required by Section 66 and Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of Conservation Areas and effects upon listed buildings or their setting when considering development proposals that affect the setting or views into it. This is reflected locally within Policies EN1 (Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment) and EN3 (Enhancement of Conservation Areas) which requires proposals to protect and where possible enhance the character and appearance of heritage assets including listed buildings and conservation areas. More generally Policy CC7 (Design and The Public Realm) requires that new development maintains and enhances the character of the surrounding area.



Existing rear elevation of no. 10 Gun Street

7.31 The proposed internal and external alterations to the grade II listed building to facilitate the proposed development are similar to that permitted under the previous planning permission and listed building consents granted at the site (ref. 151281FUL/151282LBC and 191243FUL/191244LBC). Like the previous proposals, the current applications have been subject to consideration and discussion with the RBC Conservation Officer, including review of the detailed Heritage Statement and Conservation Management Plan submitted with the applications. The Conservation Officer, in reviewing the current application, is mindful of the recent planning history at the site and previously permitted works and alterations to the listed building. The officer is broadly content with the proposals and does not object, subject to a range of conditions to be applied to the listed building consent.

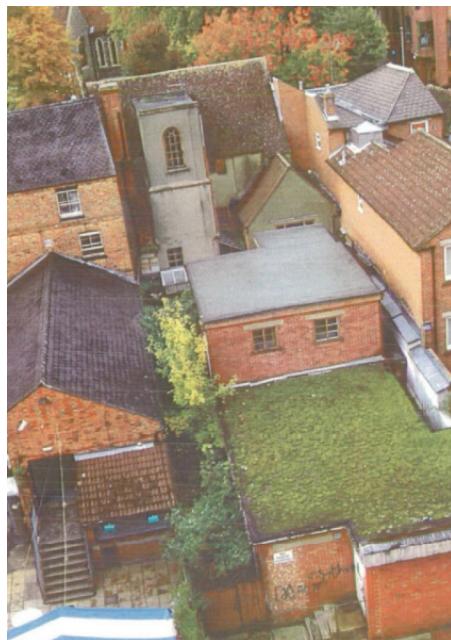
7.32 The Conservation Officer, having visited the site, notes the poor condition and deteriorated state of the existing building. In particular, the semi-derelict condition of the rear elevation following earlier demolition work that has been undertaken and removal of previous modern rear extensions, the poor condition of the front elevation of the building in terms of its timber shopfront and upper floor windows, as well as the negative impact of previous internal alterations to the original layout of the building and the poor state of upkeep of the remaining internal rooms. In its current form and appearance, the building does not contribute positively to the surrounding St Marys Butts/Castle Steet Conservation Area when viewed from the front from Gun Street and also from the rear from the pedestrian route connecting Bridge Street to The Oracle.

7.33 In terms of the internal alterations proposed, these largely reflect those changes approved under previous applications in terms of opening up the ground and first floors to form a more open plan layout for the proposed café use, significant enlargement of the proposed basement level of accommodation and recessing of the existing front entrance door to the building from Gun Street. A notable difference with the previous consents at the site is the insertion of a doorway opening at ground floor level to link no. 10 with the Purple Turtle next door, in order to provide the proposed extended night club use. Historically the buildings are separate entities, so providing these doorways results in loss of some original fabric along the shared party wall albeit, to a small degree, and also alters the historic function of the buildings as separate premises. It is pertinent to note that a doorway opening between the two buildings was previously consented under planning permission 151281 and listed building consent 151282 which was located at basement level, and this is also proposed to be provided as part of this application. Other intrusions to original fabric of the listed building include installation of a hoist between the basement and second floor level to assist with function of the café, however, again, installation of a hoist has been previously approved at the site.

7.34 In terms of external extensions to the listed building, these relate to the proposed part two part single storey rear extension, which again reflects the approach taken to extensions under previous applications. The Conservation Officer notes that the single storey element of the proposed rear extension would be significantly greater in size than the previously consented and would practically fill the entirety of the existing rear yard up to the north edge of the culverted Holy Brook channel. The single storey extension would also be significant in height with a parapet height of 5.2m in order to accommodate the proposed hall/performance space. However, the proposals would be smaller than the previously consented schemes at first floor level, in terms of rear projection with a modest flat roof stucco render and glazed element proposed. The single storey element proposed would also be a simple clean construction of white stucco render.

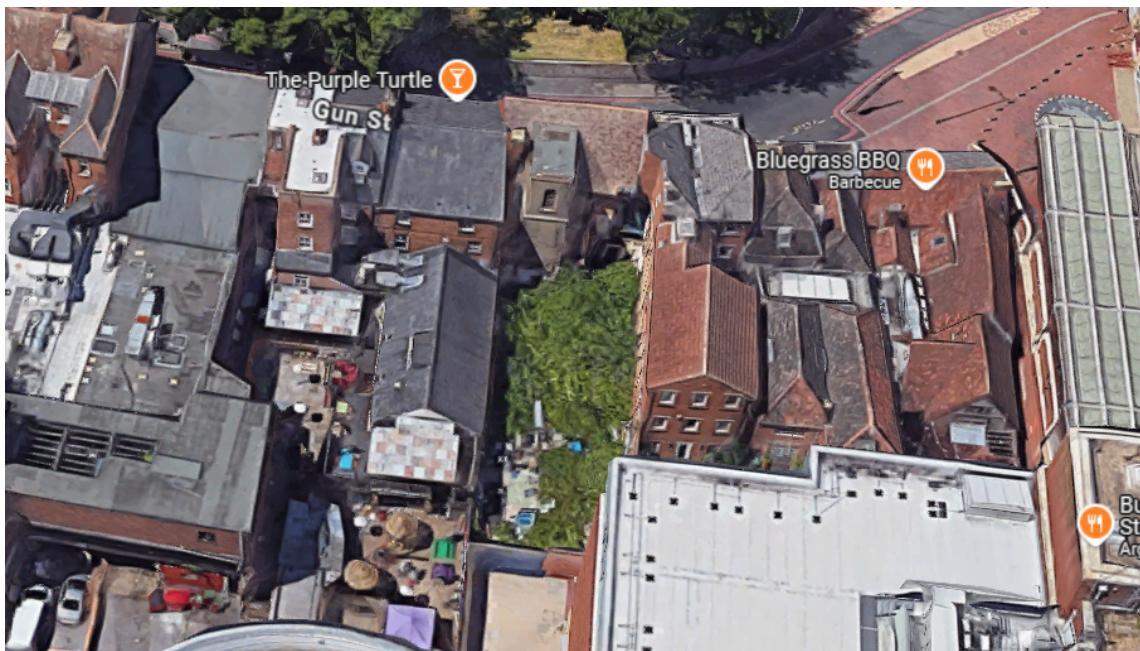
7.35 The proposed single storey element is large and reasonable to say somewhat out of proportion with the host listed building. Owing to its height, it would largely obscure the existing rear elevation. Whilst the rear elevation of the building is of less significance and architectural merit than the front, it is clear that the proposed extensions as result of their scale would result in a level of harm to the buildings character and significance and how it is viewed from within the surrounding conservation area to the rear. Albeit the most notably feature of the existing rear elevation is the turret style stair projection which projects up to roof level and would be retained and restored as part of the proposed development. Furthermore, due to its high level, it would still be visible to views from the rear of the site.

7.36 Notwithstanding the above, it can be noted that the previous modern part two part single storey rear extensions to the building that were removed in 2017 were also significant in size, as can be seen from the photograph below.



Rear of no. 10 before demolition of previous modern extension

7.37 Furthermore, the other listed buildings within the Gun Street terrace have also all been subject to similar significant rear extensions of a variety of styles and material finishes as can be seen from the aerial image below, which at present dominate the rear of no. 10 and obscure views to its rear elevation.



Existing rear extensions to Gun Street properties (no. 10 can be identified by the cleared rear yard with overgrown vegetation)

7.38 The proposed three storey red brick ancillary outbuilding to the south side of the culverted Holy Brook and abutting the rear boundary of the site would also obscure views of the

proposed rear extensions and would be the most visible element of the proposals from the public realm area to the rear of the site. This building would be red brick with stone string line course detail, a shallow gable pitched tile roof, white painted timber windows and painted metal doors at ground level to provide service access and fire exits from the site on to the adjacent rear pedestrian route to the rear of The Oracle. This building is identical to that permitted under the previous 2020 permission (ref. 191243) and its proposed design and use of materials is considered sympathetic to the red brick nature of the principal buildings to this part of Gun Street. The change in levels across the site, which drop down from Gun Street to the pedestrian route to the rear, mean the outbuilding would be set at the same roof level as the two storey element of the proposed extension. Given the variety and scale of rear extensions found to the rear of the site, as well as the dominance of the adjacent The Oracle shopping centre, it is considered that the building would integrate satisfactorily with surrounding character and would preserve the setting of the host and wider terrace of grade II listed buildings and to views within the part of the conservation area to the rear of the site.

7.39 Overall, and for the reasons discussed above, officers identify that the proposed internal and external alterations and extensions to the building would result in a degree of harm to the historic character and significance of the host listed building. Officers, and the Council's Conservation Officer, conclude that this harm would be 'less than substantial' harm at a low level (as per the NPPF), given the rear of the building where the extension would be located is considered to be of less important architecturally than the principle front elevation of the building, the current poor and semi-derelict condition of the building and degree to which it has been altered in the past. Similarly low levels of less than substantial harm is also identified to the setting of the St Marys Butts/Caste Street Conservation Area, given views of the building from the rear would be more limited, the utilitarian back of house service area character of this part of the conservation area, and also given this part of the conservation area is subject to the existing visually dominant large scale rear extensions and development which already impinge upon views of the rear of the site, most notably The Oracle shopping centre. Negligible impacts are identified to the setting of other surrounding listed buildings and no harm is considered to result from the proposed development to the principal front elevation of the building and the more significant part of the conservation area to the front of the site.

7.40 In accordance with Paragraph 215 of the NPPF (December 2024) the low level of 'less than substantial harm' identified to the significance of the heritage assets falls to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposed development as part of the wider planning balance assessment. This weighing up exercise will be undertaken within the conclusion section of this report.

7.41 With regard to the above it is identified that a number of specific heritage benefits would also result from the proposed development. Most notably in terms of bringing a long term vacant listed building which is in a very poor state of repair back into a viable use. This weighs in favour of these proposals. The application is also accompanied by a conservation management plan which sets out how parts of the existing building would be repaired and restored as part of the proposed conversion and extension works. This includes:

- Cleaning and repointing of any defective brickwork
- Cleaning and repainting of iron railings to the Gun Street frontage
- Cleaning and repainting of timber shopfront
- Repair and repainting of all existing timber sash windows

- Repair replacement and repainting of all rainwater goods
- Repair and repainting of stucco band
- Repair and repainting of doorcase
- Repair and making good of internal walls, ceilings and floors
- Retention and restoration of exposed timber beams, dado panelling, open-well staircase (including, balusters, string, newel and handrails) and other decorative features
- Retention and restoration of existing fireplace

7.42 A series of detailed listed building conditions are recommended to secure submission and approval of details, specifications, methodology, material details and drawings of the above proposed works to the listed building. The conditions would require completion of all the works in accordance with approved details prior to first use/occupation of the proposed development.

D) Amenity matters

7.43 Policy CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity) seeks to protect the amenity of existing surrounding occupiers. Policy EN15 (Air Quality) and Policy EN16 (Pollution and Water Resources) seeks to protect surrounding occupiers from the impact of pollution.

7.44 The proposals, most notably the expanded Purple Turtle nightclub and entertainment venue use in terms of music and patron noise, have the potential to result in noise and disturbance to nearby residential occupiers. The closest residential occupiers are flats to the upper floors of no. 11-12 Gun Street adjacent to the site to the east. There are already a number of nearby late night noise producing premises on Gun Street, including the existing Purple Turtle nightclub and entertainment venue at no. 9, Gun Street Garden nightclub at no. 5-6 Gun Street and Be at One bar at no. 1-2 Gun Street.

7.45 Given the close proximity of the residential occupiers at no. 11-12 Gun Street, noise transmission from playing of loud music and live performances within the parts of the building to be used by the expanded nightclub/entertainment venue use have been highlighted as a concern by RBC Environmental Protection Officers. It is proposed that the expanded Purple Turtle use would operate at the same licensed hours as the existing Purple Turtle premises, which is 1100 to 0400 hours each day. In response to this, the applicant has provided more detailed information about the construction of the proposed extensions and their acoustic treatment to accompany the noise assessment submitted with the planning application. This sets out that any new walls would be constructed with a high specification acoustically designed structure and would be entirely separate to, and not attached to, the shared walls of no. 11-12 Gun Street. Whilst there is a shared wall with no. 11-12 at the front of the existing building, this is where the proposed café use would be located, and this part of the building would not be used by the proposed expanded Purple Turtle nightclub and live entertainment use.

7.46 The acoustic proposals for the proposed rear extension include a number of measures focused on insulating against noise transmission from the premises, including low frequency sounds associated with bass. The acoustic proposals include provision of a dense masonry and cavity block walls with high specific insulation boards and wool, high performance acoustic ceiling and high performance acoustic steel doors.

7.47 Based upon the proposed acoustic performance and specifications of the rear extension, where the expanded nightclub and entertainment use would be located, the submitted noise assessment models that during loud events noise levels within the adjacent flats would not exceed recommended internal noise levels for residential properties. The noise levels are modelled upon those found at similar nightclub and live performance venues, which is standard practice.

7.48 However, the report does model that when windows are open during the evening or night-time when loud entertainment noise is occurring the noise at the adjacent flats with rear facing windows will be audible, particularly low frequency noise. The report states that this is unlikely to be any greater or different to the existing noise climate at the site, given the proximity of existing nearby late night noise producing premises. The noise assessment models that the noise level outside of the rear flat windows would be 39dbA which is 2db below the existing nighttime background noise level of 41db at the site.

7.49 The noise report states that the lower the modelled noise is relative to the measured background sound level, the less likely it is that the specific sound source will have an adverse impact or a significant adverse impact. Where the rating level does not exceed the background sound level, this is an indication of the specific sound sources having a low impact, depending on the context. Albeit noise being below the prevailing background noise level doesn't necessarily mean inaudible.

7.50 For residential premises it is targeted (within British Standard noise technical document ref. BS4142:2014 A2019) that sources of noise should be 10 dB below the background noise level. At this level, new noise would be far enough below the underlying background noise level such that during lulls in the noise climate the new noise source would not be readily distinguishable against the acoustic environment. However, this is not achieved for the proposed development with a noise level of 2 dB below background projected outside of the flats which, would be audible to occupiers of the adjacent flats with windows open.

7.51 The noise report acknowledges that the nature of the use proposed use, and particularly generation of low frequency noise, means controlling noise break-out is very challenging and that the building has been designed to the limit of what is practicable to construct in terms of acoustic performance. The report also notes that the noise impact should be considered in the context of the site's location within the Reading Town Centre, where there are a number of other bars and venues in the area contributing to the noise climate, including the existing operational venue at The Purple Turtle.

7.52 RBC Environmental Protection Officers have reviewed the noise assessment submitted and consider that it is has been carried out to a high standard and proposes significant measures in an attempt to acoustically insulate the extended part of the building and prevent noise transmission and breakout. Whilst predicted noise levels within the adjacent flats are not of concern, it is clear some additional noise would be audible during loud noise events when occupiers of the flats to the rear have their windows open. Based upon the proposed modelling it is considered reasonable to conclude that this additional noise impact would not be significant, given the existing background noise levels at the site, albeit this does not mean there is not potential for annoyance to the adjacent occupiers. There is also a degree of uncertainty attached to the modelled noise projections and the acoustic performance of the building will not be able to be verified until built. RBC Environmental Protection Officers are

satisfied that significant efforts have been made to acoustically address noise related issues from the development but advise that given the nature of the use proposed and closeness of the adjacent flats, it is unlikely to be able to completely mitigate against noise from the development to the extent that it would be inaudible.

7.53 RBC Environmental Protection Officers conclude that the proposals are likely to have an adverse impact upon the amenity of the occupiers of the adjacent flats, in terms of audible nighttime noise with windows open. However, based upon the modelled projections and the existing night time noise environment at the site, the additional impact is considered to be towards the low end of the scale but still with the potential to result in annoyance.

7.54 This adverse impact on the existing adjacent residential occupiers will need to be considered as part of the overall planning balance assessment for the proposals. This is in respect of conflict with Policies CC8 and EN16, which seek that development does not result in detrimental impacts upon the living environment of existing and proposed occupiers in terms of noise and disturbances.

7.55 Notwithstanding the above, there is also potential for noise breakout from the proposed first floor external terrace area. Given the external nature of the terrace noise spill from this area is difficult to control there is the and therefore a condition is recommended to restrict use of all external areas to between the hours of 0800 and 2300 hours each day and for use by the café only to protect the residential amenity of the occupiers of the adjacent flats. RBC Environmental Protection Officers also recommend a condition to stipulate that there shall no playing of amplified live or recorded music within the green room proposed within the outbuilding to the rear of the site, given this separate building would not be subject to the same level of acoustic performance as the extensions to the building.

7.56 The proposed café use would operate within the original part of the listed building at the front of the site and as such would share existing party walls within no. 11-12 Gun Street next door. This use does not present significant concerns in terms of noise and disturbance matters; however, the acoustic performance of this part of the building would not be as efficient as the new build extensions to the rear. As such, a condition is recommended to limit the hours of use of the cafe use to 0800-0000 hours each day in order to protect the residential amenity of the adjoining residential occupiers to the upper floors of no. 11-12 Gun Street. The same hours limitation has been applied to previously permitted café uses at the site and is in also in place for similar nearby uses, such as at no. 15 Gun Street (Bluegrass restaurant) and is therefore considered reasonable.

7.57 The proposed layout of the building presents possibilities that the proposed café and nightclub uses may blend unless this is strictly controlled. Management of these two distinct uses it considered necessary in order to protect the amenity of nearby residential occupiers, the main concern is if the expanded nightclub use were to stray into the parts of the building shown for café use (i.e those areas to front of the building fronting Gun Street where the acoustic performance of the building would not be as high as the extended parts, which have been specifically acoustically design for such a use). In this respect a condition is recommended to stipulate that no part of the building shown on the proposed plans as being for café use is to be used for the nightclub use proposed elsewhere within the development. A further condition is also recommended to secure submission and approval of management plan for the premises to set out measures and controls that will be put in place by the owner and

management team to ensure the café and nightclub uses remain separate, as well as additional controls and mitigation to manage wider noise impacts of the proposed development, such as managing patrons.

- 7.58 A condition is recommended and considered reasonable to stipulate that deliveries, collection of empty bottles and waste collections shall not be carried out between the hours of 20:00 to 08:00 Monday to Saturdays and 20:00 to 10:00 on Sundays and Bank Holidays. This is in order to mitigate potential noise from these activities given the close proximity of nearby residential occupiers.
- 7.59 The application sets out that the café use proposed would not involve on-site cooking and would mainly serve drinks, cold food and food that is heated up. As such there are not considered to be any concerns about food odours from the proposed development or significant extraction equipment required in this respect. Nonetheless, a condition is recommended to secure submission and approval of full details of any plant equipment, including a noise assessment, specifications and location within the building (including service connections throughout the building) prior to installation of any such equipment at the site. A condition is also recommended to secure vermin and pest control measures for all bin store areas to ensure stores are kept clean, well maintained and secure.
- 7.60 In terms of other amenity considerations to surrounding occupiers no adverse impacts are identified in respect of impact on receipt of daylight, privacy and overbearing matters from the proposed rear extensions and outbuilding. Notably there are not considered to be any harmful to impacts in respect of the Purple Turtle adjoining the site to west at no. 9 Gun Street given its commercial use. In terms of the flats at no. 11-12 Gun Street there are no side facing habitable windows that would be impacted by the proposed rear extensions with the windows to the front and rear of the building not considered to be affected by the proposals.
- 7.61 RBC Environmental Protection officers have identified potential noise, dust and vibration issues that could result during construction of the proposed development. Therefore, a condition is recommended to secure suitable controls are provided within a demolition and construction method statement to be submitted and approved by the Local Planning Authority prior to the commencement of any development on site. Further conditions are also proposed to limit hours of construction to standard daytime working hours for noisy activities and to stipulate that there shall be no burning of waste or building materials on site at any time.

E) Transport

- 7.62 Policies TR3 (Access, Traffic and Highway related matters), TR1 (Achieving the Transport Strategy) and TR5 (Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging) seek to address access, traffic, highway and parking matters relating to development.
- 7.63 The site is located within the Reading Central Area and within Reading's primary shopping area. This area is well served by rail and bus links and also contains the largest proportion of public car parking spaces. There is no off street parking associated with the site and none is proposed. Given the sites accessible town centre location and access to public car parks, there are no transport objections to this application. The proposals are for the type of use associated with town centre sites and would not result in a material change in vehicle trips.

7.64 Adequate space for cycle and refuse storage for the development is located to the rear of the site within the proposed outbuilding. Servicing would be from the rear as is existing for the site and The Purple Turtle next door. Conditions are recommended to secure provision of these facilities prior to first use and occupation of the development.

7.65 Given the location and constraints of the site, construction of the proposed development has the potential to result in disruption to the surrounding highway network, a condition is recommended to secure submission and approval of a demolition and constriction method statement prior to any works commencing on site.

7.66 The proposals are considered to be acceptable in respect of transport related matters and to accord with Policies TR1, TR3 and TR5.

F) Archaeology

7.67 Policy EN2 (Areas of Archaeological Significance) requires that developers should identify and evaluate sites of archaeological significance and that where remains are identified and cannot be preserved 'in situ' they should be properly excavated, investigated and recorded.

7.68 Berkshire Archaeology have reviewed the proposals and have advised that there is potential for archaeological remains of various period below ground in the surrounding area. A written scheme of archaeological investigation (WSI) has been submitted with the application and has been reviewed and found to be acceptable by Berkshire Archaeology. A condition is recommended to require that the development is undertaken only in accordance with the submitted WSI.

G) Sustainability

7.69 Policy CC3 (Adaption to Climate Change) seeks that proposals should incorporate measures which take account of climate change. A number of sustainability measures are proposed to be incorporated within the development including energy efficient materials and fittings and a net increase in greening and landscaping and biodiversity enhancements across the site.

7.70 Policy CC2 (Sustainable Design and Construction) requires that proposed for conversion or refurbishment of existing buildings for residential or non-residential uses meets a BREEAM standard of Very Good.

7.71 The application is submitted by sustainability statement which sets out a variety of sustainability and energy efficiency measures proposed to be incorporated within the proposed development. These include provision of a decentralised energy source in the form of an air source heat pump, provision of a biodiverse green roof to the large flat roof of the proposed single storey rear extension, use of energy efficient materials and fittings and achieving the BREEAM Very Good standard for the development in accordance with Policy CC2.

7.72 Conditions are recommended to secure submission and approval of a design state BREEAM certificate prior to commencement of development, submission and approval of an as built BREEAM certificate prior to first use/occupation of the development to certify that the

development has been built to the required standard and to secure implementation of all other sustainability measures proposed within the submitted sustainability statement.

7.73 The proposals are considered to comply with Policies CC2 and CC3.

8 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

8.1. Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to—

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

8.2. The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation. It is considered that there is no indication or evidence that the protected groups have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular application.

9 CONCLUSION

9.1 The NPPF (December 2024) sets out a presumption in favour of sustainable development running through both plan-making and decision-taking. The three dimensions to achieving sustainable development are defined in the NPPF as: economic, social and environmental. Both the adopted Local Plan and the NPPF require a positive approach to decision-taking to foster the delivery of sustainable development. These three dimensions of sustainable development are also central to the Council's Local Plan core Policy CC1.

9.2 As set out within paragraph 7.40 of this report officers identify that the proposals would result in a low level of less than 'substantial harm' to the host grade II listed building and St Marys Butts/Castle Street Conservation Area. In accordance with paragraph 215 of the NPPF (December 2024), where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. Officers have also identified that the proposals are likely to result in some harm to the residential amenity of the existing adjacent residential occupiers at no. 11-12 Gun Street as a result of noise from loud music and live performance events, albeit given the existing nighttime noise environment at the site and subject to the recommended conditions it is considered that such impacts can be managed to result in a low level of impact.

9.3 In terms of public benefits of the proposals a variety are identified. The proposed development would see a vacant grade II Listed building in disrepair brought back into an active and complimentary use along Gun Street and would secure repair and restoration of internal and external features of the listed building, important to its historic significance. These are considered to be significant benefits of the proposed development.

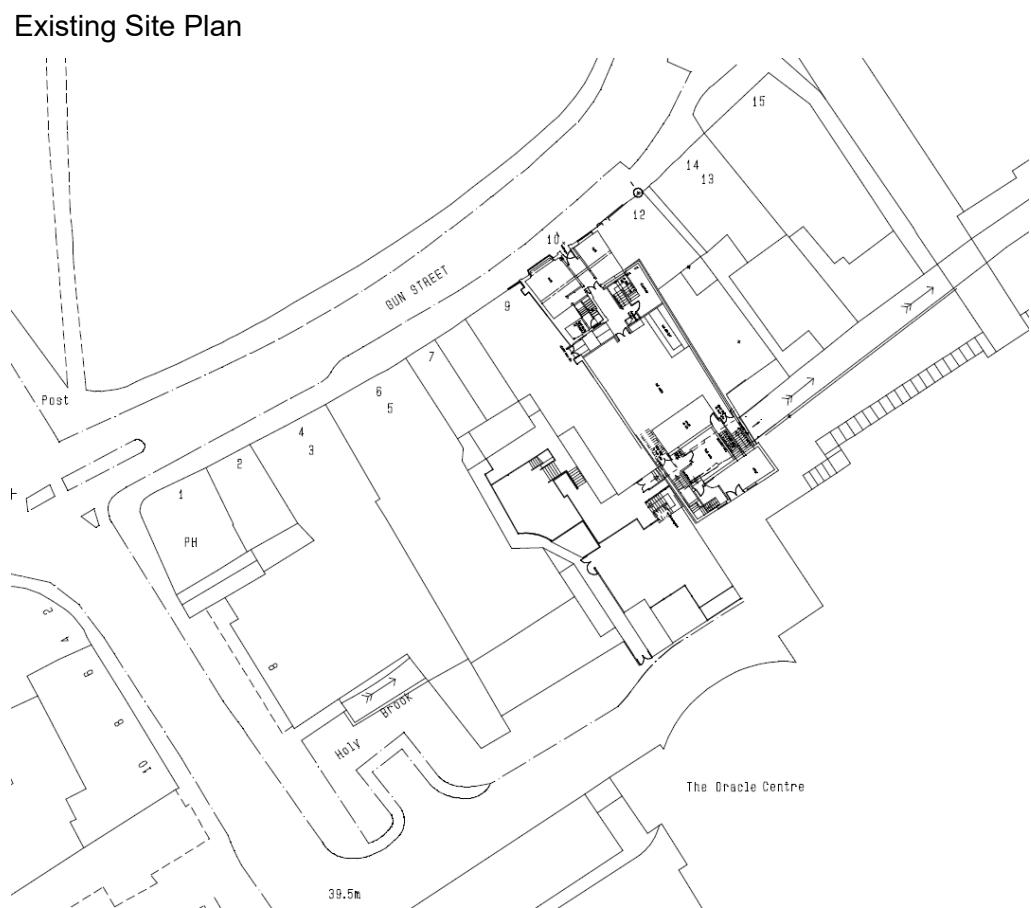
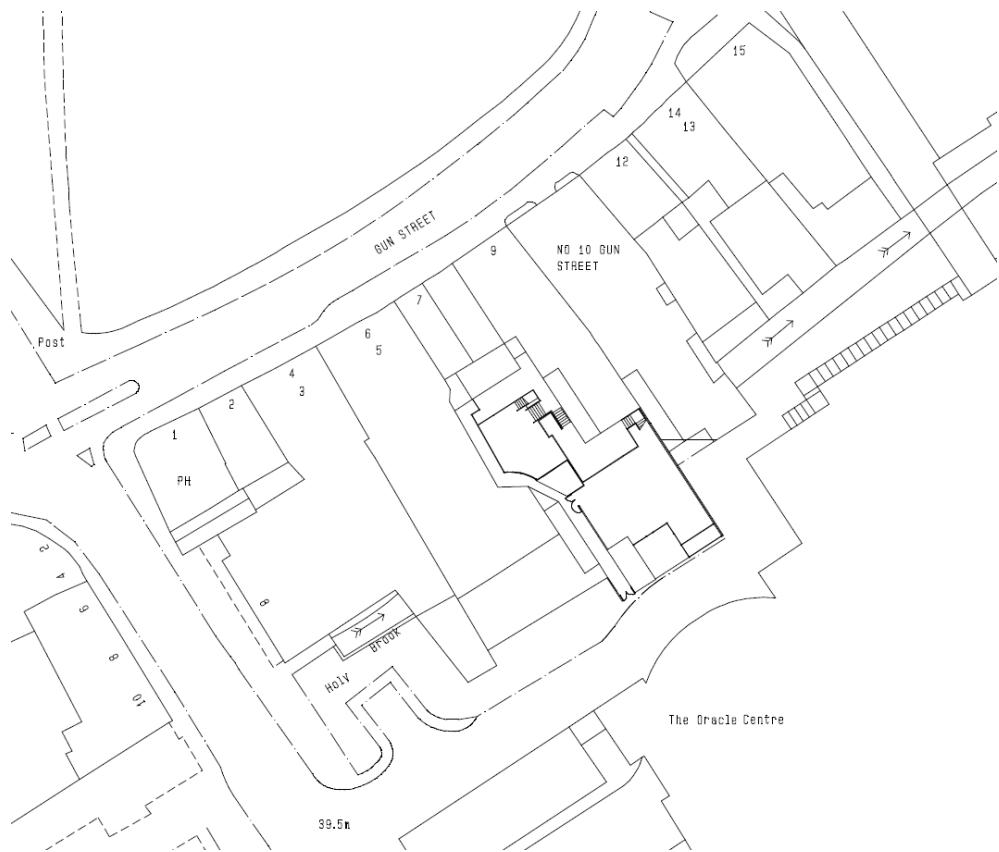
9.4 Whilst not significant, during the construction phase the proposed development would clearly contribute to and encourage associated economic activity by directly sustaining jobs in the borough. This would be supported further and in the long term by new employment opportunities in the hospitality sector.

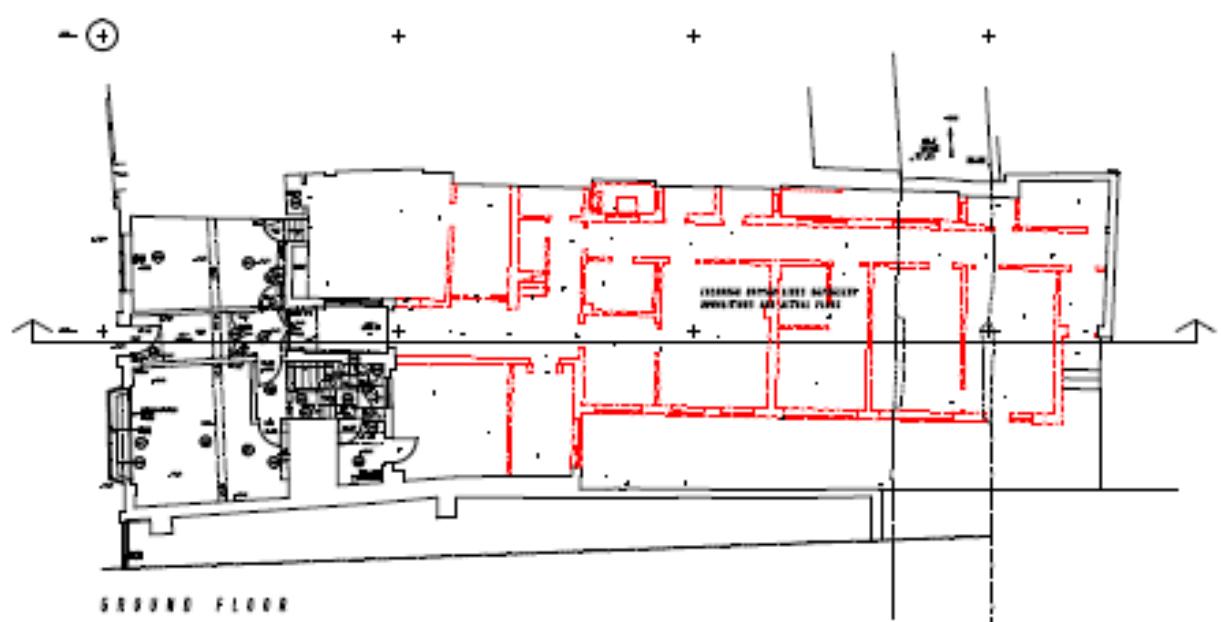
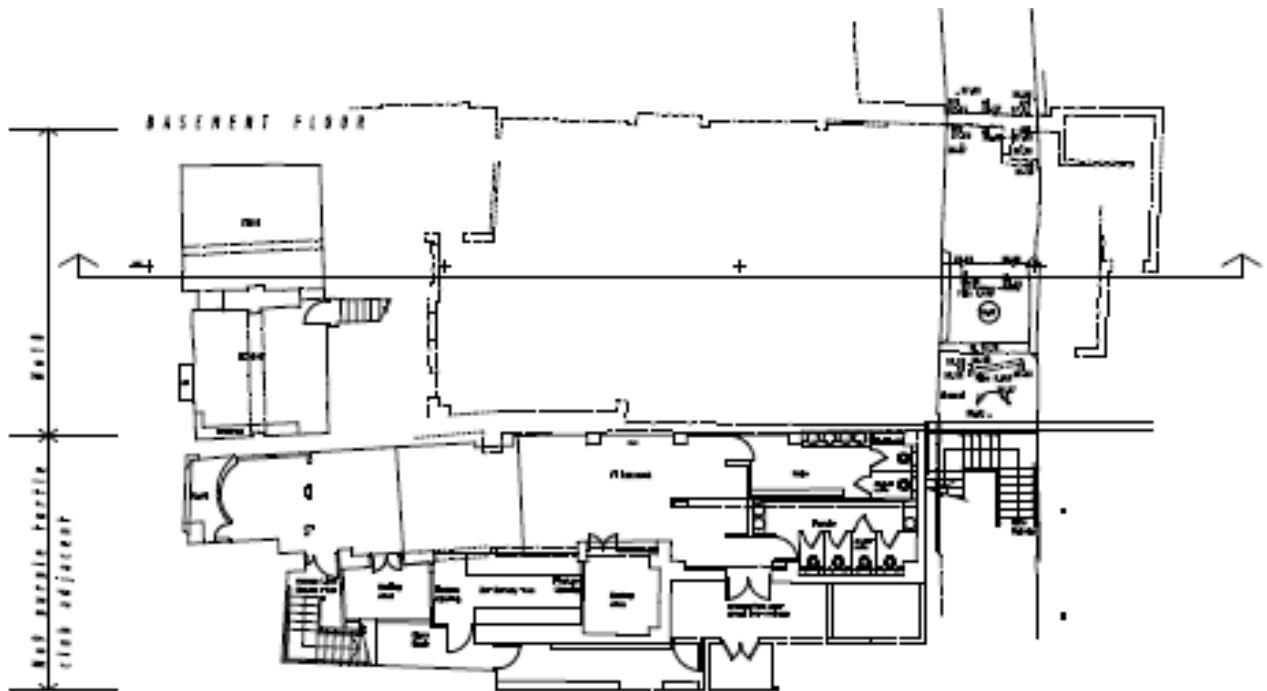
9.5 In terms of the social role, the proposal will secure the reuse of a heritage asset, ensuring the building is protected and valued in the future. In terms of health and wellbeing the internal and external spaces proposed are considered to be of good quality and would provide improved and extended facilities for the Purple Turtle, a popular town centre entertainment venue. The proposed performance hall also has the potential to provide tangible and significant cultural and leisure benefits to the local community, through providing an additional purposely designed facility within the town for hosting of live entertainment performances.

9.6 With regard to the natural environment the proposed refurbished and extended building would meet an enhanced level of sustainability than existing through compliance with appropriate BREEAM standards. The introduction of on-site soft landscape in the form of a green roof and habitat enhancement scheme would provide visual and environmental benefits, thereby allowing the site to confidently perform a far greater environmental role than it does as present. Whilst the de-culverting of the Holy Brook is not proposed, the proposals are considered to perform a more positive environmental role than at present and safeguard the ability to de-culvert in the future.

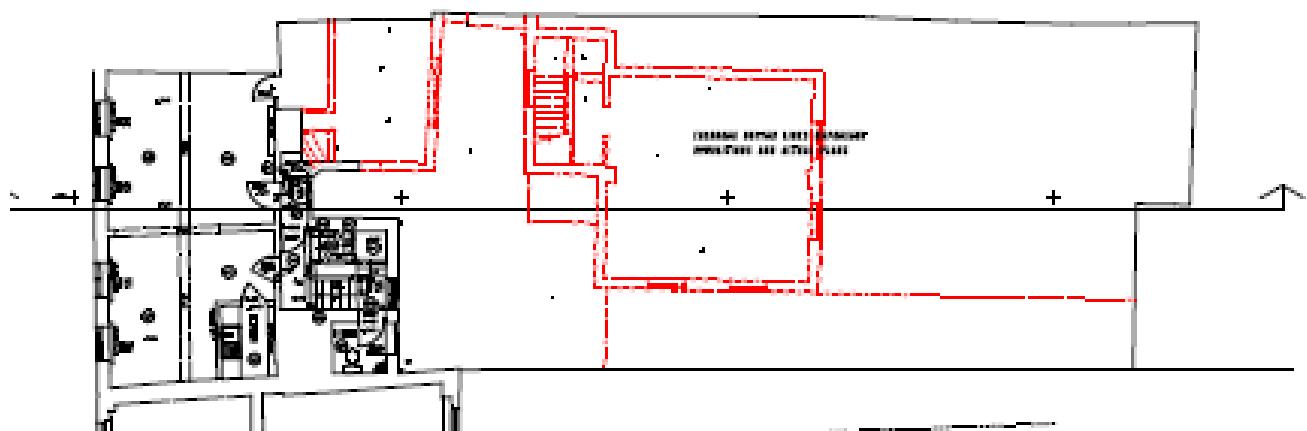
9.7 In summary, the proposal provides notable and tangible benefits, fulfilling many aspects which contribute to achieving the three dimensions of sustainable development. Having regard to all matters raised, it is concluded that these combined environmental, economic and social benefits would, outweigh the identified low level of 'less than substantial' to the host grade II Listed building and surrounding St Marys Butts/Castle Street Conservation Area and impact identified upon the residential amenity of the adjacent residential occupiers at 11-12 Gun Street. Therefore, when applying an overall critical planning balance of all material considerations presented, these applications for full planning permission and accompanying application for listed building consent are considered to comply with the relevant policies of the Development Plan and are recommended for approval subject to conditions.

Existing and Proposed Plans shown below:

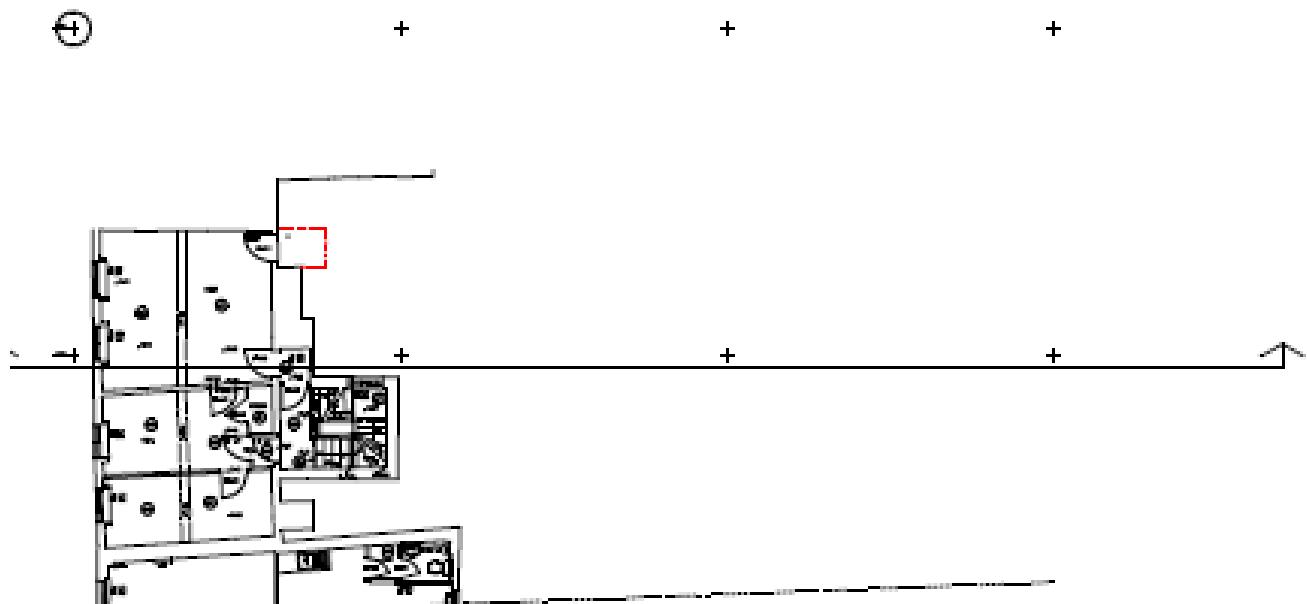




Existing Basement and Ground Floor Plans

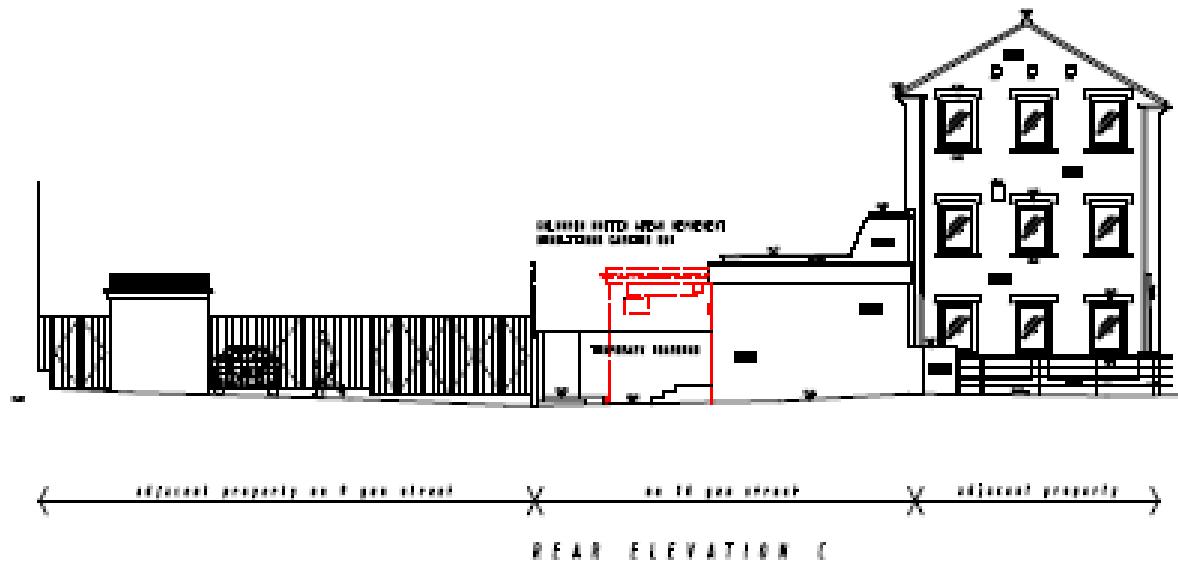


FIRST FLOOR

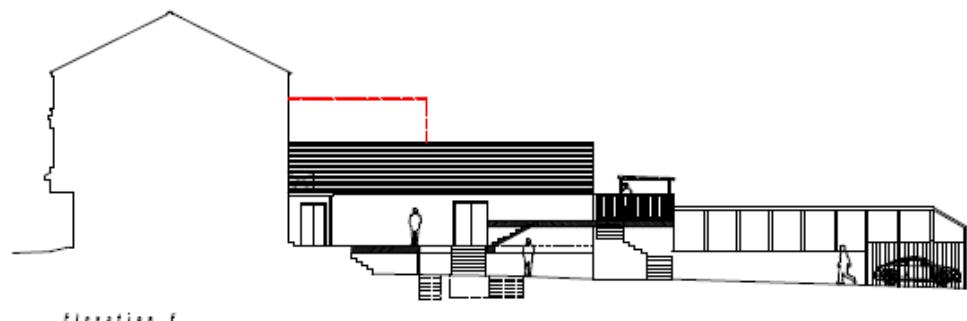


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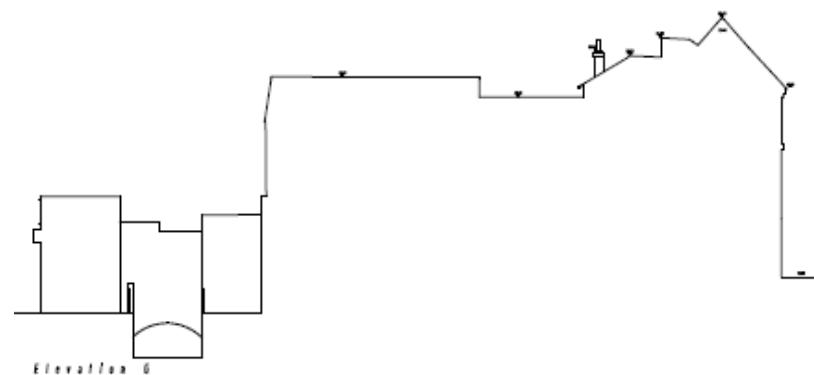
Existing First and Second Floor Plans



Existing Front and Rear Elevations

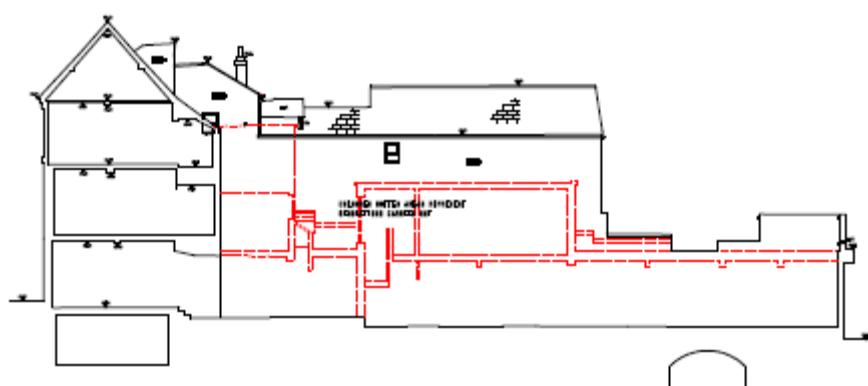


Elevation F



Elevation G

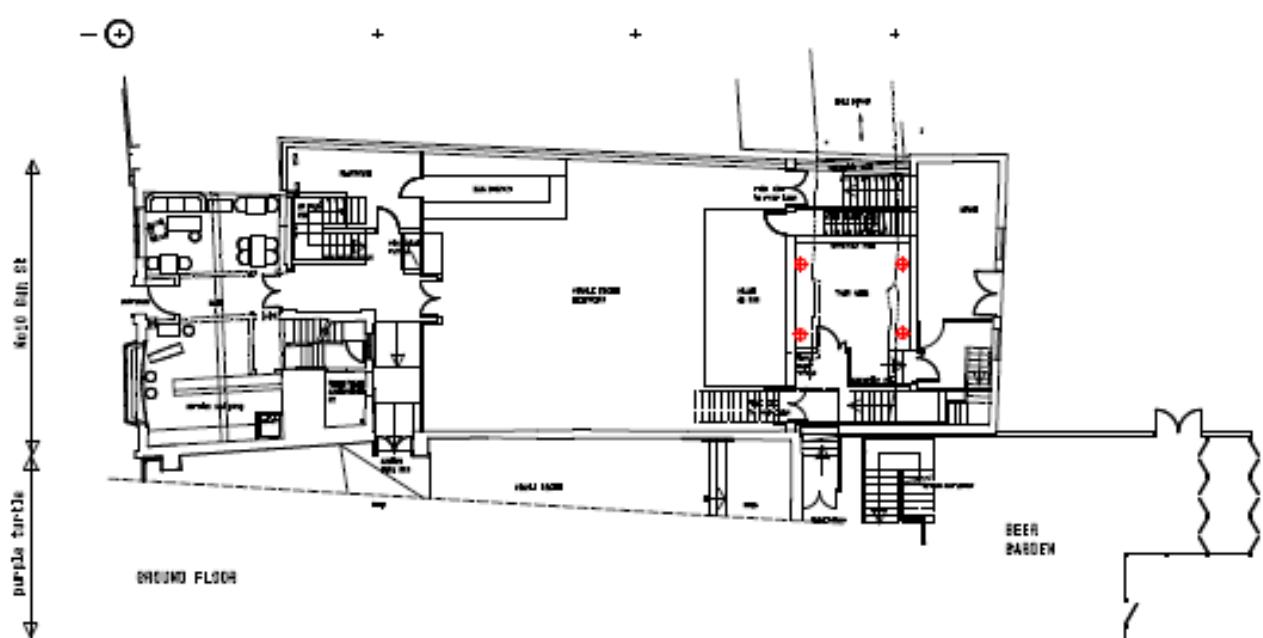
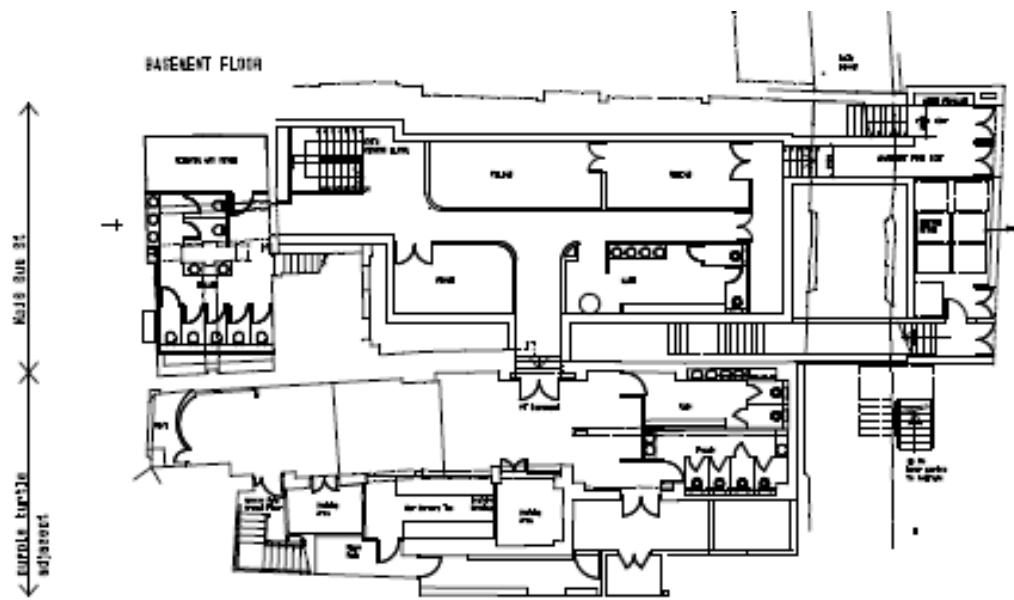
Existing Side Elevations



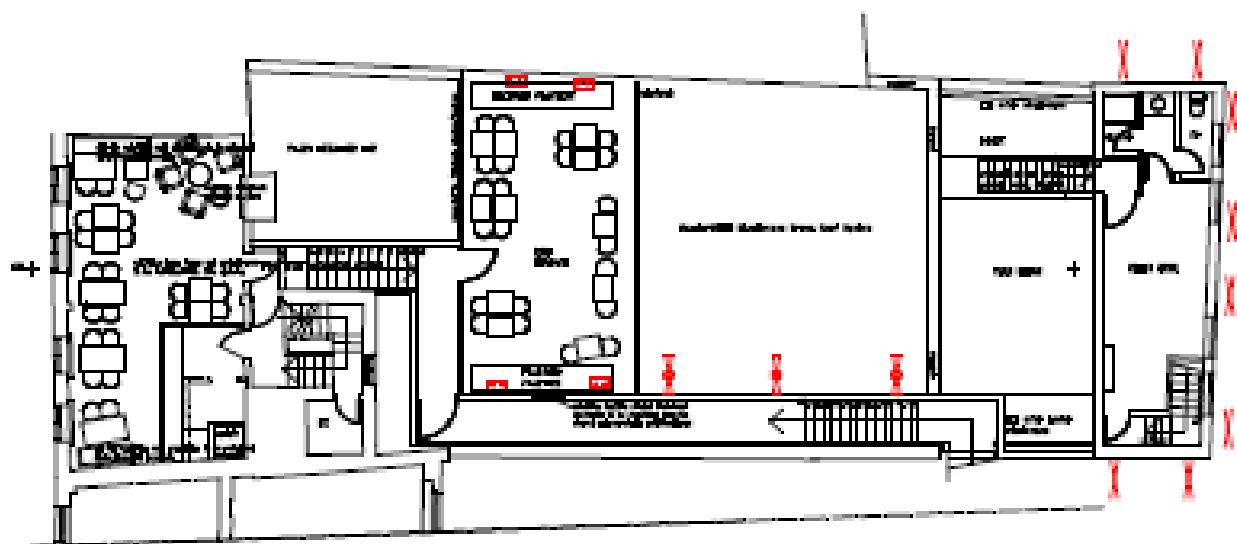
Existing Site Section



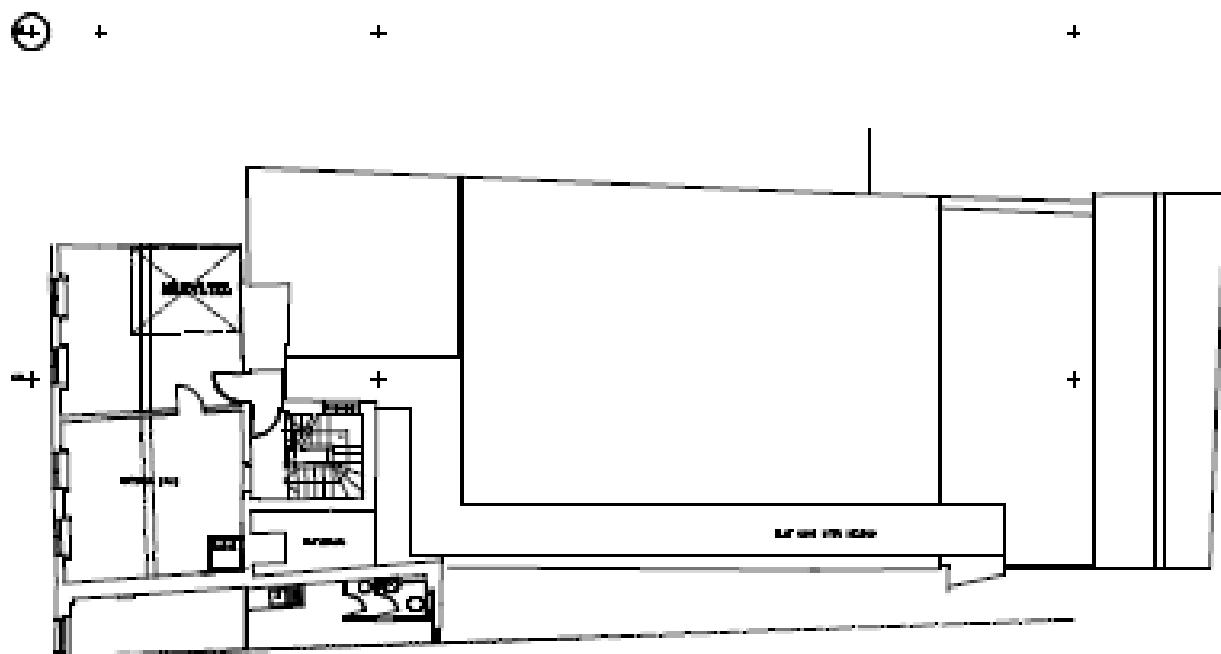
Existing Rear Street Scene



Proposed Basement and Ground Floor Plans



FIRST FLOOR

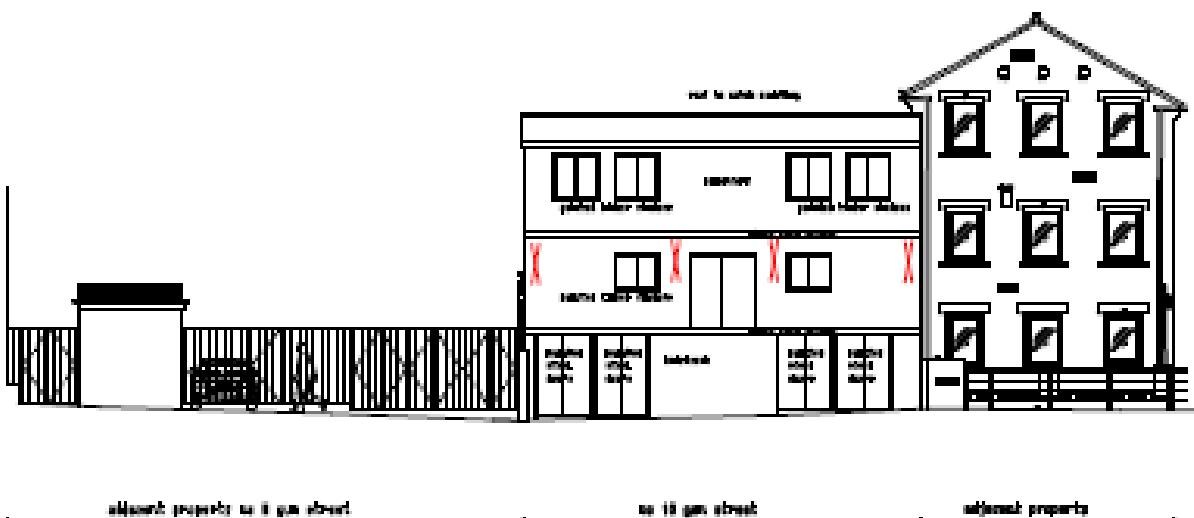


SECOND FLOOR

Proposed First and Second Floor Plans



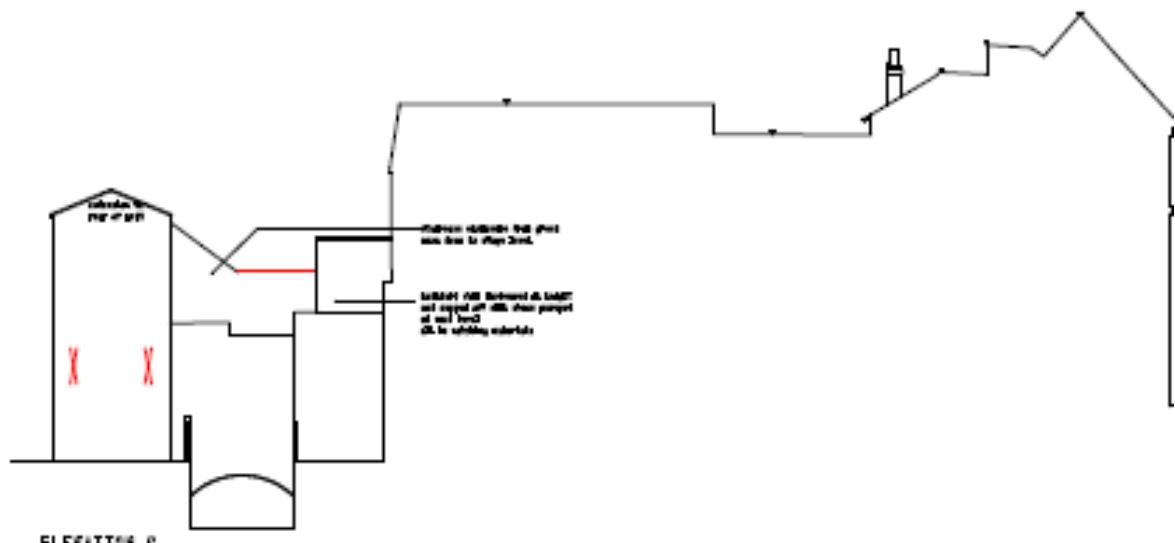
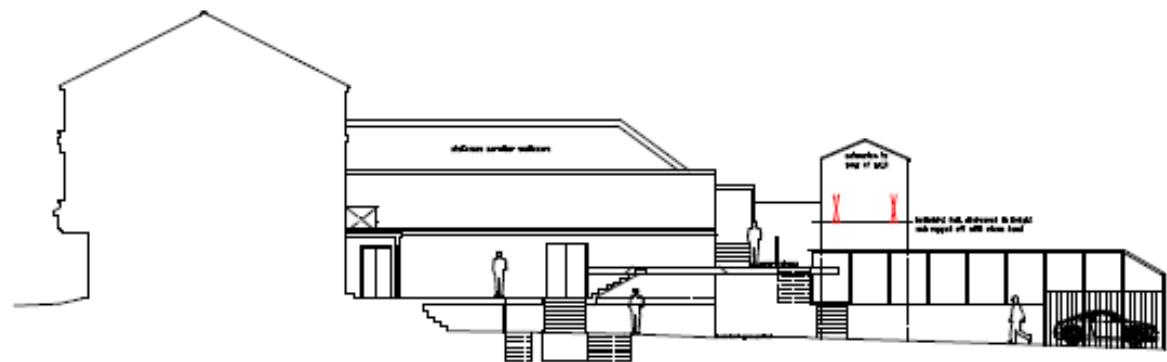
Proposed Front Elevation



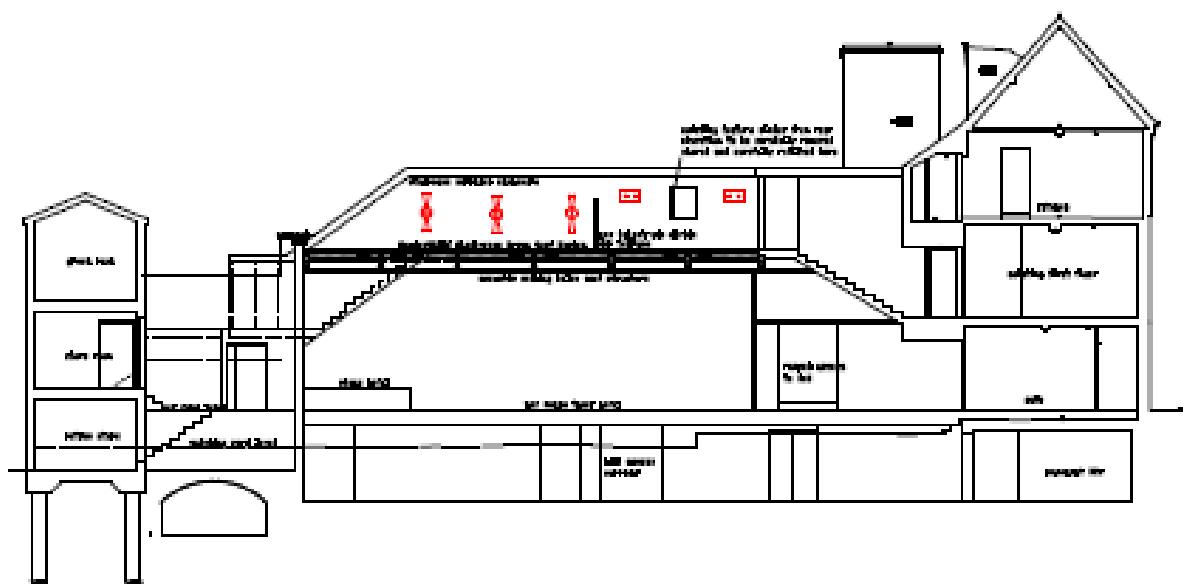
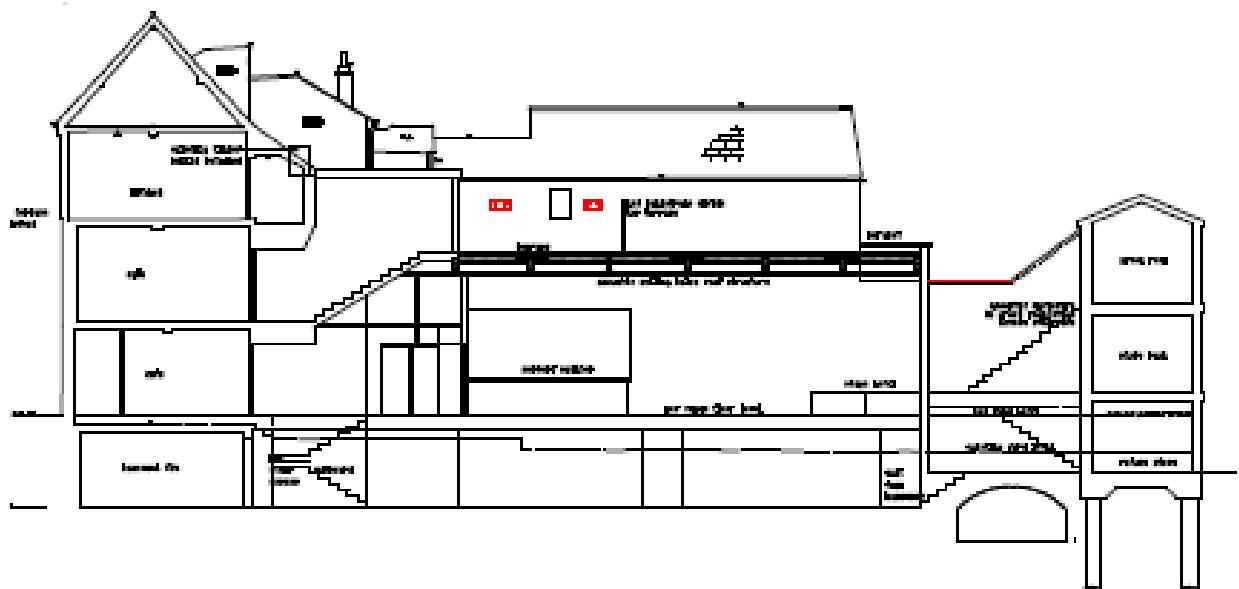
Proposed Rear Elevation



Proposed Rear Street-Scene Section



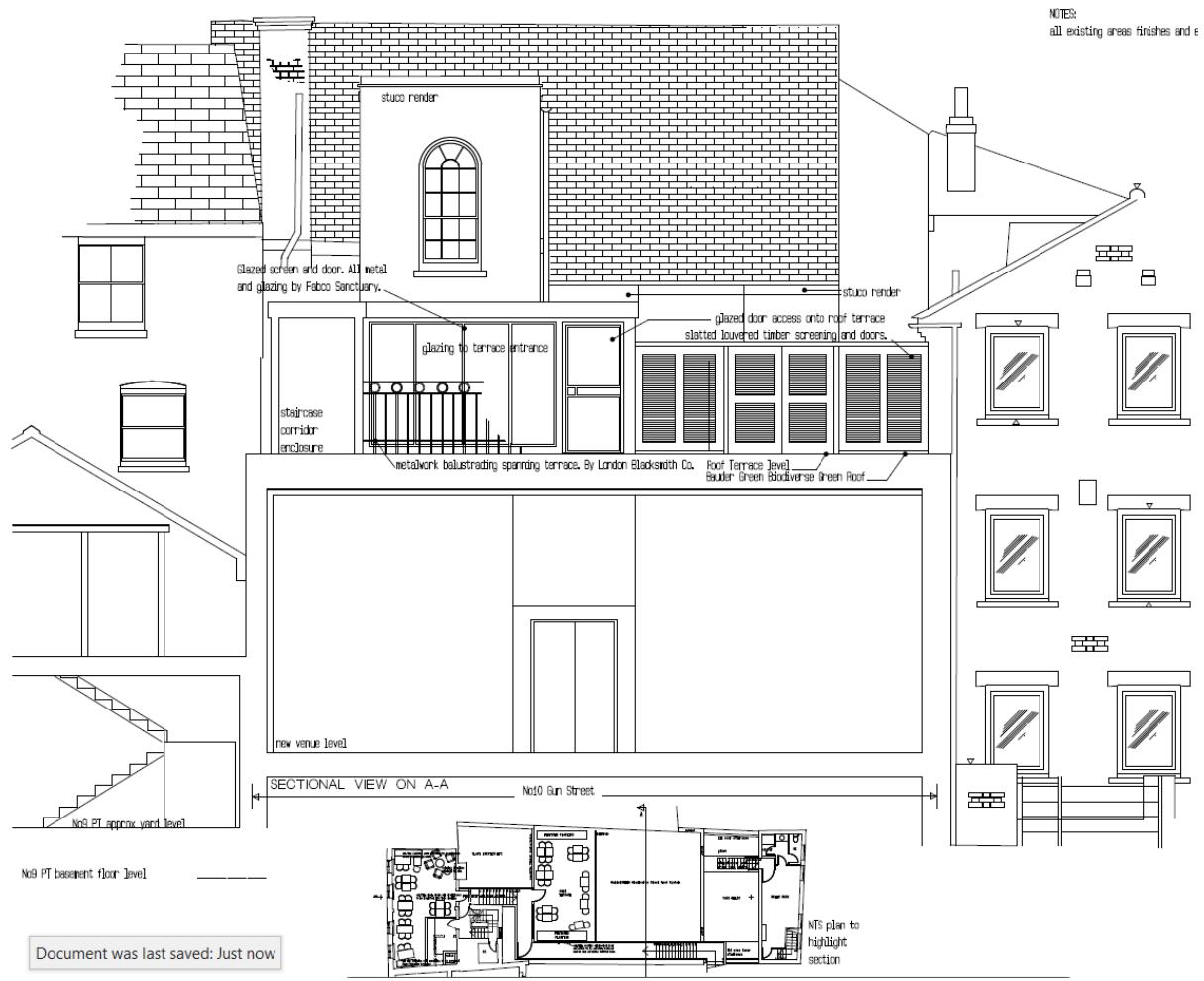
Proposed Side Elevation



Proposed Building Sections



Proposed Yard Section Drawing



Proposed more detailed Rear Elevation Section



Proposed Visual of First Floor Level Rear Terrace and Green Roof

APPENDIX 1

The following planning permission and listed building consent were granted in 2016:

15/1281/FUL

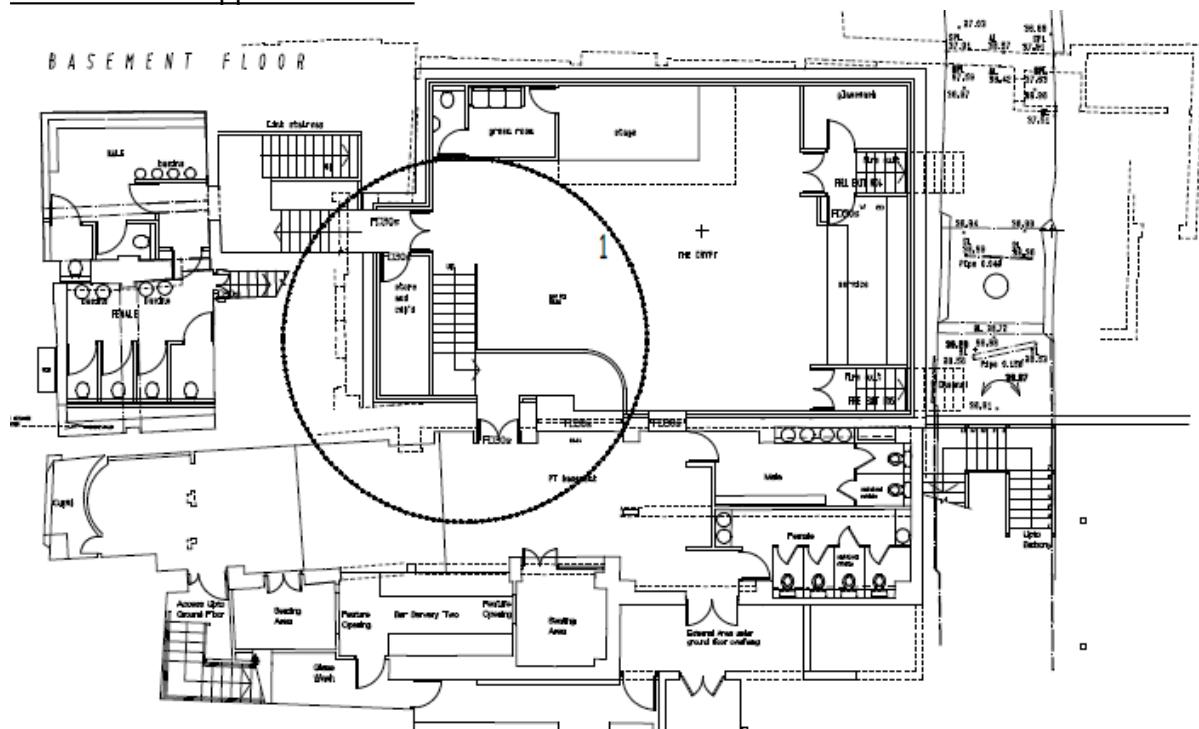
Change of use from office (Class B1) to café/restaurant (Class A3) at basement to second floor level, including replacement ground and first floor rear extension; Excavation of basement to rear as extension to existing nightclub (Sui Generis) at No. 9 Gun St; Erection of replacement two storey building to rear for micro-brewery (Sui Generis) with associated access, part de-culverting of brook, external open area and various other alterations.

15/1282/LBC

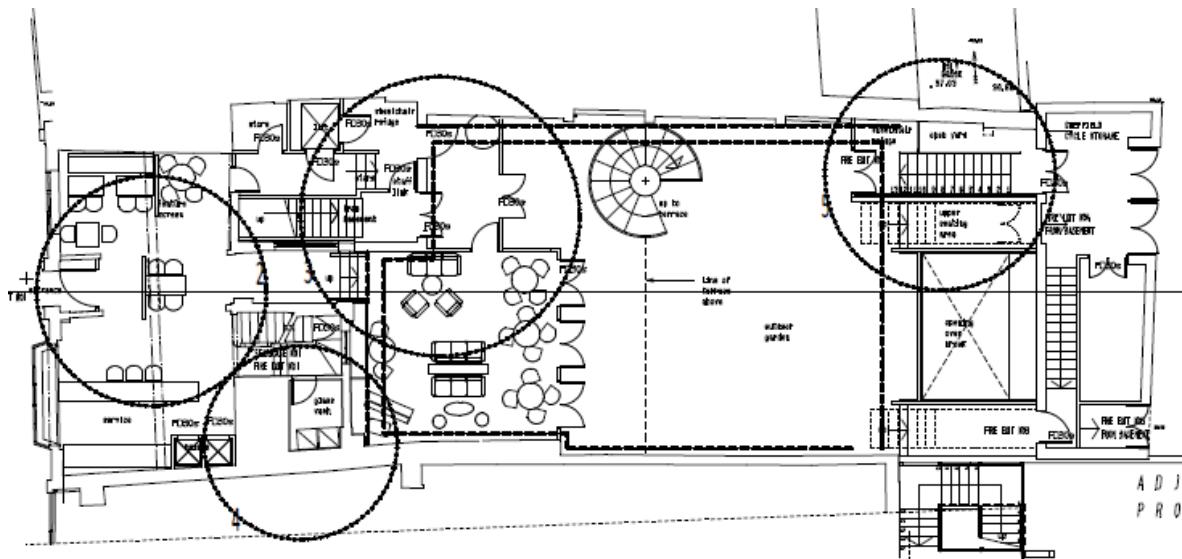
Various internal and external alterations including demolition of existing ground/first floor rear extensions, in association with change of use from office (Class B1) to café/restaurant (Class A3) at basement to second floor level, including replacement ground and first floor rear extension; Excavation of basement to rear as extension to existing nightclub (Sui Generis) at No. 9 Gun St; Erection of replacement two storey building to rear for micro-brewery (Sui Generis) with associated access, part deculverting of brook, external open area and various other alterations.

The notable differences of the above previous proposals compared to the current proposals are that this previous proposals included part de-culverting of a section of the Holy Brook to the rear of the site, smaller part two part single storey rear extension, expansion of the Purple Turtle use into no. 10 Gun Street but at basement level only and provision of a micro-brewery in the proposed outbuilding to the rear of the site.

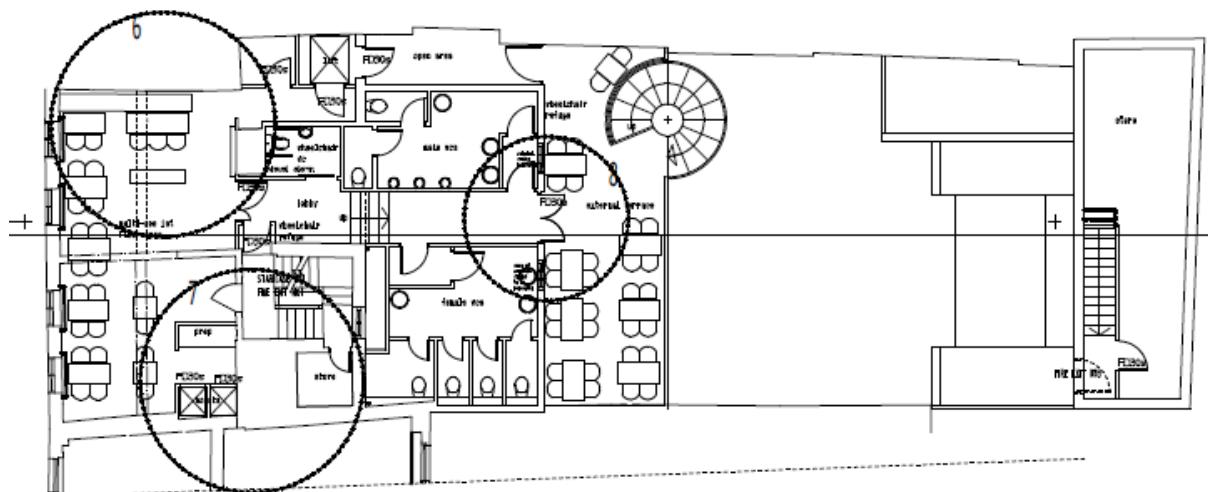
2016 Scheme Approved Plans:



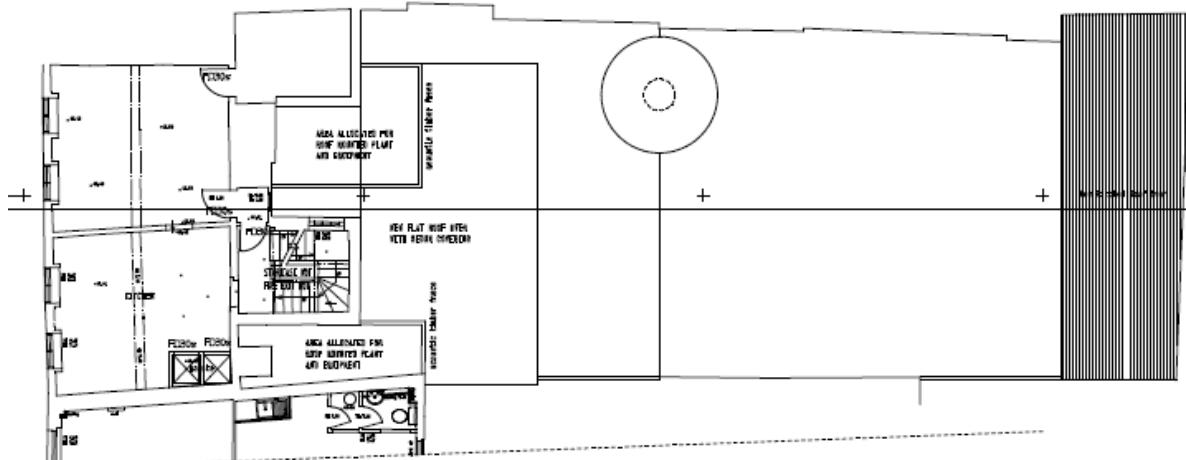
2016 Consented Scheme Proposed Basement Floor Plan



2016 Consented Scheme Proposed Ground Floor Plan



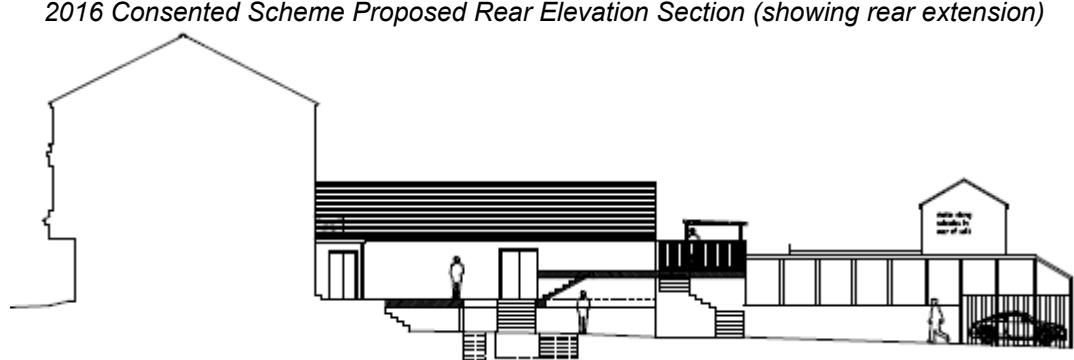
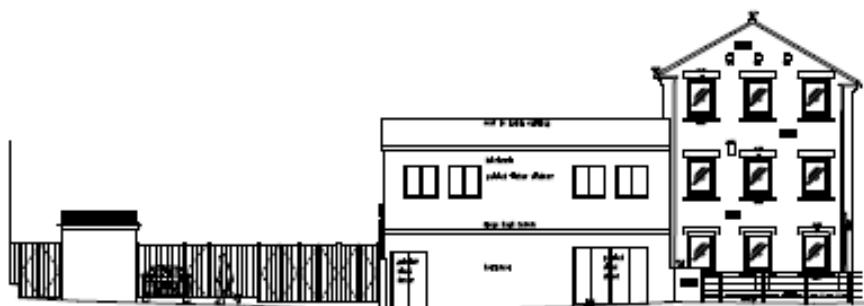
2016 Consented Scheme Proposed First Floor Plan

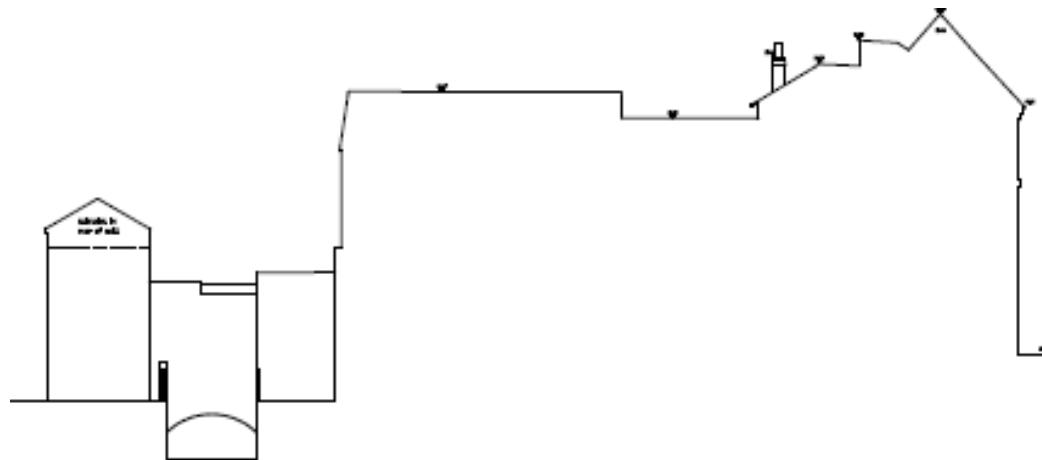


2016 Consented Scheme Proposed Second Floor Plan

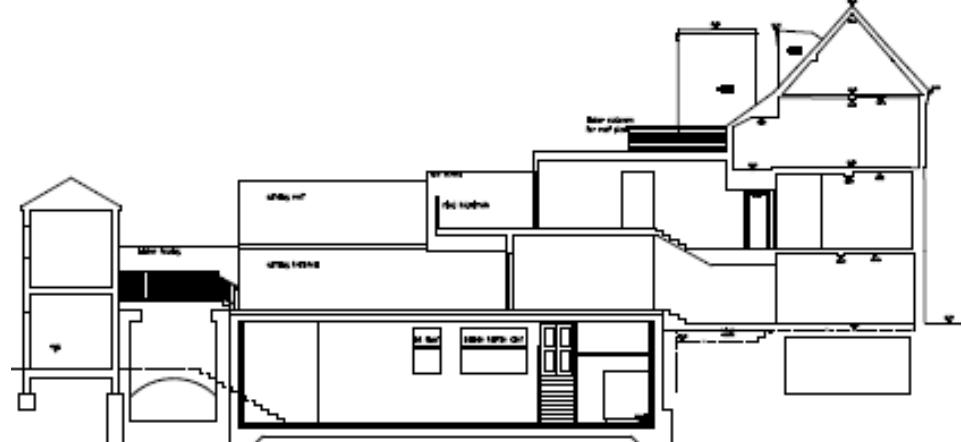
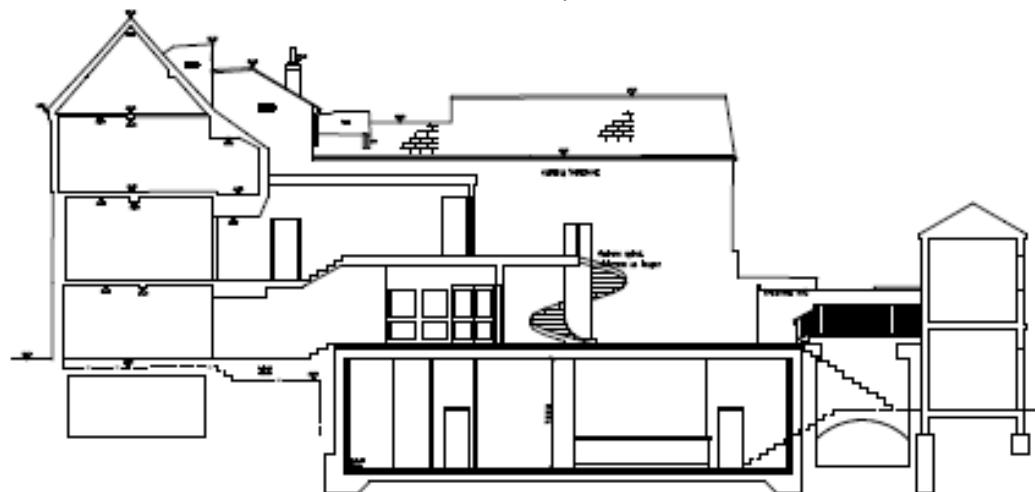


2016 Consented Scheme Proposed Front Elevation





2016 Consented Scheme Proposed Side Elevation



2016 Consented Scheme Proposed Site Sections

The following planning permission and listed building consent was granted in 2020:

19/1243FUL

Change of use from office (Class B1) to café / restaurant (Class A3) at ground to second floor level, including ground and first floor extensions following removal of previous. Erection of building to rear for microbrewery (Sui Generis) with associated access, external open area and various other internal and external alterations -

scheme almost identical to previous Consent 151281 but without basement nightclub extension and no de-culverting of brook.

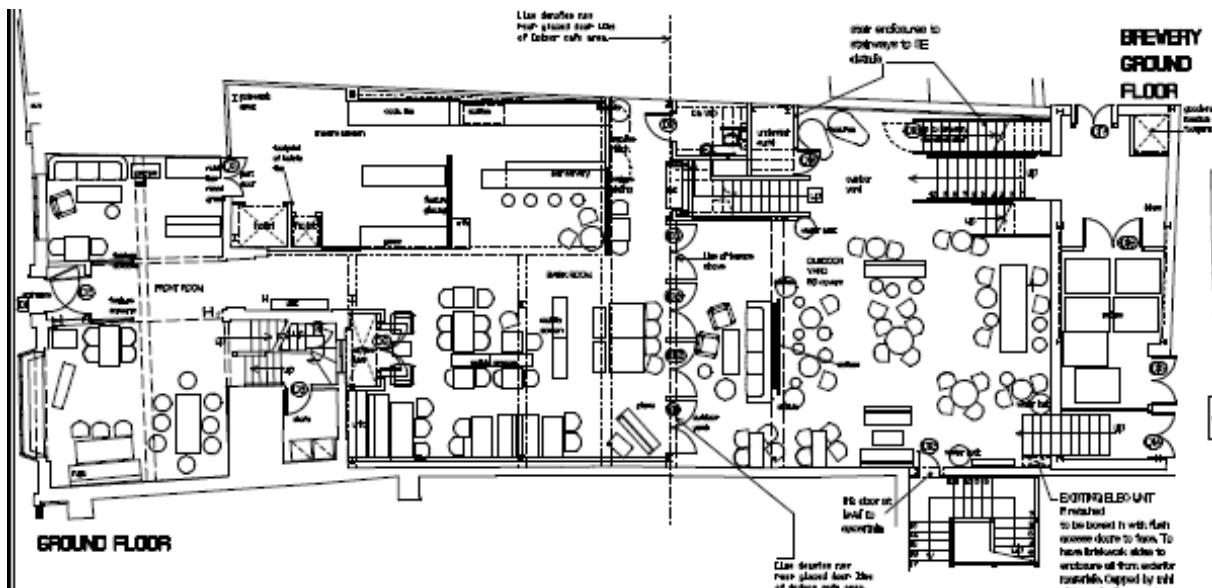
19/1244LBC

Various internal and external alterations including demolition of existing ground/first floor rear extensions, in association with change of use from office (Class B1) to café / restaurant (Class A3) at ground to second floor level, including ground and first floor extensions following removal of previous. Erection of building to rear for microbrewery (Sui Generis) with associated access, external open area and various other alterations.

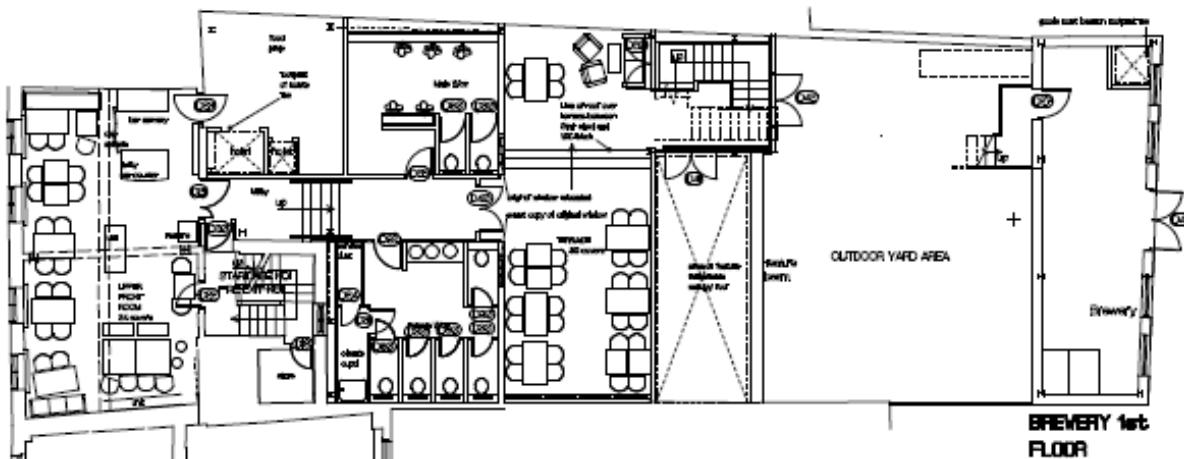
The above scheme was very similar to the consented 2016 scheme but no longer proposed to expand the Purple Turtle into 10 Gun Street with basement extension removed. This approval however did propose a slightly larger part two part single storey rear extension, but no longer proposed to part de-culvert a section of the Holy Brook to the rear of the site.

The key differences of the consented 2020 scheme to the current proposals under consideration as part of this report, are that the expansion of the Purple Turtle is again now proposed (as per the 2016 scheme) but at basement and ground floor level. In addition, a larger part two, part single storey rear extension is proposed and the outbuilding to the rear of the site is now proposed for storage and green room use, rather than as a micro-brewery.

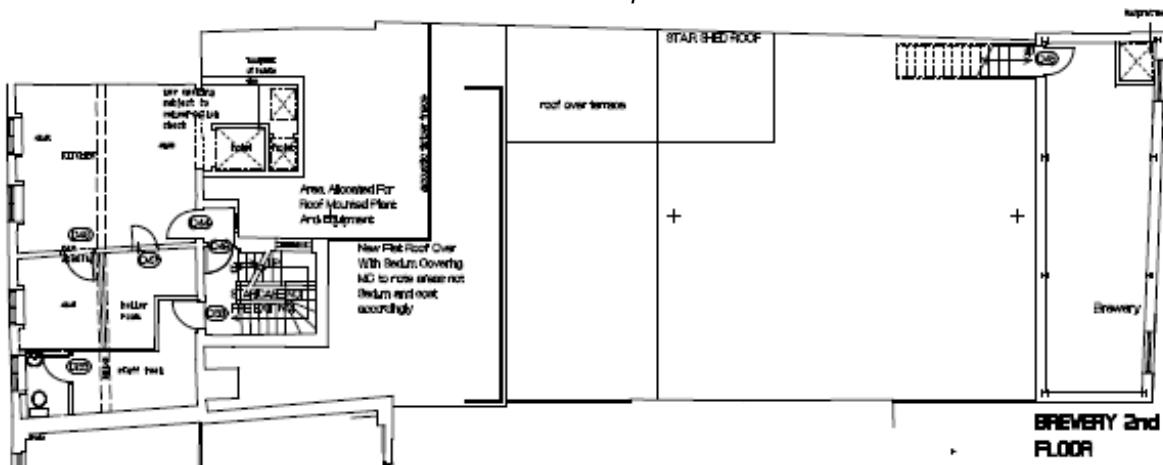
2020 Scheme Approval Plans:



2020 Consented Scheme Proposed Ground Floor Plan



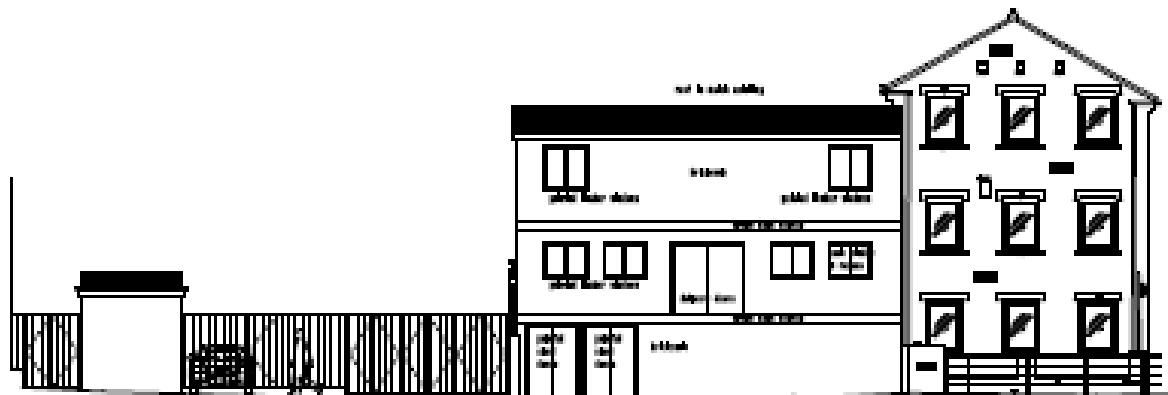
2020 Consented Scheme Proposed First Floor Plan



2020 Consented Scheme Proposed Second Floor Plan



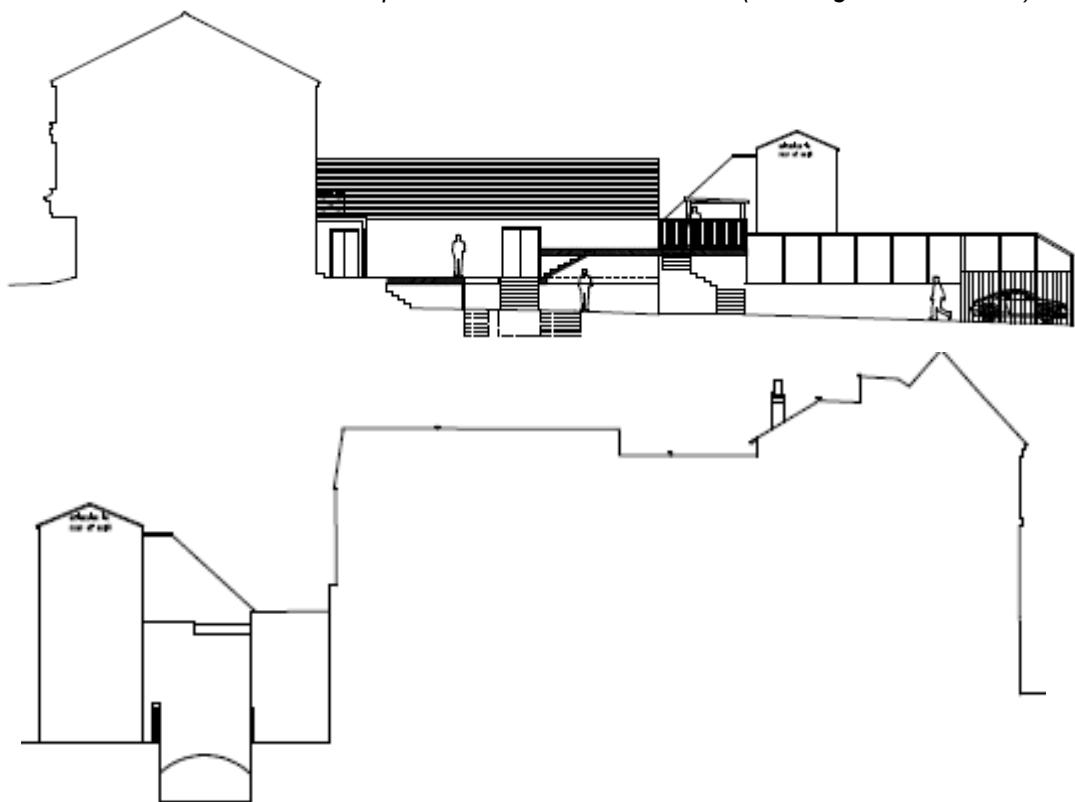
2020 Consented Scheme Proposed Front Elevation



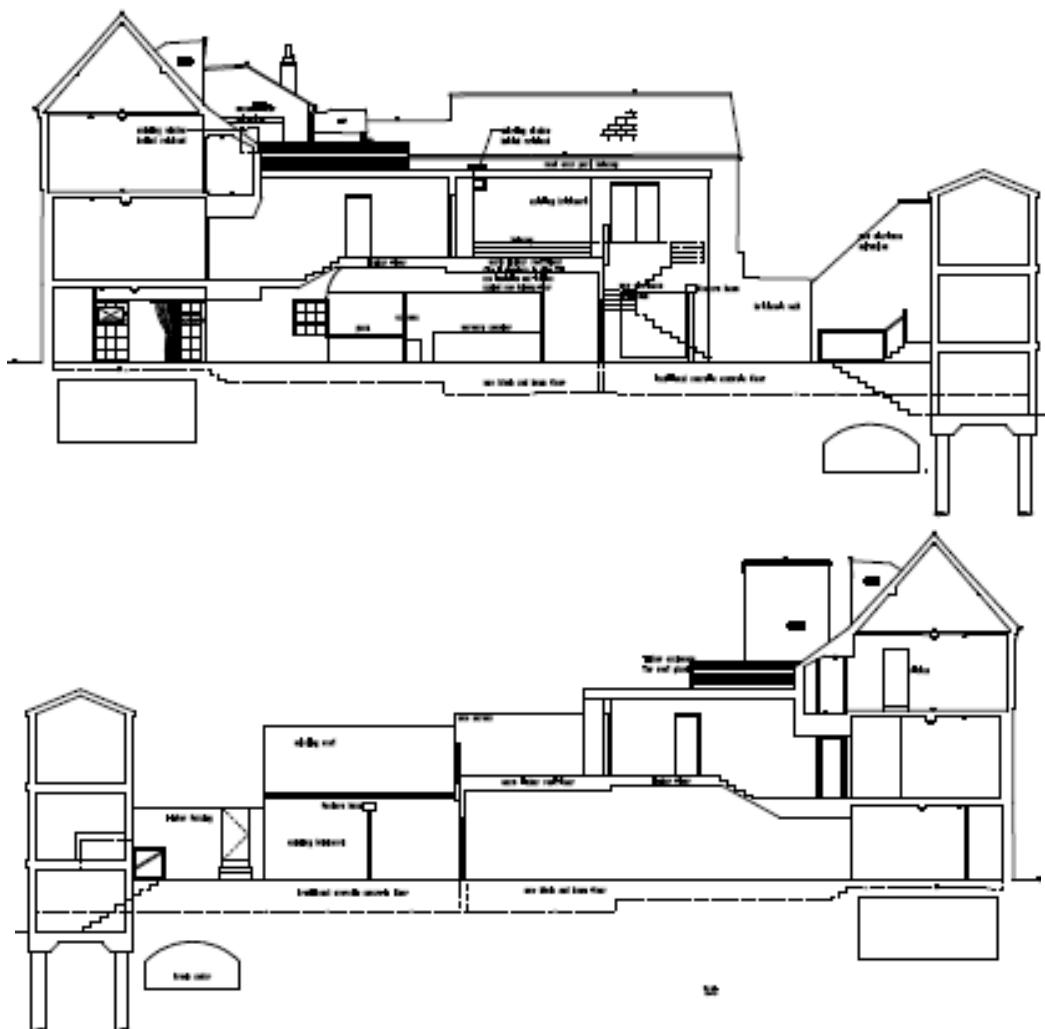
2020 Consented Scheme Proposed Rear Elevation (showing outbuilding)



2020 Consented Scheme Proposed Rear Elevation Section (showing rear extension)



2020 Consented Scheme Proposed Side Elevations



2020 Consented Scheme Proposed Site Sections

08 January 2025



Reading
Borough Council

Working better with you

Title	PLANNING APPLICATION REPORT
Ward	Abbey
Planning Application Reference:	PL/24/1392 (REG3/VAR)
Site Address:	The Hexagon, Queens Walk, Reading, RG1 7QF
Proposed Development	Variation of condition 2 of permission 240063 (dated 24/04/24 for Demolition of some of the existing back of house areas and erection of an extension of the existing Hexagon Theatre to provide a new studio auditorium, flexible rehearsal space, community studio with workshop space and back of house space, along with improved public realm by providing a new podium connection between the new proposed extension and Queens Walk, along with other associated works), including the omission of the third floor, internal rearrangement, changes to massing, changes to the access bridge and various other associated works.
Applicant	Reading Borough Council
Report author	Thomas Bradfield
Deadline:	14/02/2025
Recommendations	<p>GRANT full planning permission subject to the below conditions</p> <p>Delegation to officers sought to be able to finalise the contents of the conditions suitable for issue of the s73 variation permission.</p>
Conditions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Full - time limit - three years 2. Approved Plans (to be amended) 3. Materials (samples to be approved prior to commencement of above ground (ie. basement level) works) 4. Mechanical Plant Noise Assessment 5. Noise Mitigation Scheme 6. Contaminated Land Assessment 7. Unidentified Contamination 8. External Lighting 9. Construction Method Statement 10. Hours of Construction 11. No Bonfires on Site 12. Sustainable Drainage 13. BREEAM 'Excellent' non-residential Interim 14. BREEAM non-residential Post Construction 15. Hard and soft landscaping to be approved 16. Arboricultural Method Statement 17. Green Roofs 18. Biodiversity Enhancements 19. Hours of Operation 20. Use of Roof Restricted 21. Vehicle Parking (as specified)

	22. Cycle Parking (To be approved) 23. Use restriction 24. Sustainable Drainage (To be approved) 25. Employment Skills and Training Plan 26. Road Marking Scheme (To be approved)
Informatics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive and Proactive • Pre-commencement conditions • Highways • Terms • Building Regulations • Complaints about construction • Contamination • CIL • Thames Water informatics

1. Executive summary

1.1. The proposal seeks to make changes to the approved planning permission (ref. PL/24/0063) to extend the Hexagon Theatre. The changes would result in the proposal reducing in size and providing fewer facilities, outlined below; however, the fundamental nature of the proposal would not change. It would provide an additional theatre within the town centre, as well as rehearsal space and enhanced back of house areas which would be used by both the existing theatre and the proposed building. The amended proposals would still result in some harm to the living conditions of the student housing to the north of the proposal site through loss of light, although would be reduced when compared to the previous scheme. When balanced against the significant benefits of the proposal, including fulfilling the policy aims of the Local Plan and supplementary planning documents, it is considered that the proposal is acceptable.

1.2. This report considers only the impact of the changes to the original scheme, and so the original officer report should be referred to for further detail where appropriate. The Officer Report, and Update Report, for the previously approved scheme (PL/24/0063) is appended.

2. Site Description

2.1. The application site is part of the Hexagon Theatre land and encompasses a multi-level area accessed from Queen's Walk at ground (podium) level and for vehicles at lower basement area. Please see the original Officer Report (appended) for a fuller description.

3. The proposal

3.1. The proposal seeks changes to the previously approved scheme through varying condition 2 of the original permission. Condition 2 requires the proposal to be constructed in accordance with the approved plans. This application seeks to replace the approved plans with new plans which show the amended scheme. The changes proposed can be summarised as:

- Omission of the third floor, including the loss of:
 - Staff office
 - Community studio
 - Toilets on third floor (toilets remain available at lower levels)
 - External terrace

- External escape stair
- Merging of the foyer and rehearsal room into one space to create a more flexible space
- Staff offices moved to ground floor back of house
- Omission of the back of house lift
- Addition of a ground floor lift at front of house
- Mass of the scheme altered to be positioned further to the west, accommodating the foyer within the footprint of the building
- Alterations to the podium bridge link, reducing its size to a pedestrian footbridge
- Reduction in proposed auditorium capacity from 230 to 200 seated
- Omission of internal bike store, secondary entrance and green room
- Replacement of existing toilet block
- Omission of solar panels on the roof
- Addition of two extra staff parking spaces
- Introduction of external covered and secure bike store for staff and visitors

3.2. Overall, the floorspace is proposed to reduce from 1,7323sqm to 1,278sqm, a reduction of 454sqm.

3.3. The new scheme would provide an extension to the existing Hexagon, creating new performance space to accommodate up to 300 people (standing) or 200 (seated), revised servicing arrangements and improved facilities for staff and performers. The scheme can be broken into two parts:

- Front of House (FoH): a zinc clad extension to the existing theatre, accessed via a new bridge connection from Queens Walk at podium level. This contains the new studio theatre and adaptable, multi-level foyer and rehearsal space
- Back of House (BoH): a new entry point for performers/BoH staff, scene dock, dressing rooms, stage door, laundry, sub-stage and toilets as well as two accessible dressing rooms.

3.4. The building would be fully accessible for wheelchair users, with accessible toilets on every level, step-free connections to the existing Hexagon foyer and back of house areas, wheelchair accessible dressing rooms and wheelchair positions within the auditorium at both the stalls and gallery levels.

3.5. The scheme would retain natural ventilation, its renewable energy sources and would continue to achieve the BREEAM “Excellent” standard.

3.6. The plans and elevations below illustrate the changes to the scheme:



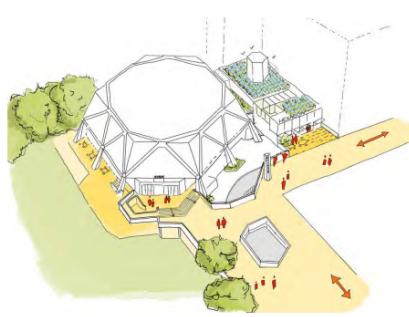
Approved scheme - Approach from podium level

Reduction in height and set back further from the podium

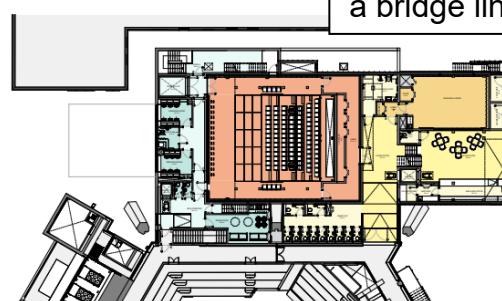


Revised scheme - Approach from podium level

Set back from podium necessitates the introduction of a bridge link



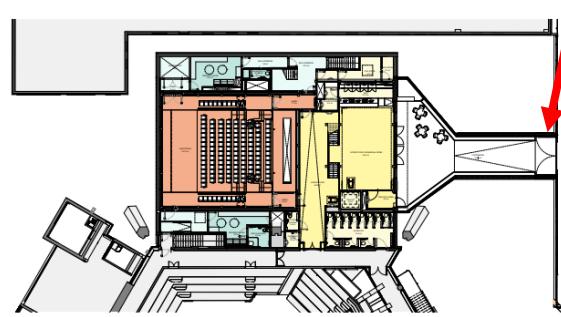
Approved scheme - Axo view



Approved scheme - G+1 plan



Revised scheme - Axo view



Revised scheme - G+1 plan

3.7. The application has necessitated changes to the following documents:
Page 80

- Air Quality Statement
- Biodiversity Net Gain Statement
- Ecology Statement
- Landscape Statement
- Noise Assessment
- Access Statement
- BREEAM Pre Assessment Report
- Daylight/Sunlight Assessment
- Energy Statement
- Travel Plan
- Planning Statement
- Sustainability Statement
- Transport Statement
- Design and Access Statement
- Proposed Plans and Elevations
- SUDS Plan

4. Planning history

4.1 The previous planning application (ref. 240063) gave approval for:

“Demolition of some of the existing back of house areas and erection of an extension of the existing Hexagon Theatre to provide a new studio auditorium, flexible rehearsal space, community studio with workshop space and back of house space, along with improved public realm by providing a new podium connection between the new proposed extension and Queen’s Walk, along with other associated works.”

4.2 The application site has no other relevant planning history. The theatre itself was constructed around 1977 as has been in continuous use as a theatre since. The red line also includes some land to the south, which was part of the Civic Centre, has been used as allotments, but is now vacant.

4.3 This proposal was subject to pre-application discussions with your officers in 2023. The applicant contacted officers before the submission of this s73 variation planning application.

5. Consultations

5.1. The following consultation responses were received from statutory and internal consultees:

RBC Transport Strategy- The proposal would provide an acceptable access into the site from the podium level for pedestrians, and would be accessible throughout. The reconfiguration of the loading area is considered to be acceptable. The reduced parking spaces (18 existing to 14 proposed) is acceptable. The proposed arrangements for coach parking are also acceptable. No objections subject to conditions.

RBC Conservation Officer – No objection to the proposals on heritage grounds.

RBC Environmental Protection – No objection subject to the imposition of conditions relating to air quality mitigation, land contamination and noise mitigation measures.

RBC Ecology – It is shown that the altered proposal would achieve a 10.51% Biodiversity Net Gain. No objection subject to conditions to secure biodiversity enhancements and green roofs.

RBC Natural Environment Team (Tree Officer) – No objection subject to the imposition of conditions to secure a landscaping scheme and an arboricultural method statement.

RBC SUDS Manager – Additional information was requested regarding the SUDS layout and was provided. No objection subject to conditions securing the works.

Thames Water – No objection subject to informatics

Theatre Trust – Indicated support for the proposals in their amended form.

Public Consultation

- 5.2. Three site notices were displayed at the site on 20 November 2024. No public objections were received.

6. Legal and Planning Policy context

- 6.1. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy framework (NPPF) – among them the ‘presumption in favour of sustainable development’. However, the NPPF does not change the statutory status of the development plan as ‘the starting point for decision making’ (NPPF paragraph 12).
- 6.2. The Planning Practice Guidance on flexible options for planning permissions confirms that section 73 applications are considered against the...

“...Development plan and material considerations, under section 38(6) of the 2004 Act, and conditions attached to the existing permission. Local planning authorities should, in making their decisions, focus their attention on national and development plan policies, and other material considerations which may have changed significantly since the original grant of permission”.

(Annex A: summary comparison table of the flexible options for planning permissions planning practice guidance)

- 6.3. With this context in mind, many of the matters that have already been considered appropriate, are not repeated in this assessment, in view of the overriding policy context not changing so significantly in the intervening time to alter those findings. Furthermore, technical matters not impacted by the proposed changes are not explicitly referenced within this appraisal, with consultation responses in section 5 of this report and conditions included on the original permission and re-attached to this permission satisfying these elements satisfactorily (barring in a number of instances an update to the plans referenced). Instead, as per the guidance above, the focus of attention is national and local policy and other material considerations which have changed significantly. Firstly, since the original decision was issued in May 2023, the NPPF has been updated (most recently in December 2024). The local policy context has not significantly altered, with the same Local Plan (2019) still in place, although the Local Plan is in being updated with a draft Partial Update published on 6th November 2024, with public consultation which finished on 18 December 2024.
- 6.4. In this regard, the NPPF states that due weight should be given to the adopted policies of the Local Plan 2019 according to their degree of consistency with the NPPF (the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the NPPF, the greater the weight that may be given).
- 6.5. Accordingly, the latest NPPF, development plan policies and supplementary planning guidance are relevant. For a full list, please see the appended report, the only change to

which is the updated NPPF, published December 2024. The changes to the NPPF do not affect this proposal.

Local Plan Update

- 6.6. The current version of the Local Plan (adopted in November 2019) turned five years old on Tuesday 5th November 2024. The Local Plan was reviewed in March 2023 and around half of the policies in the plan are considered still up to date. However, the rest need to be considered for updating to reflect changing circumstances and national policy. A consultation version of the draft updated version of the Local Plan was published on 6th November 2024.
- 6.7. Although there is a five-year period for carrying out a review of a plan after it is adopted, nothing in the NPPF or elsewhere says that policies automatically become "out of date" when they are five years old. It is a matter of planning judgement rather than legal fact whether a plan or policies within it are out-of-date. This will depend on whether they have been overtaken by things that have happened since the plan was adopted, either on the ground or through changes in national policy, for example.
- 6.8. Officer advice in respect of the Local Plan policies pertinent to this application listed in the appended report is that they remain in accordance with national policy and that the objectives of those policies remains very similar in the draft updated Local Plan. Therefore, they can continue to be afforded weight in the determination of this planning application and are not considered to be 'out of date'.

7. Appraisal

The main considerations are:

- Land Use Considerations
- Impact on Neighbours
- Design Considerations – Layout, Scale, Heritage, Appearance, Public Realm and Access
- Highways and Transport
- Natural Environment and Ecology
- Environmental Protection Matters (Air Quality, Noise, SUDS & Contamination)
- Sustainability

Land Use Considerations

- 7.1. The proposed changes to the scheme would reduce the amount of new theatre space, remove the community use aspect and reduce the rehearsal space. However, the nature of the proposal would not change, and the assessment as set out in the previous officer report would remain relevant. Given this, it is considered that the proposal continues to be acceptable in land use terms.

Impact on Neighbours

- 7.2. Policy CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity) of the Local Plan states that development will not cause a detrimental impact on the living environment of existing residential properties or unacceptable living conditions for new residential properties. Amongst its considerations, the policy highlights access to daylight and sunlight, 'visual dominance' and overbearing effects of a development, harm to outlook and noise impacts of the development that could impact on a neighbour's living conditions.
- 7.3. As the attached committee report sets out, the nearest sensitive land use is directly to the north at Queen's Court, which is a ten storey building containing student accommodation. The closest residential dwellings are to the west on the other side of the IDR, but given the intervening distance and the scale of the proposals, these properties are not considered to be affected by the proposals.
- 7.4. The attached report explains that the previously approved proposal failed to meet the criteria of Local Plan Policy CC8 due to the impact of the scheme on Queen's Court in

terms of daylight and sunlight. The amendments to the scheme include a significant reduction in scale, both in height and depth, which therefore reduces the harm to the neighbouring student accommodation.

- 7.5. In terms of Vertical Sky Component (VSC), the approved scheme showed that of the 212 windows assessed, 25 windows failed to meet the BRE criteria. In the revised scheme, 17 windows would fail to meet the BRE criteria, resulting in a lesser impact on neighbour's living conditions.
- 7.6. In terms of sunlight penetration to the student accommodation, the approved scheme would result in 12 rooms failing to meet the relevant BRE criteria. The amended scheme would result in 8 rooms failing to meet the criteria.
- 7.7. The proposed scheme would therefore still result in harm to the living conditions at the neighbouring site, although the impacts would be less than the approved scheme. The mitigation of this impact as set out in the previous officer report still stands, and should be considered against the lower number of windows and rooms affected by the amended proposals.
- 7.8. On the basis of the above, the revised proposal would fail to adhere to Local Plan Policy CC8, but at a lesser level of harm than the previously approved scheme, and this level of harm must be weighed in the planning balance against the benefits of the scheme.

Design Considerations – Layout, Scale, Heritage and Appearance

- 7.9. Policy CC7 (Design and the Public Realm) seeks to ensure that new development enhances and preserves local character. The policy places importance on the layout of the urban structure and urban grain, stipulating that development should respond positively to the local context and create safe and accessible environments. The policy requires, "...high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located". The emerging Local Plan update includes Policy CC7 unchanged as it is considered to be in line with the updated NPPF and therefore remains robust in terms of its policy force.
- 7.10. Policy EN1 of the Local Plan seeks to protect and enhance the historic environment. Policy EN3 requires development to contribute positively to local character and distinctiveness. Policy EN4 requires development to demonstrate that the development conserves locally important heritage assets.
- 7.11. The proposal would result in significant changes to the scale and massing of the approved scheme, namely a reduction in the height by a storey and a reduction in depth, pulling the building further from the podium level at Queens Walk, with an access bridge proposed. The overall design approach is retained in the amended scheme, and the quality of materials, design and layout is retained in the amended proposal. The architects of the original scheme have been retained to redesign the proposals following changes to the project's budget.
- 7.12. The reduction in scale would have a beneficial impact on the relationship between the application scheme and the Hexagon itself, ensuring that the scheme reads as subservient and does not compete with the main building.
- 7.13. Overall, the amended proposal would still represent a high quality design, which reflects important aspects of its immediate surroundings, in particular the Hexagon itself, and would provide significant improvements to the public realm at Queen's Walk. The amended scale is acceptable in townscape terms, and would be appropriate in its position adjacent to the Hexagon. The proposal is therefore considered to comply with relevant design policies and would be acceptable in this regard.

Highways and Transport

- 7.14. Policies TR3 (Access, Traffic and Highway related matters), TR1 (Achieving the Transport Strategy) and TR5 (Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging) of the Local Plan seek to ensure that development has an appropriate relationship with the transport network, and encourage the use of public transport, walking and cycling.

- 7.15. Overall, the proposals would be broadly similar to the previously approved scheme in transport terms, and so much of the previous assessment can be considered to still apply. The changes to the scheme are discussed below.
- 7.16. The bridge connection to the podium would provide an improved pedestrian access route into both the existing Hexagon and the proposed building. This creates a step-free connection from Queens Walk and throughout the site, which is a significant improvement from the existing arrangements, and would maintain an important aspect of the approved scheme. The access would now be via a slimmer link bridge rather than the foyer opening directly onto the podium level. Although this is a change from the original proposals, it does not have any negative impact on physical access into and out of the building. The approach to the proposed building would be less attractive and welcoming than the approved scheme, however, it is not considered that this is so significant that the overall approach would be considered unacceptable.
- 7.17. The proposal would provide two additional staff parking spaces compared to the approved scheme, although this is still a reduction of four from the existing arrangement. Overall, this is a welcome benefit of the revised proposals, given the retention of accessible parking bays and the availability of public car parks in the centre of Reading.
- 7.18. Amendments to the coach parking and loading will necessitate changes to the road markings, which would be secured by condition.
- 7.19. The amended proposal moves the cycle parking from internal to external, which is acceptable. This would be secured by condition.
- 7.20. Overall, the alterations to parking are considered to be relatively minor and remain acceptable in transport terms.

Natural Environment and Ecology

- 7.21. Policy EN14 (Trees, Hedges and Woodland) seeks to extend the Borough's vegetation cover and that development should make provision for tree planting whilst Policy CC7 (Design and the Public Realm) seeks proposal should include appropriate landscaping. Proposals should demonstrate an appropriate level of greening and/or net gain in the tree number.
- 7.22. The proposals retain green roofs and a similar level of planting in planters at the front of the site compared to the approved scheme.
- 7.23. Policy EN12 (Biodiversity and the Green Network) seeks that development should not result in a net loss of biodiversity and should provide for a net gain of biodiversity wherever possible by protecting, enhancing and incorporating features of biodiversity on and adjacent to development sites and by providing new tree planting and wildlife friendly landscaping and ecological enhancements wherever practicable.
- 7.24. The approved scheme resulted in a Biodiversity Net Gain of 12.82%. The amended scheme would provide an increase of 10.51% due to a reduction in the amount of green roof due to the overall reduction in scale. This would still meet local and national requirements, and so is considered acceptable.

Environmental Protection Matters (Air Quality, Noise, SUDS & Contamination)

- 7.25. Policy EN15 (Air Quality) requires development to have regard to the need to improve air quality and reduce the effects of poor air quality, especially within the Air Quality Management Area (AQMA). Policy EN17 (Noise Generating Equipment) requires development to ensure noise arising from equipment does not result in harm. Policy CC8 requires development to ensure that noise arising from the use or operation does not have any negative impact on neighbouring residents. Policy EN18 (Flooding and Sustainable Drainage Systems) requires Major development to incorporate SuDS. Policy EN16 (Pollution and Water Resources) required that developments on land affected by contamination can be satisfactorily managed or remediated against so that it is suitable for the proposed use. Past uses of the application indicate that contamination may be present/possible.

- 7.26. The changes to the proposals would result in minor changes to noise and air quality, which has been reflected in updated reports and are not considered to result in any increased harm as a result of the proposal.
- 7.27. The land contamination mitigation approach is not changed by the proposals.
- 7.28. The SUDS have been amended, but are acceptable in principle, with conditions recommended to secure further details.

Sustainability

- 7.29. Policy CC2 (Sustainable Design and Construction) seeks major non-residential to meet BREEAM 'Excellent' standards where possible.
- 7.30. The proposals seek to achieve BREEAM Excellent standards, which is compliant with policy. The previously approved scheme proposed photovoltaic panels on the roof have now been omitted from the proposals due to the reduced roof space and the presence of several existing and proposed tall buildings near to the site which reduced their viability. The proposal would still use ground source heat pumps (as per the previously approved scheme), an efficient building envelope and natural ventilation to still meet the required BREEAM standards. Several conditions are recommended to secure this.

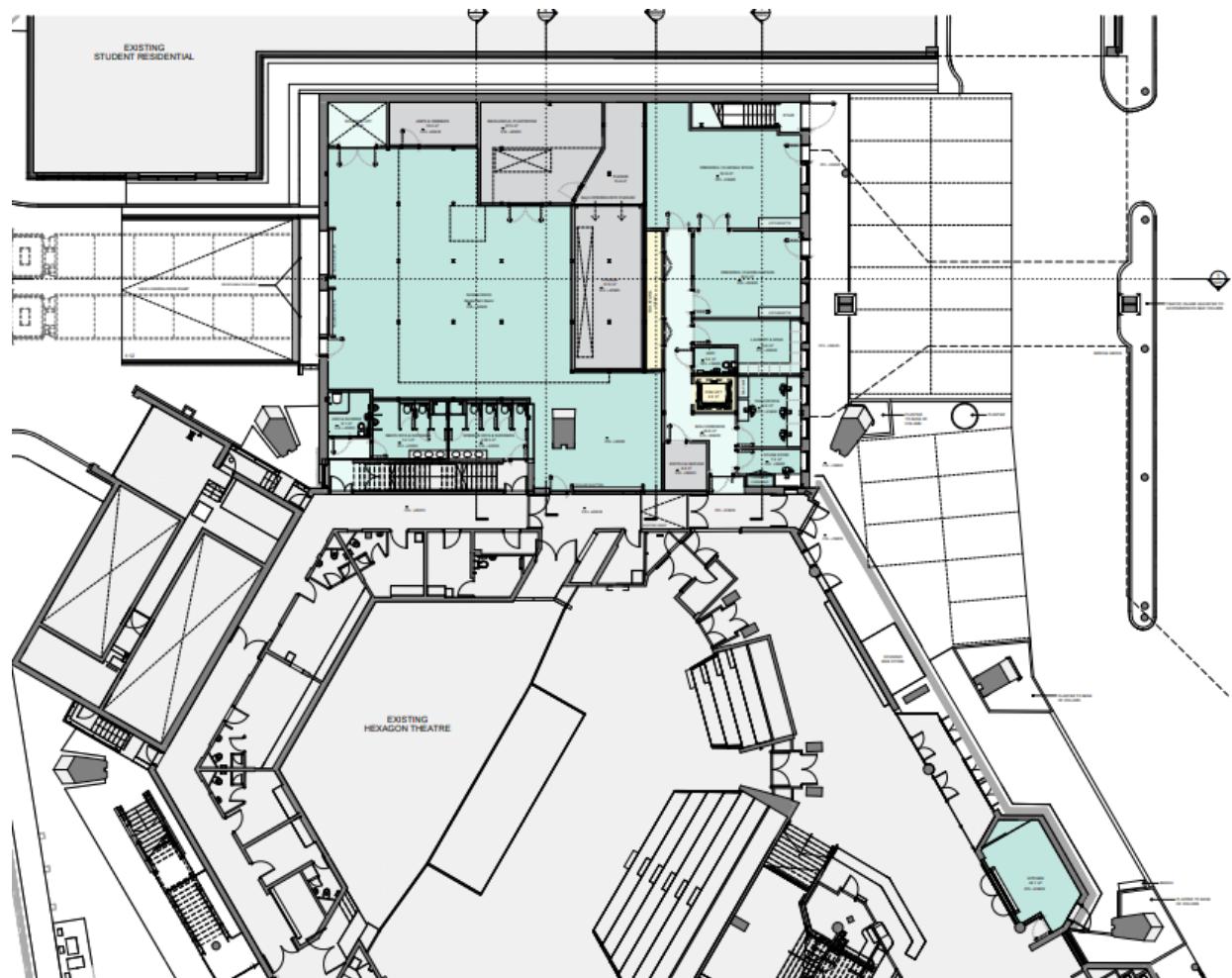
8. Equality implications

- 8.1. Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to—
 - eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 8.2. The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation. It is considered that there is no indication or evidence that the protected groups have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular application. Furthermore, the proposal would provide significant improvement in terms of access for all into both the existing Hexagon and the new theatre.

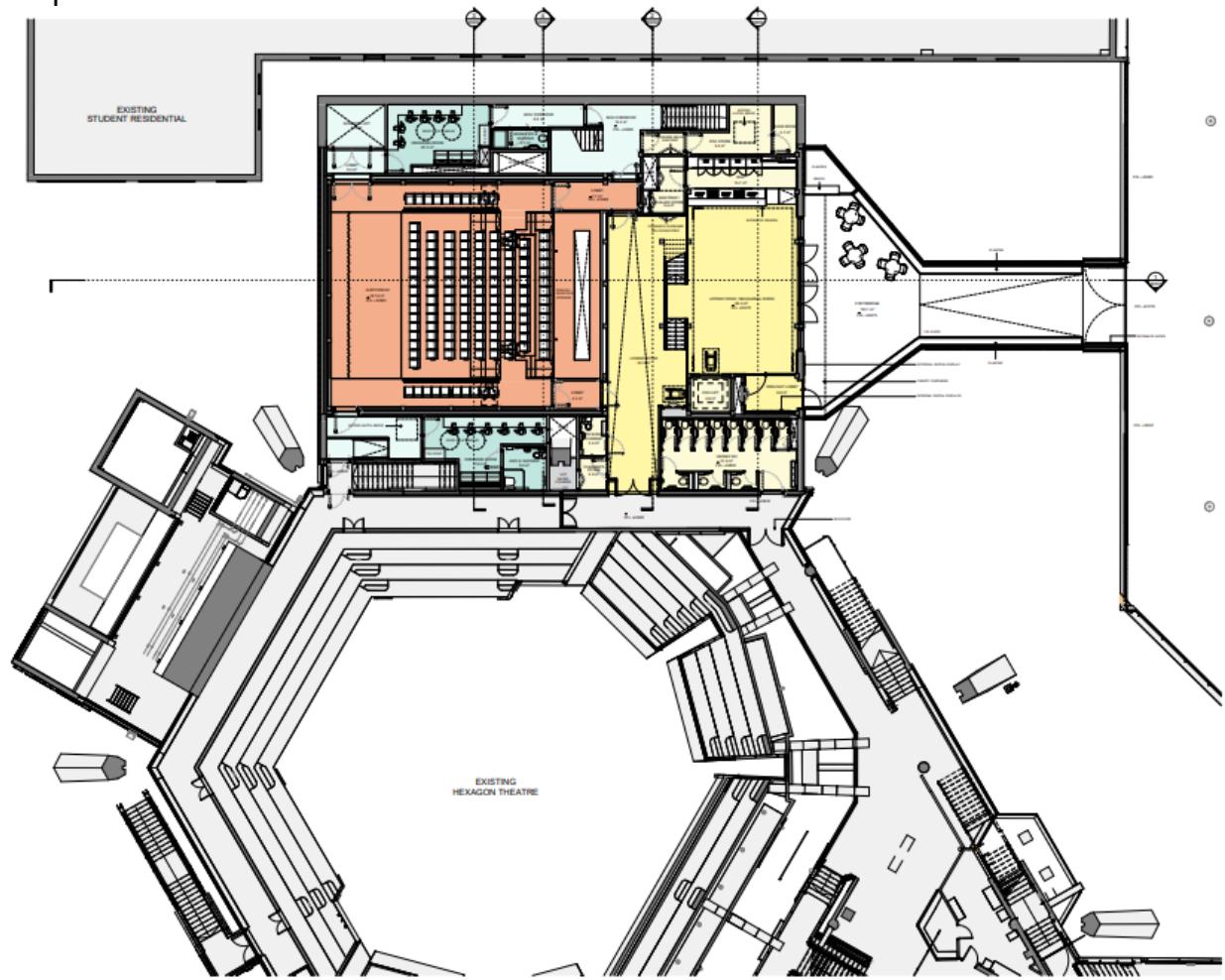
9. Conclusion and Planning Balance

- 9.1. As with all applications considered by the Local Planning Authority, the application needs to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise, as per Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
- 9.2. The amended proposals would still cause some harm to the living conditions for some occupiers of the neighbouring student accommodation at Queen's Court to the north, through a loss of light and outlook, as well as the creation of an overbearing presence. However, the reduction in scale and massing of the amended scheme results in a notable reduction in the impact on neighbours.
- 9.3. On balance, as before, the benefits that the proposals would bring to Reading are considered to outweigh the limited instance of harm caused by the proposal.
- 9.4. Given this, the application is recommended to be approved, subject to relevant planning conditions.

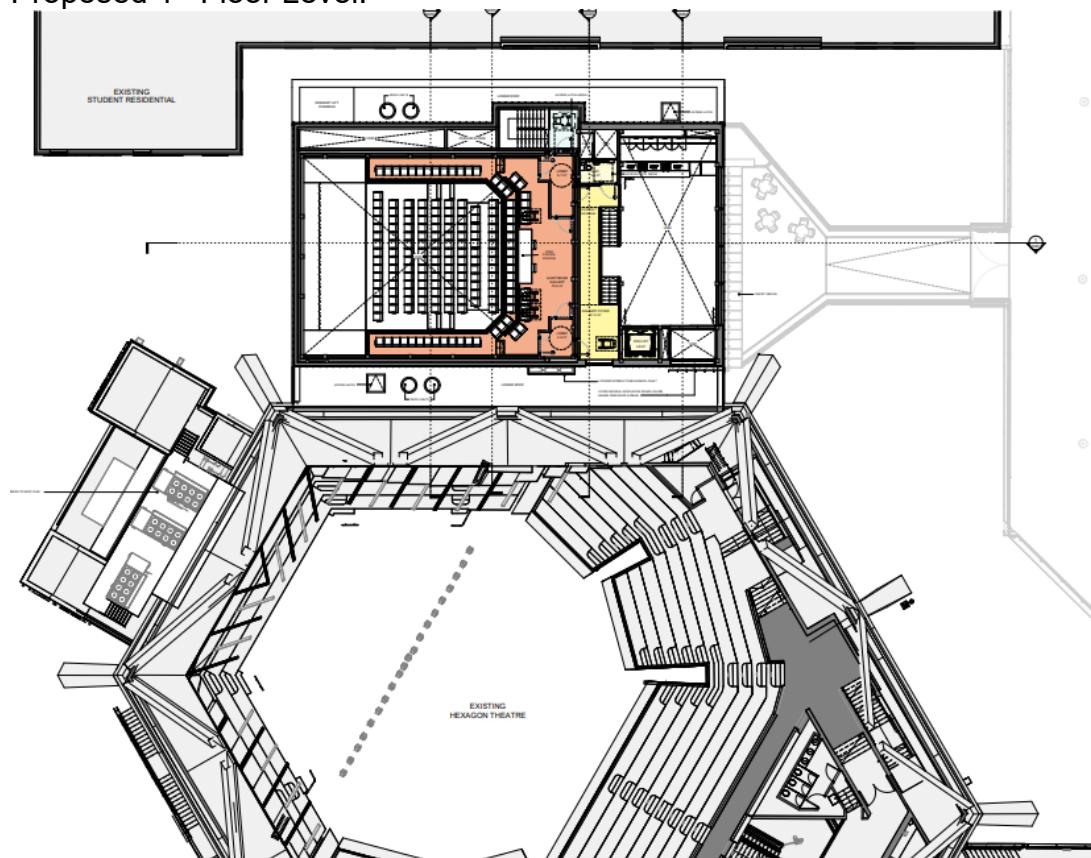
Proposed Basement:



Proposed Podium Level:



Proposed 1st Floor Level:



APPENDIX 1 – Officer Report to PAC for application ref. 240063

27 March 2024



Reading
Borough Council

Working better with you

Title	PLANNING APPLICATION REPORT
Ward	Abbey
Planning Application Reference:	240063/REG3
Site Address:	The Hexagon, Queens Walk, Reading, RG1 7QF
Proposed Development	Demolition of some of the existing back of house areas and erection of an extension of the existing Hexagon Theatre to provide a new studio auditorium, flexible rehearsal space, community studio with workshop space and back of house space, along with improved public realm by providing a new podium connection between the new proposed extension and Queens Walk, along with other associated works
Applicant	Reading Borough Council
Report author	Thomas Bradfield
Deadline:	Original target date: 17/04/2024
Recommendations	Delegate to the Assistant Director for Planning, Transport and Public Protection Services (AD PTPPS) to (i) GRANT full planning permission subject to the satisfactory completion of a Section 106 legal agreement.
S106 Terms	To either secure a construction phase Employment Skills and Training Plan or an employment and skills contribution of £4,330 towards an Employment and Skills Plan for the construction phase of the development.
Conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">27. Full - time limit - three years28. Approved Plans29. Materials (samples to be approved prior to commencement of above ground (ie. basement level) works)30. Mechanical Plant Noise Assessment31. Noise Mitigation Scheme32. Air Quality Assessment33. Contaminated Land Assessment34. Remediation Scheme (to be submitted)35. Remediation Scheme (implement and verification)36. Unidentified Contamination37. External Lighting38. Construction Method Statement39. Hours of Construction40. No Bonfires on Site41. Waste and Recycling Storage42. Sustainable Drainage

	43. BREEAM 'Excellent' non-residential Interim 44. BREEAM non-residential Post Construction 45. Hard and soft landscaping to be approved 46. Arboricultural Method Statement 47. Green Roofs 48. Biodiversity Enhancements 49. Hours of Operation 50. Use of Roof Restricted 51. Vehicle Parking (as specified) 52. Cycle Parking 53. Use restriction
Informatics	10. Positive and Proactive 11. Pre-commencement conditions 12. Highways 13. S106 14. Terms 15. Building Regulations 16. Complaints about construction 17. Contamination 18. CIL 19. Thames Water informatics

2. Executive summary

19.1. The proposal seeks planning permission to extend the Hexagon Theatre to create a new studio auditorium with associated bar and box office, rehearsal space, community space and back of house facilities. The application site currently contains The Hexagon Theatre, and the proposals would replace the existing 'back of house' areas to the north of the main theatre building (currently sited at basement level). The proposal would provide an additional theatre within the town centre, as well as rehearsal space, community use and enhanced back of house areas which would be used by both the existing theatre and the proposed building. The proposals are considered to intensify the theatre use on the site through the addition of a well-designed extension to the existing building. Furthermore, the proposals would provide community space and enhance the existing theatre facilities at The Hexagon. The proposals would result in some harm to the living conditions of the student housing to the north of the proposal site through loss of light, however, when balanced against the significant benefits of the proposal, including fulfilling the policy aims of the Local Plan and supplementary planning documents, it is considered that the proposal is acceptable.

20. Introduction and Site Description

20.1. The application site is on the western side of Queens Walk and contains the Hexagon Theatre, which is a multi-purpose theatre and arts venue. The theatre has capacity for 1,686 people (standing events) or 1,200 (seated), and hosts a variety of performances including concerts, drama, comedy, plays and school events. It is the largest cultural venue in Reading. The building has some architectural significance given the elongated hexagonal shape, and the auditorium is created by concrete trusses infilled with standing seam cladding oversailing a solid masonry base. It is a fine example of distinctive 1970's design. It is not Listed, although Historic England (HE) were asked in 2006 and 2021 to consider the building for listing, but HE determined that the criteria for listing were not fulfilled.



20.2. The main part of the site contains the theatre itself, with associated bar and café areas surrounding the auditorium. Back of house areas are contained within a part single, part two storey element of the building on the northern part of the site. This area is where the proposed extension would be.

20.3. The theatre can be accessed from both the podium level on Queens Walk (the main entrance, pedestrians only) and also from under the podium, which includes 18 parking spaces for employees and performers. There is also an access on the western side of the site from the IDR sliproad, which is used only irregularly used for deliveries, performers and staff.

20.4. The theatre originally formed part of the civic heart of Reading, which included the old Civic Centre directly to the south, which has since been demolished, the police station further to the south and the magistrates courts to further to the south east. To the north of the site is Queen's Court (15 Queens Walk), which is a ten storey former office building, now containing students' accommodation. There are a number of windows which serve a variety of rooms (study/bedrooms, stairwells and hallways) which face directly onto south the application site. To the west is the A329 (the IDR), a large dual carriageway, with terraced housing beyond. Directly to the south and east is an area which is known as Minster Quarter, and is one of the key redevelopment sites in Reading Town Centre. Currently there is not a planning application to redevelopment that area, but it is anticipated that this site will come forward for a residential-led mixed use development. To the north east is Broad Street Mall, a large shopping centre, which is currently the subject of a planning application to partially redevelop the site for high-rise residential and adjusted commercial uses (ref. 240173).

20.5. The site is within the Central Area as defined by the Local Plan, as well as the West Side Major Opportunity Area, the area covered by the Minster Quarter Outline Development Framework and the Hosier Street Site Allocation (CR12e). It is also within the Air Quality Management Area (AQMA). The Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road Conservation Area is on the other side of the A329, to the west. The western side of the site is visible from within the Conservation Area along Howard Street.



21. The proposal

21.1. The proposal seeks to demolish the existing 1-2 storey back of house area on the northern part of the site and construct an extension to the Hexagon which would contain a new studio auditorium (230 capacity when all seated, 300 when standing) alongside associated bar, box office and circulation space. In addition, a rehearsal space, community space, roof terrace and improved back of house facilities would be provided. A new link from the main entrance of the extension to the existing podium would be provided to allow access at podium level. This would mean that the replacement proposal is equivalent to three storeys, rising from the basement undercroft area, up to a ground floor level, which is at the same grade as the podium, with a first floor above this. The rear access from the A329 sliproad would be reconfigured to allow for large delivery vehicles. The proposal would reduce the number of car parking spaces for staff and performers from 18 to 12, but would retain the 8 disabled persons' spaces. New cycle storage for staff will be provided, where none is currently provided.

21.2. The extension would be constructed from a timber frame, glazed and clad in a lightweight metal screen on the Queens Walk side of the site, with a brick built back of house structure on the western side of the site. The design incorporates a natural ventilation tower at roof level, which reflects the name of the theatre in its hexagonal form. Hard and soft landscaping would be provided at podium level around the entrance, and green roofs would be created. The building seeks to attain a BREEAM 'Excellent' energy rating.

21.3. The project is part of the combined cultural regeneration project relating to the relocation of the library and extension and improvement of the Hexagon Theatre. The project was agreed to proceed by Policy Committee on 11th July 2022, with a bid for funding from the government's Levelling Up fund submitted in August 2022 and this was confirmed as being successful in January 2023.

21.4. The application is referred to Committee as this is a Council-own (Regulation 3) development, and a major scheme due to the amount of floorspace being created.

21.5. The application has been supported with the following documents:

- Air Quality Statement

- Contaminated Land Statement
- Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment
- Ecology Statement
- Landscape Statement
- Cover Letter
- Noise Assessment
- Access Statement
- BREEAM Pre Assessment Report
- Daylight/Sunlight Assessment
- Drainage Strategy
- Energy Statement
- Travel Plan
- Planning Statement
- Sustainability Statement
- Transport Statement
- Arboricultural Impact Assessment
- Design and Access Statement
- Existing Plans and Elevations
- Proposed Plans and Elevations
- SUDS Plan
- Swept Path Analysis
- Demolition Plans

22. Planning history

22.1. There is currently an application for a Screening Opinion for whether the scheme requires the submission of a separate Environmental Statement due to the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations (ref. 230653), but this has been overtaken by the current planning application being considered.

22.2. The application site has no other relevant planning history. The theatre itself was constructed around 1977 as has been in continuous use as a theatre since. The red line also includes some land to the south, which was part of the Civic Centre, has been used as allotments, but is now vacant.

22.3. This proposal was subject to pre-application discussions with your officers in 2023.

22.4. The adjacent building, Queen's Court was converted from office use to 284 student accommodation units and extended by two storeys (ref. 150752) and was latterly re-clad (ref. 190383).

23. Consultations

23.1. The following consultation responses were received from statutory and internal consultees:

RBC Transport Strategy- Additional information was requested relating to cycle storage and swept path analysis for coach drop off points, which was received and found to be acceptable. There are no objections to the proposed development subject to conditions relating to a Construction Method Statement, securing the vehicle parking and securing the cycle parking.

RBC Conservation Officer – No objection to the proposals on heritage grounds.

RBC Environmental Protection – Additional information relating to the air quality and noise mitigation measures was requested and received. No objection subject to the imposition of conditions relating to air quality mitigation, land contamination and noise mitigation measures

RBC Ecology – Additional information was requested relating to the biodiversity calculations and post development habitat plan. This was provided and it was shown that the proposal would achieve a 12.82% Biodiversity Net Gain. No objection subject to conditions to secure biodiversity enhancements and green roofs.

RBC Natural Environment Team (Tree Officer) – No objection subject to the imposition of conditions to secure a landscaping scheme and an arboricultural method statement.

RBC SUDS Manager – Additional information was requested regarding the SUDS layout and was provided. No objection subject to conditions securing the works.

Thames Water – No objection

Public Consultation

23.2. Notification letters were sent to all surrounding occupiers (approximately 500 addresses) on 25 January 2024. Three Site notices were displayed at the site on 31 January 2024. Three responses from neighbours were received, one in support, one objecting and one which requested clarification with regards the impact of the proposals on the South Street Arts Centre.

23.3. The objector raised the following points:

- Loss of daylight/sunlight to the student accommodation to the north at Queen's Court
- Impact/nuisance caused during construction works and upon completion of construction
- Concerns regarding the boundary, land ownership and the impact on the substructure

23.4. The applicant's carried out an extensive public consultation process, meeting directly neighbouring landowners at Queen's Court and Broad Street Mall as well as holding a public exhibition at the Hexagon. The applicant's consultation process raised the following comments:

- Support for a new venue in Reading, in particular a small-scale venue
- Support for development in this area of Reading
- Identifying that accessibility into and within the new theatre building is a high priority
- Comfort within the auditorium is important
- The development should be as sustainable as possible
- Use for amateur and community groups should be incorporated into the proposals

- An increase in greenery and planting is encouraged

23.5. Reading's Economy & Destination Agency (REDA) also commented on the application indicating its support for the proposals.

24. Legal and Planning Policy context

24.1. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy framework (NPPF) – among them the ‘presumption in favour of sustainable development’. However, the NPPF does not change the statutory status of the development plan as ‘the starting point for decision making (NPPF paragraph 12).

24.2. In this regard, the NPPF states that due weight should be given to the adopted policies of the Local Plan 2019 according to their degree of consistency with the NPPF (the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the NPPF, the greater the weight that may be given).

24.3. Accordingly, the latest NPPF and the following development plan policies and supplementary planning guidance are relevant:

National Policy – National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) December 2023

- Section 2 – Achieving Sustainable Development
- Section 4 – Decision Making
- Section 6 – Building a strong, competitive economy
- Section 7 – Ensuring the vitality of town centres
- Section 8 – Promoting healthy and safe communities
- Section 9 – Promoting sustainable transport
- Section 11 – Making Effective Use of Land
- Section 12 –Achieving well-designed and beautiful places
- Section 14 -Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change
- Section 15.- Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
- Section 16 – Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

Reading Borough Local Plan (November 2019):

- CC1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- CC2: Sustainable Design and Construction
- CC3: Adaptation to Climate Change
- CC5: Waste Minimisation and Storage
- CC6: Accessibility and the Intensity of Development
- CC7: Design and the Public Realm
- CC8: Safeguarding Amenity
- CC9: Securing Infrastructure
- EN1: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment
- EN3: Enhancement of conservation areas
- EN4: Locally Important Heritage Assets
- EN6: New Development in a Historic Context
- EN12: Biodiversity and the Green Network
- EN14: Trees, Hedges and Woodland
- EN15: Air Quality
- EN17: Noise Generating Equipment
- EN18: Flooding and Drainage
- OU1: New and Existing Community Facilities
- TR1: Achieving the Transport Strategy
- TR3: Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters
- TR5: Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging
- CR2: Design in Central Reading
- CR3: Public Realm in Central Reading
- CR4: Leisure, Culture and Tourism in Central Reading

CR12: West Side Major Opportunity Area

RBC Supplementary Planning Documents

Planning Obligations under S106 (2015)
Sustainable Design and Construction (2019)
Parking Standards and Design (2011)
Employment, Skills and Training (2013)
Minster Quarter Area Outline Development Framework (2018)

Other Documents:

Reading's Culture & Heritage Strategy 2015-2030
Site Layout Planning for Daylight and Sunlight: A Guide to Good Practice - BR209, 2022 edition. Known as the BRE Guidelines.

25. Appraisal

The main considerations are:

- Land Use Considerations
- Impact on Neighbours
- Design Considerations – Layout, Scale, Heritage, Appearance, Public Realm and Access
- Highways and Transport
- Natural Environment and Ecology
- Environmental Protection Matters (Air Quality, Noise, SUDS & Contamination)
- Sustainability

Land Use Considerations

25.1. Policy CC1 (Presumption in favour of Sustainable Development) requires a positive approach to development proposals that reflect the presumption in favour of sustainable development, which lies at the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). To achieve sustainable development a proposal needs to meet economic, social and environmental objectives.

25.2. Policy OU1 supports new, extended or improved community facilities, particularly where this will involve co-location of facilities on a single site. Proposals for on-site intensification of important facilities will be supported, subject to other policies in the plan. The Policy goes on to state that new community facilities should be located where there is a choice of means of travel (including walking and cycling), and in existing centres where possible. Policy CR4 seeks to direct leisure and cultural development to the central area, and states that innovative solutions to make the best use of limited available land would be encouraged.

25.3. Local Plan Policy CR12 identifies the West Side Major Opportunity Area, which includes the site. It envisions this part of Reading as a mixed-use extension to the centre of town containing high quality mixed use environments. In particular the site is covered by the CR12e Hosier Street Allocation, which seeks to provide 500-750 dwellings as well as 4,000-6,000sqm of retail and leisure uses. In particular it encourages the retention of the Hexagon theatre, and its improvement.

25.4. The Minster Quarter Development Framework (MQDF) covers the site and wider area. It provides a brief for future development of the Minster Quarter area. In relation to this site, it envisions "Hexagon Square" just outside the front of the existing theatre as the heart of the new quarter, and improvements to the Hexagon, particularly with regards the entrance.

25.5. The proposal involves the creation of a new theatre space on/adjacent to the existing theatre site, alongside ancillary uses, rehearsal space and dedicated community space. Policy OU1 specifically encourages the co-location of facilities on a single site, and supports the intensification of community and leisure uses in appropriate locations. Furthermore, it seeks to locate new community facilities in locations where there is a choice

of means of travel and in existing centres. Policy CC6 supports this aim, stating that the scale density of new development should be appropriate to the level of accessibility. Given the location is highly accessible, it is considered that the site is highly appropriate for this type of development. The proposal would provide a new theatre co-located with the Hexagon, as well as improving the existing theatre through enhanced back of house facilities as well as other spaces within the new building which support both theatres in a sustainable location with access to multiple means of travel.

25.6. The proposal would also meet the aspirations of both Local Plan Policy CR12 and the MQDF in providing high quality leisure and community floorspace in the heart of the Minster Quarter, enhancing the existing theatre and providing an improved entrance to the facility at podium level.

25.7. The proposal represents an appropriate use in this location, and would provide considerable benefits to the arts and night time economy in Reading town centre. The provision of a new theatre space provides opportunities for additional events that would be more appropriate in a smaller space than the large auditorium in the existing building. The provision of a community studio space and rehearsal space would significantly enhance opportunities for community groups and upcoming performers. The back of house improvements would benefit the existing Hexagon theatre as well as provide functions for the new auditorium. Furthermore, the improvements to Queens Walk would significantly enhance the public realm in line with the policy requirements, and will be discussed in further detail later in the report. Given this, the proposal is considered acceptable in terms of land use.

25.8. The consultation process yielded one comment which raised concerns regarding the impact that this proposal would have on the future of the South Street Arts Centre, another small theatre and arts venue in Reading. Whilst this is not a planning consideration, the applicant has confirmed that the proposed facility is in addition to Reading's existing cultural offering, and is not a replacement for other venues.

Impact on Neighbours

25.9. Policy CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity) of the Local Plan states that development will not cause a detrimental impact on the living environment of existing residential properties or unacceptable living conditions for new residential properties. Amongst its considerations, the policy highlights access to daylight and sunlight, 'visual dominance' and overbearing effects of a development, harm to outlook and noise impacts of the development that could impact on a neighbour's living conditions.

25.10. The nearest sensitive use is directly to the north at Queen's Court, which is a ten storey building containing student accommodation. The closest residential dwellings are to the west on the other side of the A329, but given the intervening distance and the scale of the proposals, they are not considered to be affected by the proposals.

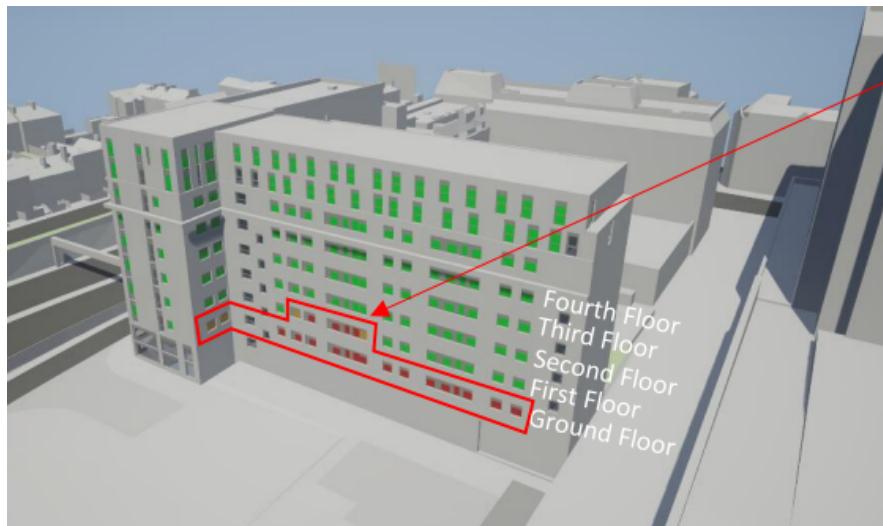
25.11. The proposals would be in close proximity to the southern elevation of Queen's Court, which has numerous windows facing towards the application site. The windows face directly south towards the site on each floor, and serve bedrooms, kitchens, stairwells, corridors and study spaces.

25.12. At basement level (below podium level), the proposed building would be sited on the northern boundary of the site, 2m away from Queen's Court. At podium level ('street level'), the proposal between 2m and 4m away from the southern face of Queen's Walk. At first floor level the proposal is almost entirely set off from the boundary, at 4m from the side elevation of Queen's Court. These are close separation distances and as such, the proposals would have an impact on the amenities of the affected rooms in terms of daylight, sunlight and outlook as per Policy CC8.

Daylight

25.13. The applicant has submitted a comprehensive daylight and sunlight report which provides an assessment of the impact of the proposed building on the daylight and sunlight levels to the rooms which the windows serve. The report assessed 212 windows that could

be affected by the proposals and found that 25 windows would experience a loss of daylight beyond the Building Research Establishment (BRE) guidelines. These affected windows are on the ground and first floor of the building on the southernmost elevation, and serve 20 study/bedrooms, some of which contain kitchen areas, as well as stairwells and corridors. Of the 25 windows which will lose daylight, 6 would experience minor reductions (up to 29% in daylight reduction), which is considered acceptable in planning terms. The other 19 windows would experience more significant reductions in daylight. Both study/bedrooms with and without kitchens are considered to be 'habitable rooms' under the BRE guidance, and so loss of light to these areas is considered to be more harmful than to corridors or stairwells. The below image taken from the submitted report identifies the affected windows:



Sunlight

25.14. The report also assessed the impact of the proposal on the sunlight received for rooms facing onto the site. Of the 127 rooms assessed which have a window facing towards the application site, 115 rooms would continue to meet the BRE criteria. The remaining 12 rooms which do not meet the criteria would not meet the guidelines due to a reduction in the winter sunlight hours only. These rooms are 2 kitchens within study bedroom units and 10 study/bedrooms and are located on the ground floor only, no communal amenity areas are affected. All rooms would, however, meet the BRE recommended criteria for annual sunlight hours, i.e. when considered across the year, average levels of sunlight would be acceptable when reviewed against the BRE Guidelines, but would be below the relevant threshold during winter. The below image, taken from the submitted report shows the windows which would not meet the guidelines for winter sunlight.



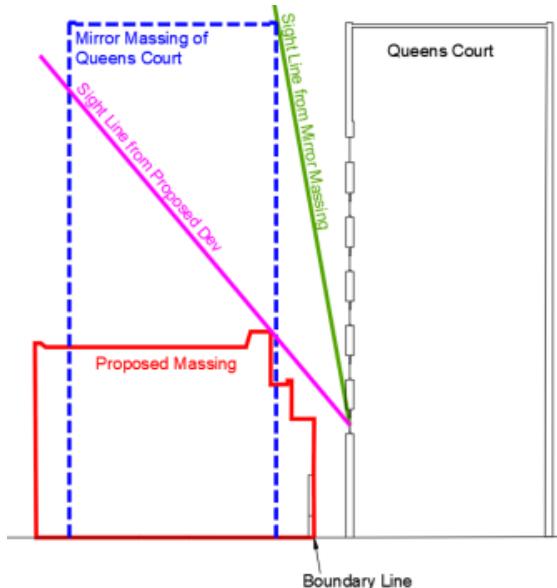
25.15. The submitted report identifies that the proposals would cause harm to the living conditions of the residents at Queen's Court through loss of daylight and sunlight. The Queen's Court building was originally constructed as an office building facing directly onto the back of house area of the theatre. The original relationship between the two sites has resulted in a

situation where the relationship between the two developments is already very close. Given the proximity of Queen's Court to the boundary of the site, and the position of the proposal on and close to the boundary of the application site, between 2m and 4m away from the south facing windows, the proposal would also result in an overbearing presence and a loss of outlook, particularly to the ground floor (podium level) windows, as well as the impacts on daylight and sunlight as outlined in the previous paragraphs. It is important to note that the proposals would only affect the study/bedrooms, some of which include their own kitchen facilities, and none of the windows serve communal living spaces. Where harm has been established, certain factors can play a part in mitigating that harm. In this case, there are several mitigating factors which should be borne in mind.

25.16. The Queen's Court building was converted from office use to student accommodation, and offers either 44 or 51 week tenancies to students. Short stays at the site (minimum 1 week) are also offered and this appears to be out of term time. These arrangements indicate that there is some turnover of tenants within the building, and although there are some short stays, many of the tenants are likely to be there for a year, but may stay longer if tenancies are available. Each student has their own study-bedroom, although there are different arrangements, including some with their own kitchen, and so logic dictates that these occupants are more likely to spend time in their study/bedroom and so are more susceptible to impacts on their light levels. The windows facing onto the application site only serve study-bedrooms and bedrooms with kitchens, as well as several corridor/stairwell windows. There are also numerous other amenity facilities within Queen's Court, including a gym and fitness studio, cinema room, games rooms, dining area and study areas, as well as an external courtyard amenity space. This allows residents other spaces to use other than the study/bedrooms which are most affected by the proposals. Given this, it is clear that whilst the impact on the identified rooms and windows is significant in places, the nature of the use of the building is such that there are other areas which the residents regularly use which have suitable amenity.

25.17. Whilst the daylight loss for the 25 windows identified in the report is significant compared to the daylight received currently, another assessment technique in the BRE guidance is the 'Vertical Sky Component' (VSC) values of the windows. This is a measure of the amount of sky visible from a given point (usually taken from the centre of the window), and is expressed as a percentage. All of the 25 windows which are affected by the proposals would retain a VSC of 10% or higher, and the average across these windows would be 15%. It is accepted practice that VSC values over 20% are considered reasonably good, in the mid-teens can be considered acceptable, but below 10%, the availability of direct light from the sky will be poor. Given the VSC values, and the urban location, it is considered that although there is a loss of daylight to the windows, on average, the VSC value demonstrates that in terms of this important measure, the daylight levels nevertheless remain comparatively reasonable for this dense urban location.

25.18. The BRE guidelines further establish the 'bad neighbour' principle, recognising that some buildings are inherently bad neighbours and are sited too close to their boundary to expect high levels of daylight. Queen's Court is within 2m of the boundary with the application site and can be considered as a bad neighbour as it constrains the development potential of the application site if the BRE guideline tests for daylight and sunlight are rigidly adhered to, and therefore larger reductions of daylight and sunlight should be expected by this adjacent development. The BRE Guidelines set out a Mirror Massing Assessment, which is used to demonstrate that if a bad neighbour building were replicated on the development site, what the light implications would be for the existing building. The applicants have carried this out, and provided the below image to demonstrate the difference:



25.19. The mirror massing of Queen's Court creates an obstruction angle of 80 degrees, which is equivalent to approximately 3% VSC value. Therefore the alternative target value of 3% would be considered a reasonable VSC value when using this method of assessment. Given the proposals would have a VSC value of 10% as a minimum, this would exceed the 3% suggested by the Mirror Massing Assessment.

25.20. Overall, it is accepted that the proposal would cause harm to the living conditions of the neighbouring student accommodation through loss of light, outlook and the creation of an increased overbearing presence in close proximity to the boundary. This harm is mitigated somewhat given the nature of the adjoining use and the provision of a largely acceptable VSC value to many of the windows. Furthermore, the application of the Mirror Massing Assessment demonstrates that Queen's Court relies on the current open nature of the Hexagon site to "borrow" outlook and light to achieve the light levels as existing. The Mirror Massing Assessment demonstrates that Queen's Court can be considered a bad neighbour, and it is not reasonable to expect that the light and outlook levels can be retained where development is presented in such situations. Forthcoming development, for example at Broad Street Mall, must be considered in terms of an increase in overshadowing and loss of light, but given no permission exists on that site currently, this should only be given very limited weight. These mitigating factors would not fully overcome the harm that would arise from the introduction of the proposed building, however, officers consider that the impact of the harm is lessened in this instance. Given this, the proposal would fail to adhere to Local Plan Policy CC8 in its entirety, and this harm must be weighed in the planning balance against the benefits of the scheme.

Design Considerations – Layout, Scale, Heritage and Appearance

25.21. Policy CC7 (Design and the Public Realm) seeks to ensure that new development enhances and preserves local character. The policy places importance on the layout of the urban structure and urban grain, stipulating that development should respond positively to the local context and create safe and accessible environments. The policy requires, "...high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located".

25.22. The application relates to one of the landmark buildings in Reading, the Hexagon, which has a distinctive character due to its Brutalist hexagonal form. The current theatre is readily visible from Queens Walk and the podium level, and whilst it presents an attractive façade itself, has become somewhat isolated in recent years, and the experience of the Hexagon from the podium level is not as welcoming and attractive as it could be, particularly given that the main access is accessed via stairs from the podium.

25.23. The proposal would replace existing back of house space to the north of the Hexagon building, introducing a larger scale of development on this side of the Hexagon when compared with the current built form. Considering the unique design characteristics

of the Hexagon itself, the proposed rectangular form of the new extension would not compete with the architectural form of the main building. The introduction of podium-level access, a glazed frontage, and active uses such as the bar/café and roof terrace will significantly increase the legibility of the cultural offering in this part of Reading. Furthermore, the activation of this part of Queens Walk at podium level would provide an enhanced visitor experience for both the new theatre and the existing Hexagon. The proposed use, access route to Queens Walk, internal and external spaces would complement the Hexagon's original use and would enhance the setting of the Hexagon, particularly when viewed from Queen's Walk.

25.24. The proposed extension would reflect important characteristics of the main Hexagon building, without seeking to copy the original building, or become more prominent. The use of a timber structure with concrete decks and steel columns would refer to both the architecture of the Hexagon itself and the wider immediate environment by using complementary materials and an appropriate design style. The repetition of the hexagon shape in the ventilation stack would also ensure that the building reflects the unique architectural style of the existing theatre. The ventilation stack provides an attractive and visible marker which would aid in pathfinding from along Dusseldorf Way and other views across the Minster Quarter Area, signifying the Hexagon cultural quarter.

25.25. The extension of the podium to provide access into the new theatre would provide additional high quality public space and an improved entrance to the theatre facilities. Given the existing entrance to the Hexagon is not at the same level as the podium, and requires stepped or ramped access, this would bring significant advantages, and would contribute towards the aims of Local Plan Policy CR12 and the MQDF, especially when combined with the increase in planting at both podium level and roof level with green roofs provided.

25.26. Policy EN1 of the Local Plan seeks to protect and enhance the historic environment. Policy EN3 requires development to contribute positively to local character and distinctiveness. Policy EN4 requires development to demonstrate that the development conserves locally important heritage assets.

25.27. The site is not within a conservation area, nor is the building listed. However, it can be considered as a non-designated heritage asset given its local significance and the unique nature of its design. The application site is located in between two Conservation Areas, St Mary's Butts/Castle Street to the east and Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road to the west. There are some Listed Buildings nearby, including the Grade 1 Listed Church of St Mary (the Minster), although these are set some distance from the application site.



25.28. Given the distance from designated heritage assets, such as the Grade 1 Listed St Mary's Church and the two Conservation Areas, combined with the high quality of design

and appropriate scale within its context, it is considered that the proposal would not result in any harm to the setting or views of the designated heritage assets.

25.29. Overall, the proposal would represent a high quality design, which reflects important aspects of its immediate surroundings, in particular the Hexagon itself, and would provide significant improvements to the public realm at Queen's Walk. The scale is acceptable in townscape terms, and would be appropriate in its position adjacent to the Hexagon. The proposal is therefore considered to comply with relevant design policies, and would be acceptable in this regard.

Highways and Transport

25.30. Policies TR3 (Access, Traffic and Highway related matters), TR1 (Achieving the Transport Strategy) and TR5 (Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging) of the Local Plan seek to ensure that development has an appropriate relationship with the transport network, and encourage the use of public transport, walking and cycling.

25.31. The site is within the Reading Central Area, and is well served by rail and bus links, as well as having a large number of public car parking spaces nearby (within the Broad Street Mall car park). There are extensive on-street car parking restrictions in the area which prevent on-street parking. The proposal would result in a reduction in car parking spaces, from 18 to 12 due to the space needed to create the podium level pedestrian link. The 12 spaces would be provided in the same area as the existing spaces, and the 8 disabled persons' spaces would be retained. No visitor parking, other than accessible parking, would be provided. Given the location of the site in an area with great public transport links, and the proximity to public car parks, this level of provision is considered to be acceptable.

25.32. New cycle parking would be provided for staff in an internal cycle store at basement level, along with end of trip facilities such as a shower. This is an improvement on the existing situation, as there are currently no cycle parking spaces on site.

25.33. The proposals could accommodate 244 seated attendees, or 321 standing, alongside the existing provision at the Hexagon. The number of staff on site is expected to be unchanged as a result of the development proposals. The applicant has undertaken travel surveys which demonstrate that 55% of visitors travel to the Hexagon by car, with 45% travelling by sustainable modes of transport. Therefore, in a worst case scenario (321 attendees), the new space may generate approximately 178 additional trips to the site. Whilst this represents an increase on the existing trip generation, it is unlikely to result in a material impact on traffic flows on the surrounding highway network, or the public transport system.

25.34. The proposal would provide a new podium-level pedestrian link connecting Queen's Walk to the new extension, which would provide improved access into the Hexagon at an appropriate location. This represents a significant benefit in terms of accessibility into both theatres.

25.35. The proposals would reconfigure the existing Hexagon loading area, moving the loading area from the eastern side to the western side to create a unified loading area for back of house operations accessed from the A329 IDR. This results in the removal of the need to park lorries and other large vehicles at the front of the Hexagon, minimising interaction with coach drop offs, staff parking and disabled parking, which is a benefit. Swept paths have been submitted to demonstrate that two HGVs can be accommodated on site simultaneously. Deliveries are not expected to increase, and the proposed extension would use the same waste and recycling storage and collection arrangements as the existing building, which is considered to be acceptable.

25.36. The provision of a new theatre with associated other uses is in a highly accessible location, with multiple methods of transport viable for access to the site. It would improve the existing servicing and access arrangements at the Hexagon, and would introduce cycle parking and facilities for staff to the site. Furthermore, it would provide an adequate level

of car parking. The proposal would result in any unacceptable impact on the highway network, and is considered acceptable in this regard.

Natural Environment and Ecology

25.37. Policy EN14 (Trees, Hedges and Woodland) seeks to extend the Borough's vegetation cover and that development should make provision for tree planting whilst Policy CC7 (Design and the Public Realm) seeks proposal should include appropriate landscaping. Proposals should demonstrate an appropriate level of greening and/or net gain in the tree number.

25.38. The site is within Abbey ward, which has the lowest tree canopy cover in the Borough, and is within the Air Quality Management Area. The site is a very urban precent location, with significant levels of hard surfacing and limited opportunities for planting given the nature of the podium and level differences. The need for additional tree planting is therefore of significant importance. Furthermore, given the importance of the site in its position within the Minster Quarter area, proposals should ensure that high quality hard and soft landscaping is provided.

25.39. Significant planting and landscaping will be difficult to achieve because of the constrained nature of the site, changes in levels between the basement and podium and the urban nature of the immediate area. The proposals would introduce hard landscaping to the front of the building to allow for the new link to the podium, alongside planters with trees on the Queens Walk frontage. The proposal would also include green roofs and a number of biodiversity enhancements. The proposals have provided an appropriate level of soft landscaping, considering the restrictions on the site, which would fit into the wider aspirations for the area, and would introduce green roofs and planters with trees to an area with very little existing greenery. The hard landscaping linking Queens Walk with the theatre would ensure a high quality finish, and would represent a significant improvement on the existing arrangements.

25.40. Policy EN12 (Biodiversity and the Green Network) seeks that development should not result in a net loss of biodiversity and should provide for a net gain of biodiversity wherever possible by protecting, enhancing and incorporating features of biodiversity on and adjacent to development sites and by providing new tree planting and wildlife friendly landscaping and ecological enhancements wherever practicable.

25.41. The applicant has demonstrated that the site does not currently accommodate for protected species, but there are likely to be some areas of the site which are used for nesting birds, with some offsite trees nearby (within the Minster Quarter site) having potential for roosting bats. The applicant has recommended some precautionary measures which would ensure that the works would not affect protected species, which would be secured by condition.

25.42. The applicant has provided a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) assessment, which demonstrates that the proposal would result in a net gain of 0.16 biodiversity units, equating to an increase of 12.82%. This is achieved through the creation of two green roofs, which would be secured by condition.

25.43. The proposals would provide adequate levels of hard and soft landscaping and ecology enhancements, which would comply with Local Plan Policies EN12 and EN14.

Environmental Protection Matters (Air Quality, Noise, SUDS & Contamination)

25.44. Policy EN15 (Air Quality) requires development to have regard to the need to improve air quality and reduce the effects of poor air quality, especially within the Air Quality Management Area (AQMA). Policy EN17 (Noise Generating Equipment) requires development to ensure noise arising from equipment does not result in harm. Policy CC8 requires development to ensure that noise arising from the use or operation does not have any negative impact on neighbouring residents. Policy EN18 (Flooding and Sustainable Drainage Systems) requires Major development to incorporate SuDS. Policy EN16 (Pollution and Water Resources) required that developments on land affected by contamination can be satisfactorily managed or remediated against so that it is suitable for

the proposed use. Past uses of the application indicate that contamination may be present/possible.

25.45. The site is within the AQMA, and therefore must consider appropriate mitigation measures where a potential increase in pollutants exists. The applicant has demonstrated that the proposal would have a negligible impact on air quality due to the nature of the use and mitigation measures proposed. The applicants are encouraging the use of sustainable modes of transport through the provision of cycle facilities on site, a reduction in car parking on site and would seek the BREEAM Excellent accreditation. It is considered that the proposals are sufficient to ensure that there would not be a negative impact on air quality, and mitigation measures would be secured by condition.

25.46. The proposals would result in an increase in activity (ie. noise disturbance) at the site. The nearest noise receptor would be at Queen's Court. A noise assessment has been submitted as part of the application, which demonstrates that there would be no significant impact on the neighbouring building, however, further information regarding mechanical plant noise and noise insulation would be secured by condition. A Construction Method Statement will be secured by condition to ensure that the construction process would be managed appropriately to ensure minimal impact on neighbouring uses.

25.47. The applicant has submitted a desk top study which identifies that there is likely to be a low risk of contaminated land at the site, but recommends an investigation to confirm. This would be secured by condition.

25.48. The building would have glazing facing onto Queens Walk, which would result in some lightspill in an easterly direction. The flank wall facing Queen's Court does not contain glazing, and is unlikely to result in significant lightspill, ensuring that there would be no harm to the neighbouring student accommodation. A condition is recommended to provide additional information relating to light levels at the site to ensure that lightspill from inside the building would not impact on neighbouring residents.

25.49. Further conditions securing a Construction Method Statement, hours of construction and preventing bonfires on site have been recommended to ensure that disruption during the construction process would be minimal.

25.50. The applicant has presented a Sustainable Drainage Strategy which would be satisfactory and would be secured by condition.

Sustainability

25.51. Policy CC2 (Sustainable Design and Construction) seeks major non-residential to meet BREEAM excellent standards where possible.

25.52. The proposals seek to achieve BREEAM Excellent standards, which is compliant with policy, and would bring forward a sustainable scheme. The proposal would utilise Air Source Heat Pumps and solar panels at roof level to achieve this. The construction process would also use sustainable materials. Conditions are recommended to secure this.

Legal Agreement

25.53. The overarching infrastructure Policy CC9 (Securing Infrastructure) allows for necessary contributions to be secured to ensure that the impacts of a scheme are properly mitigated. The following obligations would be sought and as set out in the recommendation above.

25.54. Employment and Skills Plan (ESP) for the Construction phases of the development. This is required in line with Policy CC9 (Securing Infrastructure) and the Employment, Skills and Training SPD. It is not yet known whether this will take the form of an actual ESP to be progressed by them on site, or payment of an equivalent financial contribution, as per the SPD formula. The legal agreement will be worded flexibly to enable either eventuality.

- To secure a construction phase Employment Skills and Training Plan or equivalent financial contribution (**£4,330**).

26. Equality implications

26.1. Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to—

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

26.2. The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation. It is considered that there is no indication or evidence that the protected groups have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular application. Furthermore, the proposal would be a positive addition to Reading in terms of its use and the complementary nature of the uses and significant improvement in terms of access for all into both the existing Hexagon and the new theatre.

27. Conclusion and Planning Balance

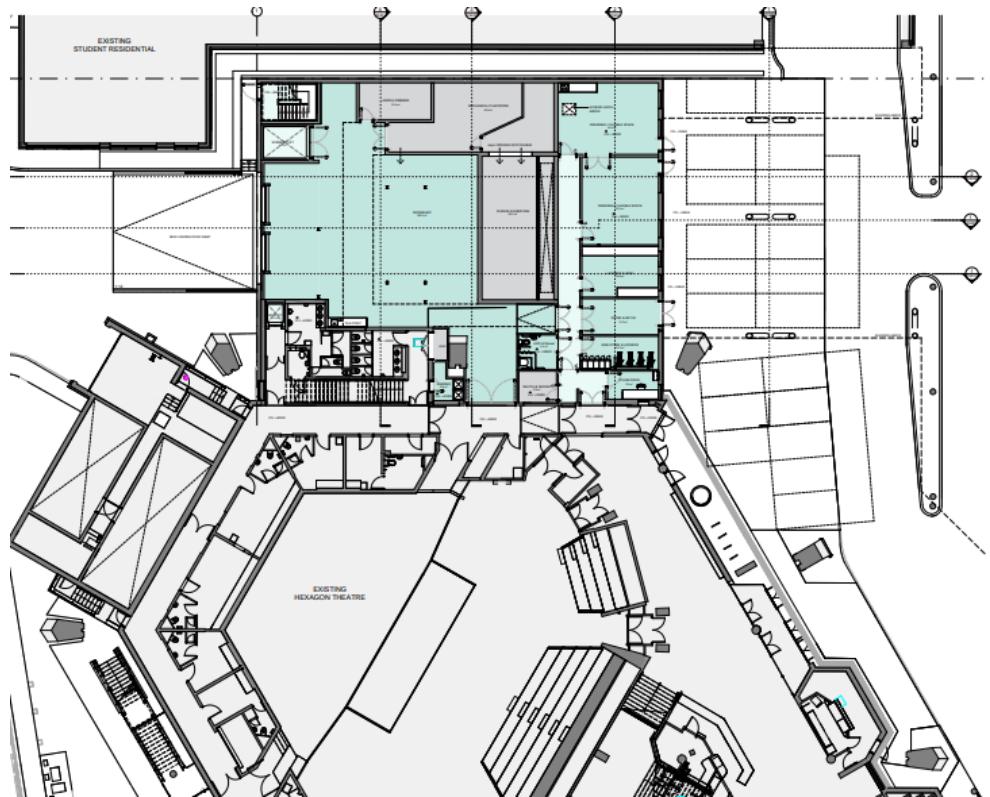
27.1. As with all applications considered by the Local Planning Authority, the application is required to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise, as per Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

27.2. The proposals would result in significant benefits, including the provision of a new theatre within the town centre, alongside community space which can be used in conjunction with the rehearsal space and other facilities at the site. The proposals would also provide improvements to the existing theatre facility at the Hexagon, through greatly improved back of house space, a reorganised delivery and servicing provision and the provision of cycle parking for staff. These improvements to the arts and culture offer within Reading Town Centre carry great weight in considering the proposal. Furthermore, the proposals bring significant public realm improvements in a key location within an allocated Opportunity Area, and would introduce a building of high quality design in a key cultural quarter of Reading. The high quality design and public realm improvements carry significant weight when assessing the application.

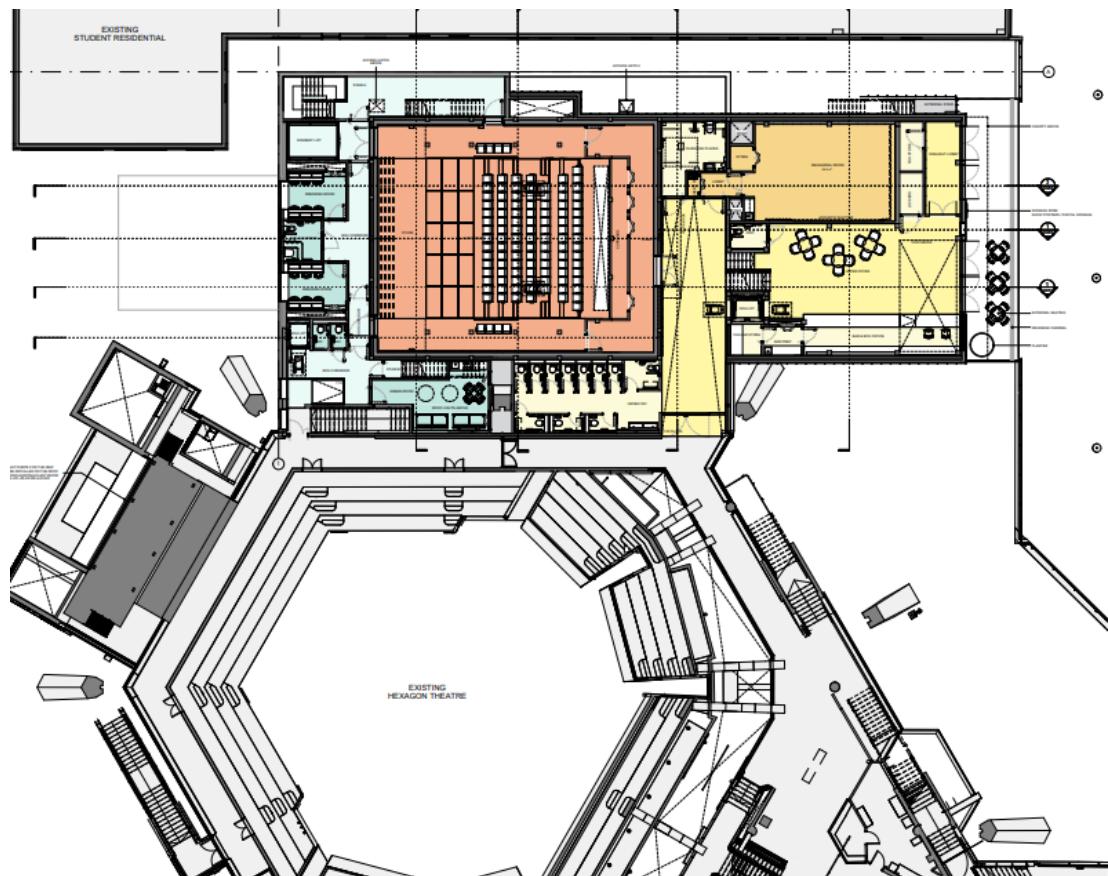
27.3. The proposals would cause harm to the living conditions for some occupiers of the neighbouring student accommodation at Queen's Court to the north, through a loss of light and outlook, as well as the creation of an overbearing presence. However, the severity of this harm is considered to partly due to the orientation, proximity and siting/history of the adjacent building, which was designed as an office block and largely relies for its outlook and daylight over the adjacent site (the application site). This situation is not considered to prevent development given the significant benefits of the scheme.

27.4. On balance, the benefits that the proposals would bring to Reading outweigh the limited instance of harm caused by the proposal. The significance of a new cultural facility in this part of the town, alongside the benefits to the existing Hexagon theatre, as well as the public realm and design quality would be so great that they would overcome the harm caused to living conditions at the neighbouring site.

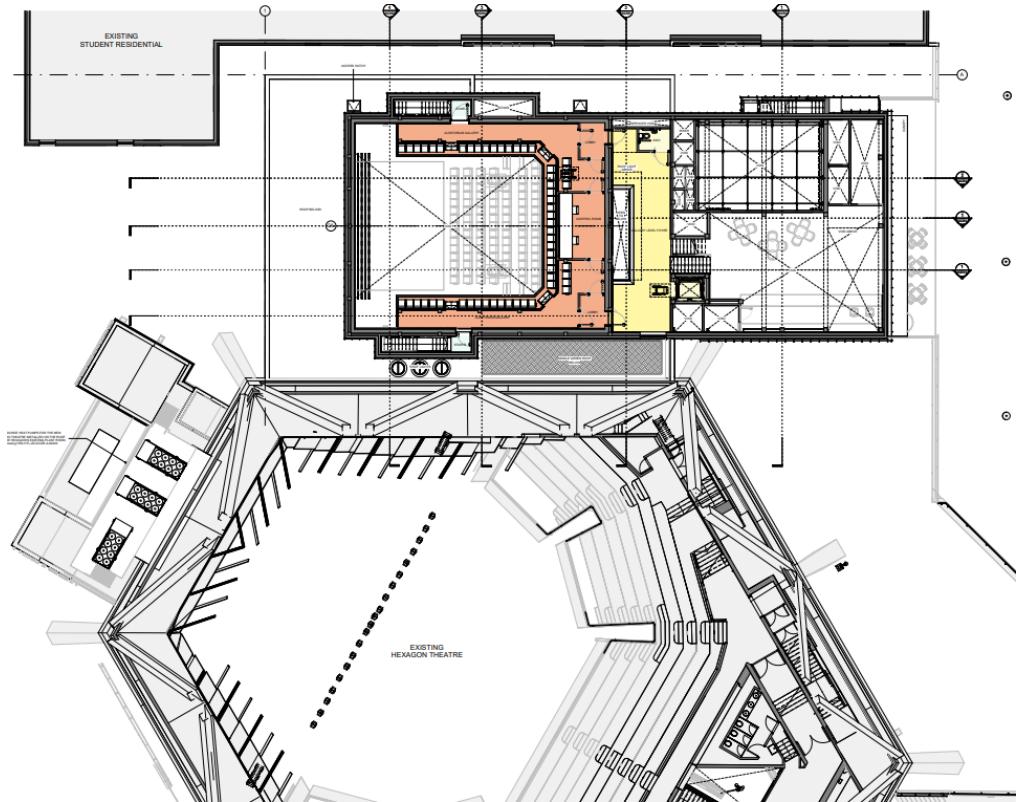
27.5. Given this, the application is recommended to be approved, subject to relevant planning conditions and legal agreement.



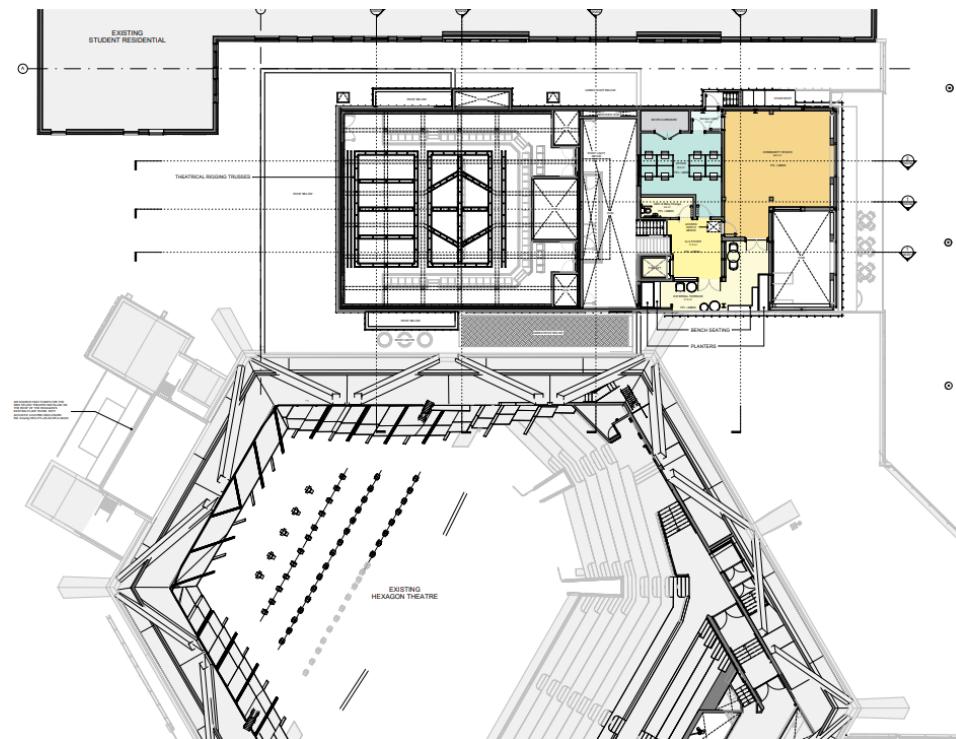
Ground Floor Plan (Podium level)



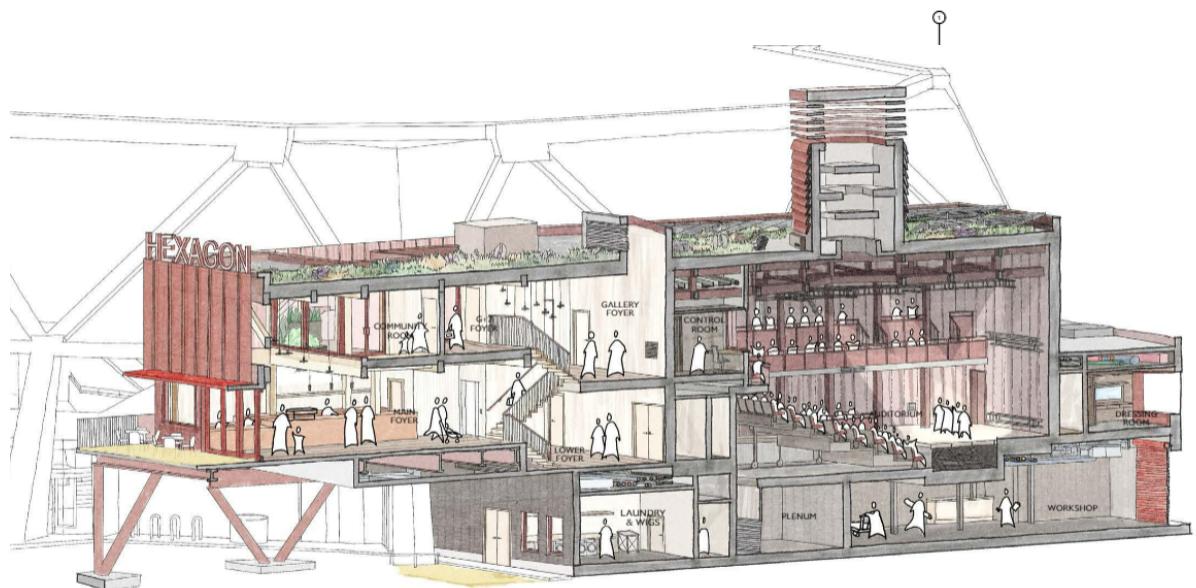
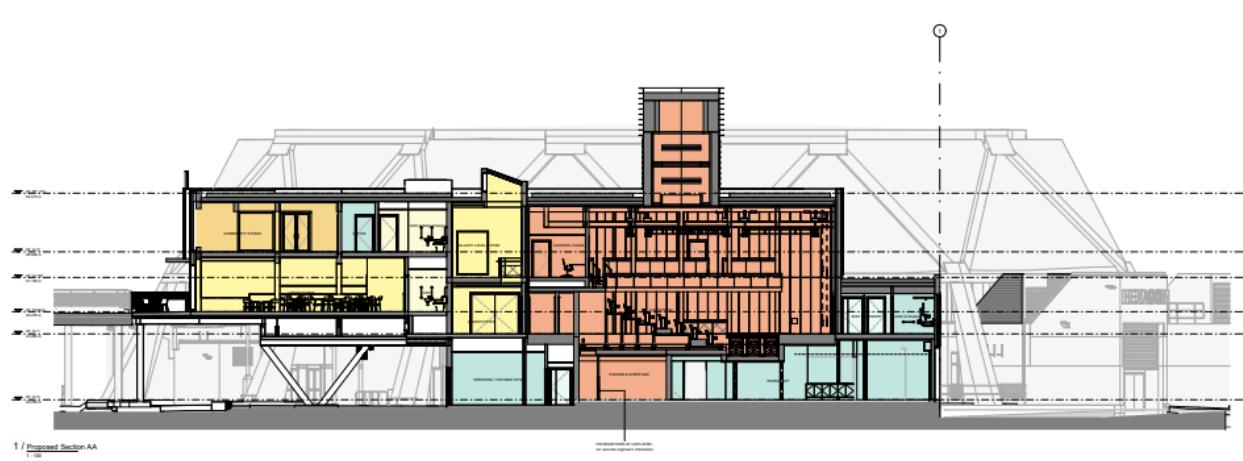
Mezzanine Level



First floor level (above podium)



Site Sections



APPENDIX 2: Update Report for PAC for Application ref. 240063

27 March 2024



Title	PLANNING APPLICATION UPDATE REPORT
Ward	Abbey
Planning Application Reference:	240063/REG3
Site Address:	The Hexagon, Queens Walk, Reading, RG1 7QF
Proposed Development	Demolition of some of the existing back of house areas and erection of an extension of the existing Hexagon Theatre to provide a new studio auditorium, flexible rehearsal space, community studio with workshop space and back of house space, along with improved public realm by providing a new podium connection between the new proposed extension and Queens Walk, along with other associated works
Applicant	Reading Borough Council
Report author	Thomas Bradfield
Recommendation	Approve, subject to planning conditions S106 not recommended as the Employment Skills and Training Plan can be secured by condition.
Conditions	As per main report, with the following alterations: Removal of Condition 6 (Air Quality Assessment) – the applicant has demonstrated that sufficient measures are included within the proposals to ensure that there would be no unacceptable increase in emissions Removal of Condition 15 (Bin stores) – The applicant has confirmed that the existing bin stores within the Hexagon will be used, which is considered to be an acceptable arrangement, and so no further details are required. Removal of Conditions 7 (Contaminated Land Assessment) and 8 (Remediation Scheme to be submitted). Applicant has provided these as part of the application documents, and demonstrated that there is no risk of contaminated land. Insertion of condition CO7 (Land Gas) to ensure that the applicant undertakes the required checks to ensure that there is no land gas at the site. Insertion of Condition SU7 (Sustainable Drainage to be Approved). The applicant has provided enough information to

	<p>agree that the SUDS scheme is acceptable in principle, but additional detail will be required.</p> <p>Insertion of a condition to secure the Employment Skills and Training Plan, as worded below:</p> <p><i>Prior to the commencement of construction, an Employment, Skills and Training Plan for construction skills shall have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority in consultation with Reading UK CIC and shall thereafter be implemented in accordance with the approved plan.</i></p> <p><i>REASON: to ensure that the relevant economic development services including employment, skills and training development initiatives are implemented in accordance with Policy CC9 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 and the Employment, Skills and Training SPD 2013</i></p>
Informatics	As per main report

1. Further consultation responses

- 1.1 Two additional consultation responses were received following publication of the committee report, and are detailed below:
 - 1.2 The first was from the Theatre Trust, who wrote in support of the application:
 - The principle of the proposals is supported
 - The extension is sensitively designed with little impact on the existing theatre
 - The proposals would provide operational improvements to both the new theatre and the existing Hexagon
 - The energy efficiency and sustainability measures are welcomed
 - 1.3 The second was an expanded objection from the party who objected as per the Committee Report:
 - Insufficient consideration of the harm arising from the proposals when making the planning balance
 - Expanded objections to daylight and sublight impacts of the proposals on the neighbouring student accommodation
 - Loss of privacy as a result of the walkway addition, as well as the roof terrace
 - Further concerns raised regarding the noise and disturbance during construction
 - Further concerns raised about operational noise emanating from the venue and from people leaving the venue.
 - 1.4 It is considered that sufficient weight was given to the harm arising from the proposals within the main committee report when making the planning balance and arriving at the recommendation.
 - 1.5 With regards loss of privacy to the student accommodation, it should be stressed that the roof terrace is on the southern side of the site, set well away from the student accommodation with no direct overlooking. The walkway would essentially extend the podium level towards the site to allow access, but given the oblique angle to the nearest windows, and the obstruction the proposed building would cause, it is not considered that there would be any unacceptable loss of privacy. Due to the position of the roof terrace

and proposed walkway, it is not considered that there would be a significant increase in harm.

- 1.6 In terms of noise and disturbance during construction, a condition requiring a Construction Method Statement is proposed to ensure that matters such as noise prevention measures, construction hours, dust control measures, management plans and monitoring of these measures are implemented throughout the construction process.
- 1.7 With regards noise from the proposed use, it is considered that the proposal would have a level of noise insulation that would ensure that there would be no harm when the venue is in use. In terms of noise from patrons leaving the site, it is considered that this would not be at levels which would cause significant harm to neighbouring residents. Furthermore, the site is within a busy town centre location, adjacent to an existing theatre, restaurants and bars and some level of noise must be expected. It is not considered that the proposals would give rise to any significant increase in noise.

2. Removal of requirement for legal agreement

- 2.1 The original report recommended that a legal agreement was required to secure either an Employment, Skills and Training Plan or a payment. Following publication of that report, the applicant has confirmed that they will be providing a Plan rather than a payment.
- 2.2 Given payments cannot be secured by condition, a legal agreement was required when this was still a possibility. Now that it has been confirmed that a Plan will be forthcoming, this is proposed to be secured by condition, as per the wording above.

3. Sustainable Urban Drainage Scheme (SUDS)

- 3.1 The applicant has provided additional information relating to SUDS following publication of the committee report. This demonstrates that the drainage scheme is acceptable in principle, and would result in a reduced surface water runoff with attenuation proposed on site. However, further detail will be required, and conditions securing this are proposed.

Case Officer: Thomas Bradfield

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08 January 2025



Title	PLANNING APPLICATION REPORT
Ward	Kentwood
Planning Application Reference:	PL/24/1257/REG3
Site Address:	1, 3, 5, 7, 10, 13, 19, 20, 23, 37, 39, 45 and 47 Lyndhurst Road, Tilehurst, Reading, RG30 6UG
Proposed Development	Retrospective application for Phase 4 of Estate Improvement Project including; installation of triple glazed uPVC windows; renewal of flat roof coverings; external structural repairs; renewal of pitched roof tiles; and installation of external wall insulation (amended).
Applicant	Reading Borough Council
Report author	Alison Amoah - Principal Planning Officer
Deadline:	Original deadline 28 th November 2024, but an extension of time has been agreed with the applicant until 10 th January 2025
Recommendation	Grant planning permission, subject to conditions as follows:
Conditions	To include: 1. Approved Plans. 2. Materials as specified.
Informatics	To include: 1. Terms and conditions 2. Positive and Proactive Statement

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 The retrospective proposal relates to external improvement works to several of the Council's residential properties. These improvements improve the sustainability of the properties. There are no significant detrimental effects of the proposal, and it is considered that it accords with adopted policies and is recommended for approval subject to the conditions set out above.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 The application site comprises a number of two storey residential properties on Lyndhurst Road, Tilehurst. All properties within the estate improvement project are located within the old Norcot estate which are predominantly 3 bed semi-detached and terraced houses constructed in the mid 1920s.

2.2 The external appearance of dwellings, within this wholly residential area comprise a mix of finishes including some of painted render and others pebbledash.

2.3 The existing materials include:

- A variety of plain and interlocking tiles in various colours and types
- Walls – comprise narrow cavity brick and block walls in cement render and pebbledash
- Windows and rear doors- upvc double glazed white frames.
- Front doors - variety of materials and styles

2.4 The road is not covered by any specific local plan policy designations and the proposal, therefore, is assessed against the general relevant policies within the Reading Borough Local Plan (RBLP, 2019) as set out under Section 6. Below.



Site Location Plan

(Red outlines are for the application properties, blue outline are others owned by RBC within the area)

2.5 The application is a 'council' development and, therefore, referred to the Planning Applications Committee.

3. PROPOSAL

3.1 The original submission included the installed air source heat pumps, but this was amended based on this element being considered as permitted development, although not formally confirmed through a Lawfulness Certificate.

3.2 The proposed retrospective scheme, completed in November 2023, is as follows, and it should be noted that all elements apart from the external wall insulation would have been considered as permitted development:

- Installation of triple glazed Upvc windows with grey frames;
- Replacements soffits and fascias in white Upvc;
- Insulation of bay flat roof;
- New external wall insulation system comprising 100mm wool insulation meeting Class A1 fire rating and 0.29w/mk¹ required under Building Regulations, and a permarock finish silicone textured render 115mm in overall depth finished white;
- New front doors - Permadoor's composite Plantherm doors with low E float glass part glazed in range of colours GRP² (in a range of colours);
- New rear doors - Permadoor's composite Plantherm doors with white frames; and
- Resultant minor changes to window openings, door frames and eaves.

3.3 The submitted Planning Statement identifies that the need for the works included that several elements of the properties were nearing the end of their life expectancy and to improve the thermal efficiency of the properties. A key component of the project is the external wall insulation, which improves thermal efficiency through conserving fuel and power.

3.4 Submitted Plans and Documentation

As received 25th September 2024 unless otherwise stated:

Plans

- Location Plan, received 19th December 2024
- Site Plan [1, 3, 5, 7, 10, 13, 19 & 23 Lyndhurst Road]
- Site Plan [20, 37, 39, 45 & 47 Lyndhurst Road]
- Drawing no: 23.004/01 – General Arrangement [Existing and Proposed Elevations] 1, 3, 5, 7, 10, 13 & 20 Lyndhurst Road
- Drawing no: 23.004/02 – General Arrangement [Existing and Proposed Elevations] 19, 23, 37, 39, 45 & 47 Lyndhurst Road

Other Documents received:

- Cover Letter, prepared by Pegasus Group, dated 24th September 2024
- Air Source Heat Pumps Sound Test Results [related to previous Phase (3) works approved under ref: 221800]
- Noise Impact Assessment, ref: SA-7502, by Sound Advice Acoustics Ltd, dated September 2023
- Planning, Design and Access Statement for Phase 4 of Estate Improvement Works at Norcot Estates, ref: P24-1958 V3, dated September 2024, prepared by Pegasus Group, received 3rd October 2024

3.5 Community Infrastructure levy (CIL):

In relation to the community infrastructure levy, the applicant has duly completed a CIL liability form. The development would be CIL liable, but would be a nil charge.

¹ w/mk=Watts per metre thickness

² GRP=glass reinforced plastic

4 PLANNING HISTORY

This is Phase 4 of the Council's area wide property improvement programme within this part of Reading. The previous 3 phases are as follows:

Phase 1

210904/REG3 - Works consist of property improvements and upgrades of Thermal efficiency measures to dwellings detailed below. All properties located on the Old Norcot Estate, Reading. Phase 1 addresses to include:- 35, 37, 39, 41, 43 Bramshaw Road RG30 6AT 69, 71, 73, 75 Bramshaw Road, RG30 6AS 377 & 379 Norcot Road, RG30 6AB. Works will see the existing render overclad with a new external wall insulation system, replacement of new triple glazed windows, minor roof adaptions and associated works (Part Retrospective) (Amended Description) – Approved 10th September 2021

Phase 2

220190/REG3 - Property improvement works and Thermal efficiency upgrades to 31 RBC properties. Works to each property will consist of fitting new External Wall insulation, new triple glazed windows and doors, minor roof adaptions, fitting of Air Source Heat pumps, central heating upgrades and associated works. All properties located on the Old Norcot Estate, Reading. Addresses include 5, 8, 10, 11, 12, 23, 24, 26, 27, 28, 42, 50, 51, 54, 55, 56, 59, 60, 61, 64, 66, 83, 87, 89 Bramshaw Road. 1, 4, 8 Wimborne Gardens. 158 Thirlmere Ave. 13 Ringwood Road. 61 Lyndhurst Road. 67 Lyndhurst Road. (Part Retrospective) – Approved 1st April 2022.

Phase 3

221800/REG3 - Property improvement works and Thermal efficiency upgrades to 22 RBC properties. Works to each property will consist of fitting new External Wall insulation, new triple glazed windows and doors, minor roof adaptions, fitting of Air Source Heat pumps, central heating upgrades and associated works. All properties located on the Old Norcot Estate, Reading. Addresses include:- 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10 and 13 Rockbourne Gardens, RG30 6AU. 2, 4, 7, 8, 10 and 11 Cranbourne Gardens, RG30 6TS. 6, 11, 16, 18, 20, 22, 24 and 26 Ripley Road, RG306UD. (Part retrospective) (Amended description)- Approved 29th June 2023.

5. CONSULTATIONS

5.1 **RBC Environmental Health** – In terms of the original application description, which included air source heat pumps (ASHP) and the submission material, the Environmental Health Officer confirmed that each ASHP complies with the permitted development noise limit of 42dBA. There was also a request for a noise model to demonstrate that cumulatively the noise levels do not add up to more than 42 dBA at any one nearby property.

5.2 **Planning Officer Note:** As the sir source heat pumps were considered to be permitted development no further information was requested and the description of development amended.

Public

5.3 Site notices were displayed on 11th October 2024. No representations have been received.

6. RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY AND GUIDANCE

6.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which states at Paragraph 11 "Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development".

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

National Planning Policy Framework (2024).

The following chapters are the most relevant (others apply to a lesser extent):

2. Achieving Sustainable Development
4. Decision-making
12. Achieving Well-Designed Places
14. Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change, Flooding and Coastal Change

National Planning Policy Guidance (2014 onwards)

Reading Borough Local Plan (November 2019).

The relevant policies are:

- CC1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- CC2: Sustainable Design and Construction
- CC3: Adaptation to Climate Change
- CC7: Design and the Public Realm
- CC8: Safeguarding Amenity
- H9: House Extension and Ancillary Accommodation

Relevant Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) are:

- Sustainable Design and Construction SPD (2019)

Local Plan Update

6.3 The current version of the Local Plan (adopted in November 2019) became 5 years old on 5th November 2024. The Local Plan was reviewed in March 2023 and around half of the policies in the plan were considered still up to date. However, the remainder need to be considered for updating to reflect changing circumstances and national policy. A consultation version of the draft updated version of the Local Plan, to reflect changing circumstances and national policy updates, was published on 6th November 2024, the consultation period for which ended on 18th December 2024.

6.4 Although there is a five-year period for carrying out a review of a plan after it is adopted, nothing in the NPPF or elsewhere states that policies automatically become "out of date" when they are five years old. It is a matter of planning judgement rather than legal fact whether a plan or policies within it are out-of-date. This will depend on whether they have been overtaken by things that have happened since the plan was adopted, either on the ground or through changes in national policy, for example.

6.5 Officer advice in respect of the Local Plan policies pertinent to this application, listed above, is that they remain in accordance with national policy and that the objectives of those policies remains very similar in the draft updated Local Plan.

Therefore, they can continue to be afforded weight in the appraisal below and are not considered to be 'out of date'.

7. APPRAISAL

7.1 The main matters to be considered are:

- Sustainability
- Design Considerations
- Amenity of Existing and Future Occupiers

Sustainability

7.2 The overarching sustainability policy, Policy CC2 requires proposals for new development, including the construction of new buildings and the redevelopment and refurbishment of existing building stock, to reduce the consumption of resources and materials.

7.3 Policy CC3: Adaptation to Climate Change, requires that "*all developments demonstrate how they have been designed to incorporate measures to adapt to climate change.*" This includes maximising resistance and resilience to climate change through building improvements to existing buildings.

7.4 Reading Borough Council is committed to working towards achieving a carbon neutral Reading by 2030. Paragraph 4.7 of the Sustainable Design and Construction SPD (2019) states that heat loss can be prevented by applying high levels of insulation to the roof, walls and floors and that heat loss from windows can be further reduced through double or triple glazing.

7.5 The works have refurbished the properties to improve the thermal performance of these properties for the benefit of the occupiers. The implemented scheme maximises energy efficiency by reducing heat loss from the building envelope.

7.6 It is considered that the implemented scheme meets the policy requirements of Policies CC2, CC3, and the SPD.

Design Considerations

7.7 Policy CC7 requires that all development must be of high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located. Policy H9 requires any extension to a house to respect the character and appearance of the house, character and pattern of neighbouring properties and appearance of the street.

7.8 The appearance of these properties previously was the same as others in the area being pebble-dash render, brown roof tiles, PVC windows, brick porch arches and bays (see photo of some of the properties below).



1-7 Lyndhurst Road prior to improvements (Google image November 2022)

7.9 A sample of the completed works can be seen in a current photo below.



7.10 The external wall insulation has been selected to improve energy efficiency at the respective properties. The colour of the render finish is different from the predominantly pebble-dash render character of the surrounding area, however, it is considered that the new render coating and natural white colour selected is not harmful to the appearance of the application properties or the surrounding area.

7.11 The render and finish at the depth that has been implemented has very minimally altered the appearance of openings and eaves, but this is considered to be so limited, as to not cause any harm to the character and appearance of the proposal site and surrounding area.

7.12 Some of the groups of dwellings have new render adjacent to the original pebbledash finish for properties. Although different in appearance, there are other examples of different elevational treatments adjacent to each other on Lyndhurst Road and the wider area (see examples below on Lyndhurst Road) and it is not considered so harmful as to warrant refusal on this basis.



(Google images)

7.13 The replacement of the windows with triple glazed uPVC windows are considered like for like, whilst positively improving energy efficiency to these dwellings.

7.14 It is noted that there is a loss in the detailing of some of the properties including the loss of red brick archways and the change from red brick to render at the ground floor (see an example of before and after photos below). The loss of such features is not considered harmful and has been weighed against the positive benefits of the scheme and varied character of the area.



23 Lyndhurst Road (left - Google image Nov 2022); implemented scheme to right.

- 7.15 With regards to the long-term care and maintenance of the external wall insulation RBC undertake a cyclical external maintenance programme every 7 years, which would include cleaning and general maintenance. The applicant has advised that the permarock system used is one of the better ones in terms of longevity, repairs and maintenance. The silicone based top-coat allows easier cleaning than other polymer based systems.
- 7.16 The appearance of the refurbished and altered properties are considered to be acceptable and in accordance with policies CC7 and H9.

Amenity of Existing and Future Occupiers

- 7.17 Policy CC8 states that *“Development will not cause a detrimental impact on the living environment of existing residential properties... in terms of: • Privacy and overlooking; • Access to sunlight and daylight; • Visual dominance and overbearing effects of a development; • Harm to outlook; • Noise and disturbance; • Artificial lighting; • Vibration; • Dust and fumes; • Smell; • Crime and safety;....”*
- 7.18 The works undertaken are not considered to harm the living conditions of neighbours within the surrounding area.
- 7.19 The development is considered to result in a betterment for existing and future occupiers at the dwellings.
- 7.20 Therefore, the proposed works are considered in accordance with policy CC8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan.

8. CONCLUSION

- 8.1 In accordance with policies CC2, CC3 of the Local Plan 2019 and material considerations in respect of sustainable development, including policies within the NPPF, the scheme is considered to meet the environmental objectives of mitigating and adapting to climate change through improving the thermal efficiency of the properties.
- 8.2 The proposal is acceptable with regard to the effect on the appearance of the properties and does not harm the overall character and appearance of the dwellings or the wider area.

8.3 The application is, therefore, recommended for approval, subject to the recommended conditions.

Case Officer: Alison Amoah

Proposed Plans shown below:

Proposed Elevations



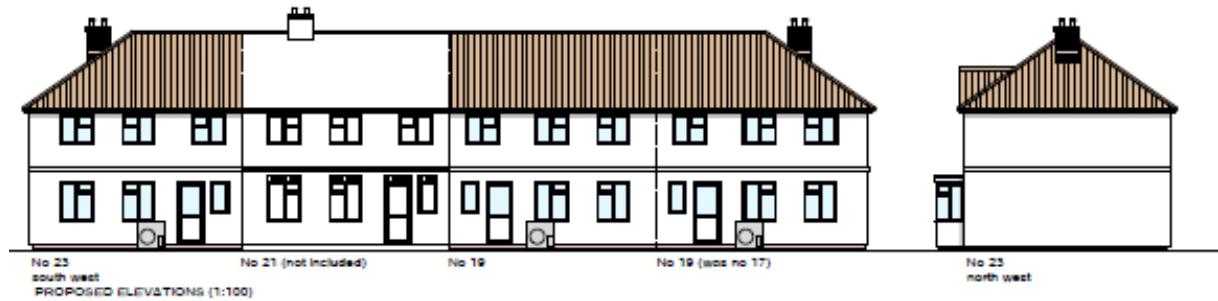
1, 3, 5, & 7 Lyndhurst Road



10 & 20 Lyndhurst Road



13 Lyndhurst Road



19 & 23 Lyndhurst Road



37 & 39 Lyndhurst Road



45 & 47 Lyndhurst Road

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08 January 2024



PLANNING APPLICATION REPORT	
Ward	Norcot Ward
Planning Application Reference:	PL/24/1499 Miscellaneous/Project Work – Deed of Variation to S106
Site Address:	Site of 103 Dee Road Tilehurst, Reading, RG30 4FS
Proposed Development	Deed of Variation request - redevelopment of former Fire Station at 103 Dee Road Tilehurst (relating to original permission PL/22/1130).
Applicant	Bellway Homes Limited (Thames Valley)
Report author	Steve Vigar
Deadline:	N/A
Recommendations	<p>Vary the existing S106 agreement ref 221130 as follows:</p> <p>Affordable Housing: To secure 30% of the dwellings on-site as affordable housing as shown on the Affordable Housing Plan 092102-BEL-TV-04 revision G dated 12 September 2024 to be annexed to the agreement and consisting of sixteen units (five one-bedroom flats, four two-bedroom flats and seven three-bedroom houses), all to be let at Reading Affordable Rent tenure. The seven houses to be delivered prior to first occupation of the 11th market dwelling, and the remaining nine affordable flats to be delivered prior to first occupation of the 26th market dwelling. To be secured as such in perpetuity.</p>
Conditions	N/A
Informatics	N/A

1. Executive summary

- 1.1. This report refers to a proposed deed of variation of the existing S106 agreement relating to planning permission 221130. The proposal is to change the current terms so that all 16 affordable housing units will be Reading Affordable Rent instead of the current 10 Reading Affordable Rent and 6 Shared Ownership. This is an improvement in terms of affordability and is recommended for approval.

2. Introduction and site description

- 2.1. Planning permission was granted on 21 September 2023 for “Redevelopment of former fire station to provide 54 dwellings, including affordable housing, together with associated access, parking, public open space and landscaping (Amended Description)”. The current approved S106 heads of terms are as follows:

“Secure 30% on-site affordable housing consisting of 16 units (4x one-bedroom, 4x two-bedroom and 6x three-bedroom), of which 10 would be for

Reading Affordable Rent and 6 shared ownership. Of these, 1 of the three bedroom houses, 4 two bed flats and 5 one bed flats to be let at Reading Affordable Rent tenure. The remaining units (5 three bed houses and 1 one bed flat to be Shared Ownership)."

- 2.2 The owner and developer, Bellway Homes seek to vary the terms of the S106 to:
- 2.3 *Affordable Housing: To secure 30% of the dwellings on-site as affordable housing as shown on the Affordable Housing Plan annexed to the agreement consisting of sixteen units (five one-bedroom flats, four two-bedroom flats and seven three-bedroom houses), all to be let at Reading Affordable Rent tenure. The seven houses to be delivered prior to first occupation of the 11th market dwelling, and the remaining nine affordable flats to be delivered prior to first occupation of the 26th market dwelling. To be secured as such in perpetuity.*
- 2.4 It is also proposed to increase the number of affordable houses to seven, with the affordable flat at Plot 35 being replaced with an affordable house at Plot 12.
- 2.5 The proposals are considered to be an improvement over the current S106 terms. Both in terms of the affordability of the units (Reading Affordable Rent is an improvement on Shared Ownership). Also the additional house in place of the flat is considered to be an improvement in terms of meeting housing need.

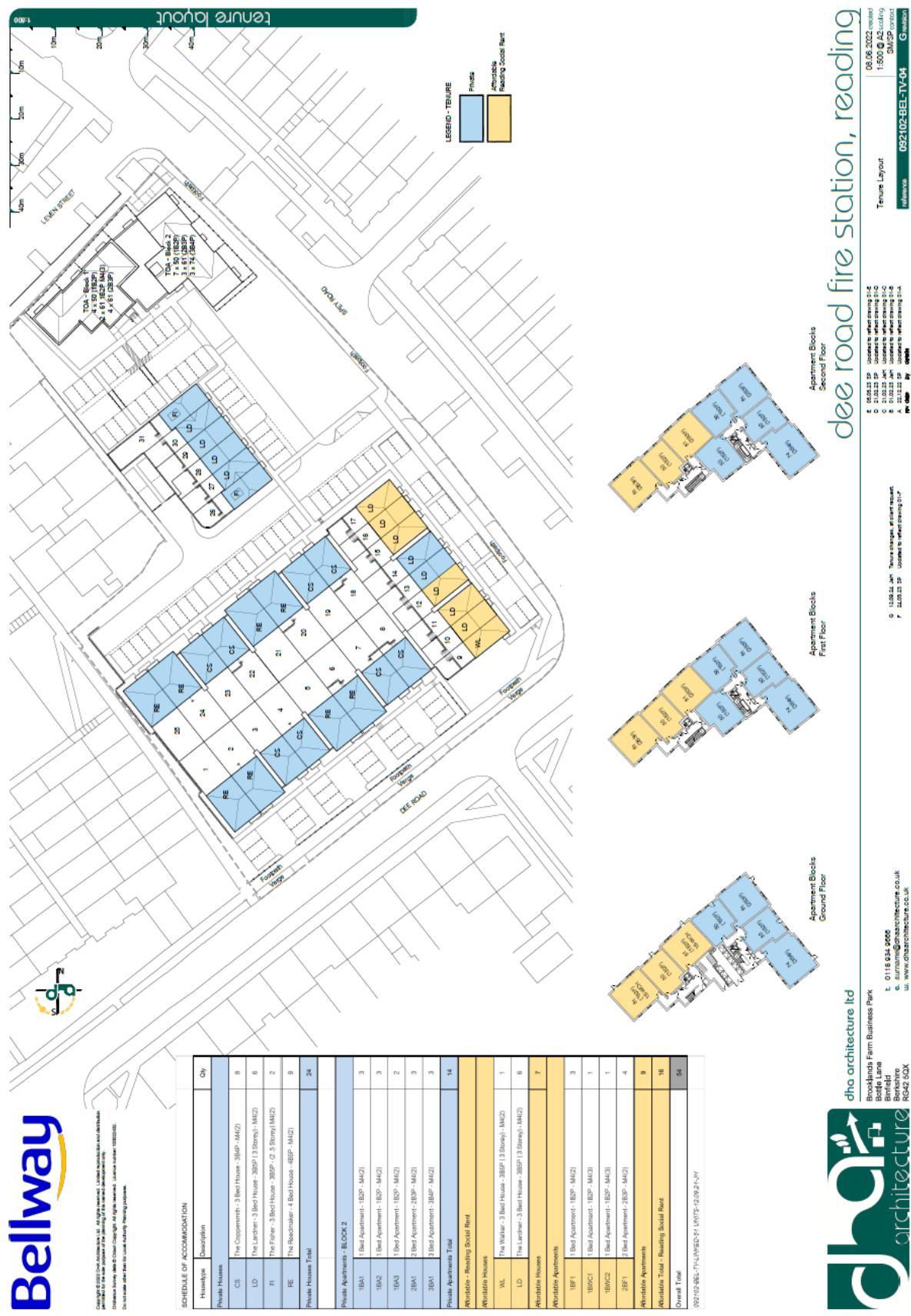
3. Equality implications

- 3.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to—
 - eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 3.2 The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation. It is considered that there is no indication or evidence that the protected groups have or will have different needs, experiences, issues, and priorities in relation to this particular application.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1 The proposed variation to the current terms of the S106 legal agreement would improve the affordable housing provision within the site and therefore better meet identified housing need in the Borough. The proposals are recommended for approval on this basis.

Plans & Appendices



Proposed Affordable Housing Plan

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08 January 2025



Title	PLANNING APPLICATION REPORT
Ward	Redlands
Planning Application Reference:	PL/23/0909/REG3
Site Address:	56 Bamburgh Close, Reading RG2 7UD
Proposed Development	Retrospective installation of 18No. Air source heat pumps located externally and distributed around full perimeter.
Applicant	Reading Borough Council
Report author	Marcie Rejwerska
Deadline:	10/01/2025 (extension of time agreed with applicant)
Recommendations	Grant planning permission, subject to conditions as follows:
Conditions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Approved Plans Noise levels of equipment restricted to -8dB below background noise as per submitted information.
Informatics	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Terms Positive and proactive - approval

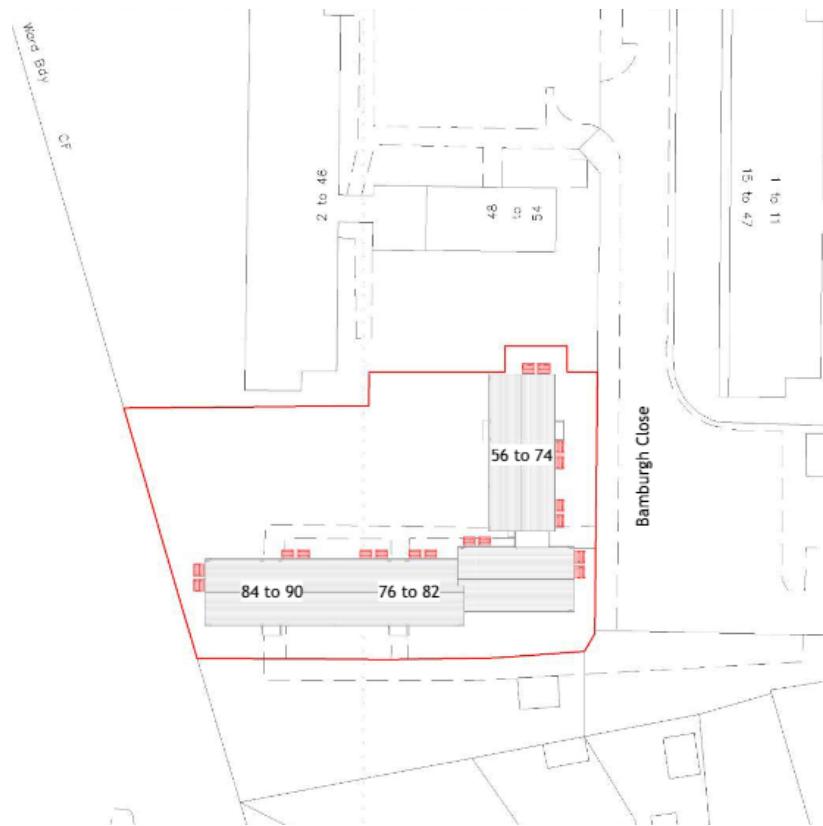
1. Executive summary

- This report explains the application for retrospective planning permission for the installation of 18 Air Source Heat Pump (ASHP) units around the perimeter of the block comprising nos. 56-90 Bamburgh Close. The units were installed in June 2023 as part of a wider programme of refurbishment of the block. There are minimal concerns with regards to the appearance of the units, and the submitted information demonstrates there is no risk to the residential amenity of the occupiers from resultant noise levels.

2. Introduction and site description

- The application is referred to Committee owing to it being works to a property owned by the Council, and the application has been submitted by the Council's Property Services team.
- The application site comprises a L-shaped two-storey apartment block on the west side of Bamburgh Close. The block was recently refurbished, and the external finishes comprise blue/grey render.
- The 18 ASHPs have already been installed around the perimeter of the block. The units are set behind the fencing which surrounds the block.
- The surrounding area is predominately residential, comprising two- and three-storey apartment blocks, and terraced dwellings in similar character. Hexham Road Community Centre is located at the entrance to Bamburgh Close.

Site location plan:



3. The Proposal

- 3.1. Planning permission is sought retrospectively for the 18 ASHP units installed at the premises, as there are no permitted development rights for flats and apartments.
- 3.2. Submitted plans and documentation:

MAP/C3977/PS2/0 – Planning Statement, dated 29/06/2023, received 10/07/23

Noise Assessment [Daikin], dated 24/11/23, received 12/12/23

MAP-C3977-011-A – Location and Block Plan, dated 19/06/23, received 10/07/23

MAP-C3977-121-A – Existing Floor Plans, dated 19/06/23, received 10/07/23

MAP-C3977-190-A – Existing Elevations, dated 19/06/23, received 10/07/23

MAP-C3977-221-A – Proposed Floor Plans, dated 19/06/23, received 10/07/23

MAP-C3977-487-A – Proposed Elevations, dated 19/06/23, received 10/07/23

AS13652.241001.L1 ASHP Sound Impact Assessment, Clarke Saunders Acoustics, dated 04/10/24, received 04/10/24

13652.241213.TN1 – Amended Sound Impact Assessment (Low Noise Mode), Clarke Saunders Acoustics, dated 13/12/24, received 13/12/24

4. Planning history

- 4.1. 221649 – Various external and internal refurbishments include the complete replacement of non-load bearing elevations including wall insulation/cladding, windows, communal doors, gutters, fascias and soffits altering the external appearance of the building, and internally, the removal of internal walls within communal halls – Application permitted by Planning Committee on 02/02/2023
- 4.2. No other relevant planning history for numbers 59-90 Bamburgh Close.

5. Consultations

5.1. Non-Statutory

5.1.1. RBC Environmental Protection – Due to the number of units in proximity to each other a detailed noise assessment was requested to ensure the units together do not create unreasonable noise levels. The submitted noise assessment initially demonstrated the units fail to meet local noise limits (EN17), however, identified that this could be due to “low noise mode” not being switched on by the installation team. This has now been switched on. Following reassessment the units now, the units now run at -8dB below background noise. This does not meet the -10dB target required by policy EN17, however, this is considered acceptable on this occasion due to the overall low level noise performance of the units installed.

5.1.2. RBC Natural Environment – No comments to make.

5.2. Public

5.2.1. The following neighbouring properties were consulted by letter for both applications:

2-54 Kershope Court, Bamburgh Close

56-90 (even) Bamburgh Close

5.2.2. No letters of representation received.

5.2.3. Two site notices were erected on site on 09/01/2023.

6. Legal context

6.1. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy framework (NPPF) - among them the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'. However, the NPPF does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making (NPPF paragraph 12).

6.2. In this regard, the NPPF states that due weight should be given to the adopted policies of the Local Plan 2019 according to their degree of consistency with the NPPF (the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the NPPF, the greater the weight that may be given).

6.3. Accordingly, the latest NPPF and the following development plan policies and supplementary planning guidance are relevant:

Reading Borough Local Plan 2019

Policies:

CC1 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

CC3 Adaptation to Climate Change

CC4 Decentralised Energy

CC7 Design and the Public Realm

CC8 Safeguarding Amenity

EN14 Trees, Hedges and Woodland

EN17 Noise Generating Equipment

H10 Private and Communal Outdoor Space

Supplementary Planning Documents:

Local Plan Update

6.4 The current version of the Local Plan (adopted in November 2019) became 5 years old on 5th November 2024. The Local Plan was reviewed in March 2023 and around half of the policies in the plan were considered still up to date. However, the remainder need to be considered for updating to reflect changing circumstances and national policy. A consultation version of the draft updated version of the Local Plan, to reflect changing circumstances and national policy updates, was published on 6th November 2024, the consultation period for which ended on 18th December 2024.

6.5 Although there is a five-year period for carrying out a review of a plan after it is adopted, nothing in the NPPF or elsewhere states that policies automatically become “out of date” when they are five years old. It is a matter of planning judgement rather than legal fact whether a plan or policies within it are out-of-date. This will depend on whether they have been overtaken by things that have happened since the plan was adopted, either on the ground or through changes in national policy, for example.

6.6 Officer advice in respect of the Local Plan policies pertinent to this application, listed above, is that they remain in accordance with national policy and that the objectives of those policies remains very similar in the draft updated Local Plan. Therefore, they can continue to be afforded weight in the appraisal below and are not considered to be ‘out of date’.

7. Appraisal

7.1. The main considerations are:

- I. Principle of development
- II. Design and appearance
- III. Amenity and noise implications

I) Principle of development

7.2. Reading Borough Council is committed to working towards achieving a carbon neutral Reading by 2030. Paragraph 5.1.15 of the Local Plan states that ASHPs should be considered in the first instance as these methods are less carbon intensive.

7.3. The principle of development is considered acceptable and in accordance with Policies CC3 and CC4 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

II) Design and appearance

7.4. The ASHP units have been placed around the perimeter of the block, and protective cages installed for each unit to prevent vandalism. Units and their cages do lessen the visual qualities of the façades fronting the street and a more visually discreet solution could have been achieved. However, of the installed units, only 8 are visible from the street, as the remainder are screened by the layout of the building and there are considered to be overriding public benefits in terms of reduced carbon dioxide emissions.

7.5. Overall, the units are not considered to cause significant harm to the appearance of the property nor the wider street scene, in accordance with Policies CC7 and H9 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019

III) Amenity and noise implications

7.6. Due to the number of units that have been installed, the Environmental Health team requested a more detailed noise assessment which considers the cumulative impact of

the ASHPs. The noise assessment which was subsequently submitted demonstrated that the ASHPs met the British Standard noise requirements, but failed to meet the requirements of Policy EN17, which requires mechanical equipment to perform at -10dB below background noise. The assessment also identified that the units have a “low noise mode” but due to the retrospective nature of the application it was uncertain whether this had been enabled by the installation team. It was identified that the low noise mode had in fact not been switched on at the time of the initial assessment. The “low noise mode” has now been switched on, and the performance of the ASHPs re-assessed. The resulting performance is now -8dB below background noise. Although this is 2dB above the policy aim of -10dB below background the policy is to prevent ‘background creep’ where background levels rise due to the cumulative effect of noise-generating equipment. In this instance the blocks are in a spacious setting, and it is unlikely that significant amounts of other new equipment would be likely to exist in the immediate area in the future. As such the risk of background creep is lessened and the proposals are not considered harmful in respect of noise. Any residual harm which might exist would be outweighed by the public benefits of the ASHPs in terms of reduced carbon dioxide emissions.

7.7. Overall, the proposal is not considered to cause a risk of harm to nearby sensitive receptors (the residents of the building) and is therefore, acceptable. In accordance with Policy EN17.

8. Equality implications

8.1. Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to—

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

8.2. The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation. It is considered that there is no indication or evidence that the protected groups have or will have different needs, experiences, issues, and priorities in relation to this particular application.

9. Conclusion

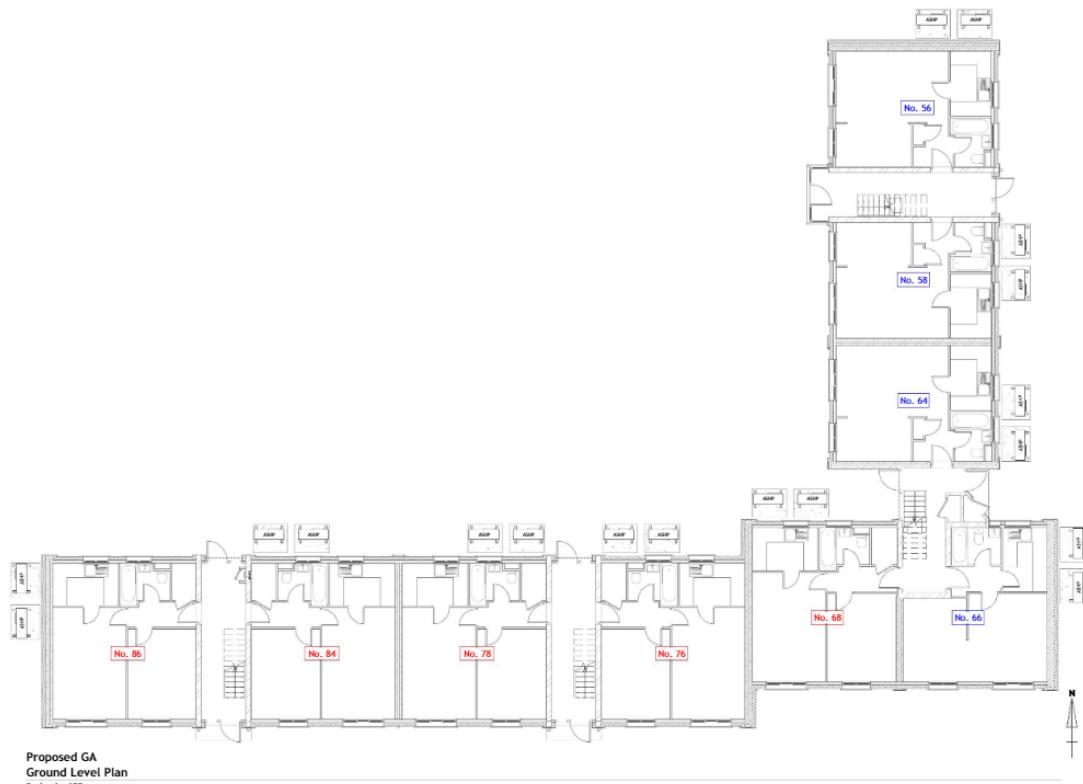
9.1 As with all applications considered by the Local Planning Authority, the application is required to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise, as per Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

9.2 Officers consider that the proposed works are acceptable due to the less than harmful effect of the installed units on the character of the property and the street, and the minimal amenity impacts on the residents and neighbouring properties. The noise performance gap is considered marginal and the benefit of the 18 ASHPs is considered to outweigh this.

9.3 As such, this application is recommended for approval for Planning Permission subject to the recommended conditions.

Plans & Appendices

1. Layout



2. Site photographs

