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CHIEF EXECUTIVE

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

Direct ☎ : 0118 9372112

27 January 2026

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

NOTICE OF MEETING - PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE 4 FEBRUARY 2026

A meeting of the Planning Applications Committee will be held on Wednesday, 4 February 2026 at 6.30 pm in the Council Chamber, Civic Offices, Bridge Street, Reading RG1 2LU (from Monday 26 January the public entrance to the Civic Centre will be on Bridge Street). The Agenda for the meeting is set out below.

AGENDA		ACTION	WARDS AFFECTED	PAGE NO
1.	MINUTES	-		9 - 14
2.	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST	-		
3.	QUESTIONS	-		
4.	POTENTIAL SITE VISITS FOR COMMITTEE ITEMS	Decision		15 - 18
5.	PLANNING APPEALS	Information		19 - 22
6.	THIRD QUARTER PERFORMANCE REPORT - PLANNING & BUILDING CONTROL	Information		23 - 26

PLANNING APPLICATIONS TO BE CONSIDERED

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.*

7.	PL/22/1916 (FUL) - FORMER DEBENHAMS DEPARTMENT STORE, WEST OF YIELD HALL PLACE ('YIELD HALL PLACE 1'), THE ORACLE AND PL/22/1917 (FUL) - EXISTING VUE CINEMA COMPLEX WEST OF YIELD HALL PLACE/LONDON ROAD ('YIELD HALL PLACE 2'), THE ORACLE	Decision	ABBEY; KATESGROVE	27 - 236

Proposal:	PL/22/1916/FUL - Mixed use development comprising part demolition of former department store and erection of new buildings comprising up to 218 build to rent residential dwellings (Class C3) & 1,209sqm commercial uses within Uses Class E and/or bar (Sui Generis Use). Reconfiguration and change of use of up to 5,866sqm remaining department store floorspace (Class E) to uses with within Use Class E and/or bar (Sui Generis Use) and/or experiential leisure use (Sui Generis Use). Associated public realm, infrastructure works & external alterations to shopping centre, including creation of new shopping centre entrance (amended description) (accompanied by an Environmental Statement).
Recommendation:	Permit subject to S106.
Proposal:	PL/22/1917/FUL - Mixed use development comprising demolition of existing buildings and erection of new building comprising up to 218no. build-to-rent residential dwellings (Class C3) & up to 3,046 sqm commercial floorspace comprising cinema (Sui Generis) and ground floor commercial uses within Use Class E and/or Bar (Sui Generis Use). Associated public realm and infrastructure works (amended description) (accompanied by an Environmental Statement).
Recommendation:	Permit subject to S106.

8.	PL/25/0691 (OUT) - LAND WEST OF KIDMORE END ROAD, OXFORDSHIRE	Decision	EMMER GREEN	237 - 314

Proposal:	Outline planning application for the development of up to 70 homes (including affordable housing), new vehicular access, associated parking and landscaping (all matters reserved except for access).
Recommendation:	That the Planning Applications Committee confirm that, had they been able to determine the planning application, they would have resolved to permit the application subject to S106.

9.	PL/25/0835 (REM) - DELLWOOD COMMUNITY HOSPITAL, 22 LIEBENROOD ROAD	Decision	SOUTHCOTE	315 - 370

Proposal: Application for approval of reserved matters (landscaping) submitted pursuant to outline planning permission ref. PL/21/1728.

Recommendation: Permit subject to conditions.

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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

PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES - 7 JANUARY 2026

Present: Councillor Gavin (Chair);

Councillors Davies (Vice-Chair), Ennis, Hornsby-Smith, Leng, Lovelock, McCann, Moore, Rowland, Williams and Yeo.

Also in attendance: Councillor Tarar attended the meeting as an observer via Microsoft Teams.

Apologies: Councillors Goss.

RESOLVED ITEMS

45. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 3 December 2025 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

46. 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 -

(1) That the previously agreed accompanied site visit for the following applications take place on 22 January 2026:

PL/22/1916 Former Debenhams site, The Oracle & PL/22/1917 Vue Cinema site, The Oracle

(2) That no additional site visits be arranged.

47. 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 six new appeals lodged since the last Committee.

Appendix 2 to the report set out details of four appeals decided since the last Committee.

A verbal update was provided at the meeting advising the Committee of an error in the report, where an incorrect case number and address had been provided for the second of

the six new appeals listed under Appendix 1. The correct case details were reported as follows:

WARD:	Southcote
APPEAL NO:	APP/E0345/W/25/6001950
CASE NO:	PL/25/0350
ADDRESS:	58 Bath Road, Reading, RG30 2AY
PROPOSAL:	Erection of five detached 4-bed dwellings, and associated works, following demolition of detached bungalow
CASE OFFICER:	Catrin Davies
METHOD:	Written Representations
START DATE:	09/12/2025

It was report at the meeting that, in addition to the three cases listed in Appendix 1, several further appeals had been lodged with the Planning Inspectorate regarding the Council's decisions to refuse planning and advertisement consent for the installation of BT Street Hubs at various locations across the town. In total, 12 appeals had been lodged concerning six different sites across the Borough.

Resolved –

(1) That, the new appeals, as set out in Appendix 1 and reported at the meeting, be noted, subject to the correction of the case details set out above.

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

48. P25/S1431/O - SOUTH OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL & PL/25/0691 - READING BOROUGH COUNCIL - LAND WEST OF KIDMORE END ROAD, EMMER GREEN

PL/25/0731 (ADJ) (South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) ref P25/S1431/O) & PL/25/0691 (OUT) - Outline planning application for the development of up to 70 homes (including affordable housing), new vehicular access, associated parking and landscaping (all matters reserved except for access).

Further to Minute 36 held on 5 November 2025, the Committee received a report providing an update on the current situation with the above applications.

The purpose of the report that had been considered at the meeting held on 5 November 2025 had been to seek agreement for comments on the South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) application that Reading Borough Council (RBC) had subsequently submitted to SODC (see Minute 36) and to explain that an officer report with a recommended decision on the application site within Reading Borough would be held pending the outcome of SODC's decision on the substantial part of the site located with South Oxfordshire.

The report explained that, on 3 December 2025, SODC's Planning Committee had overturned SODC officers' recommendation to grant planning permission for 25/S1431/O and set out the SODC Planning Committee's reasons for refusal.

The report advised that, as a consequence of the SODC decision, the applicant had notified RBC of their intention to (i) appeal against SODC's decision to refuse the application and (ii) appeal against RBC's failure to reach a decision on the application located within Reading Borough within 13 weeks on 22 December 2025. The report stated that it was the applicant's intention to ask for a Public Inquiry.

At the meeting the Committee was informed that that applicant had formally submitted their appeal to the Planning Inspectorate on 22 December 2025. The report stated that officers had understood that the applicant had accepted the sense in RBC delaying reaching a decision on its part of the application site within the RBC boundary until the outcome of the application within the SODC boundary was known and that therefore the applicant's decision to include RBC in the appeal was disappointing. Nevertheless, the applicant was entitled to appeal for non-determination as formal agreement to extend the timeframe had not been made.

The report stated that if an appeal were submitted against RBC the Council's ability to reach a planning decision would be removed. However, it was good practice for the Planning Applications Committee to make a resolution on the application to indicate the decision that it would have made had the application not been appealed for non-determination.

Legal advice had been sought and recommended that a resolution should be made as soon as possible to clarify the Council's position and the extent of the Council's involvement at the Public Inquiry. Doing so would help to reduce legal costs and would reduce the potential for the appellant to seek legal costs against the Council. Consequently, a report would be submitted to the meeting on 4 February 2026 setting out officers' recommended decision.

Resolved –

That the report be noted.

49. PL/25/1679 (REG3) - READING CREMATORIUM & HENLEY ROAD CEMETERY, 55 ALL HALLOWS ROAD, CAVERSHAM

Reading crematorium redevelopment phase 2A and associated works for a new staff area, Funeral Director's collection facilities, installation of a plant room and works to improve courtyard accessibility including retaining walls, level adjustments, new ramps and staircases.

The Committee considered a report on the above application.

A verbal update was provided at the meeting confirming that the Environmental Agency (EA) had responded with no objections to the proposals. The EA had requested to be

notified of the decision within two weeks of it being made and had asked for an informative to note the requirement for a cemetery to operate with an environmental permit.

The Committee was also verbally informed that RBC Ecology had no objections to the application, subject to the approval of appropriate landscaping and lighting conditions. RBC Ecology had confirmed that they were satisfied with the proposed existing landscaping scheme condition, as detailed in the report. At the meeting two additional conditions relating to lighting were recommended to: (i) require warm tone lighting for Type D exterior lights and, (ii) regulate the hours of use to limit the usage of lighting to the opening hours of the cemetery.

It was reported at the meeting that the following additional documents and product specifications had been added to the list of documents considered for approval and had been made available on the Council's website:

- Materials details 20_12_2025
- HC_Biodiversity Net Gain - Mitigation Strategy-02
- BRICK- Mantis Handmade The Bespoke Brick Company

(As received 20 December 2025)

- D and EX1 Fittings-4367-RHB-XX-GF-DR-E-3103-T1
- D and EX1 Fittings-HC_Material-Schedule of Luminaires

(As received 7 January 2026)

Comments were received and considered.

Resolved –

That, pursuant to Regulation 3 of the Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1992, planning permission for application PL/25/1679 (REG3/FUL) be authorised, subject to the conditions and informatives as set out in the report, the addition of an informative to note the requirement for the cemetery to operate with an environmental permit, and the addition of two additional conditions relating to lighting to: (i) require warm tone lighting for Type D exterior lights and, (ii) regulate the hours of use by limiting the usage of lighting to the opening hours of the cemetery.

50. PL/25/1671 (REG3) - NEW CHRIST CHURCH CE PRIMARY SCHOOL, MILMAN ROAD

New external fence and play area to be constructed. Installation of two WCs and an accessible WC into existing building.

The Committee considered a report on the above application.

A verbal update was provided at the meeting to report that an additional pre-commencement condition to require an arboricultural method statement had been recommended and agreed by the applicant and the RBC Natural Environment Team, which would provide final detail of tree works and building specifications within the root protection

area. It was also reported at the meeting that the RBC Ecology and RBC Natural Environment Teams had no objections to the proposed works, subject to the use of an impermeable membrane to prevent concrete leaching into the soil and further details of pruning requirements being provided within the arboricultural method statement.

Comments were received and considered.

Resolved –

That, pursuant to Regulation 3 of the Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1992, planning permission for application PL/25/1671 (REG3/FUL) be granted, subject to the conditions and informatives recommended in the report, and the addition of the further agreed condition for a pre-commencement arboricultural method statement to be provided, as set out above.

(The meeting started at 6.30 pm and closed at 7.08 pm)

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Planning Applications Committee
04 February 2026

Title	**POTENTIAL SITE VISITS FOR COMMITTEE ITEMS**
Purpose of the report	To make a decision
Report status	Public report
Executive Director/ Statutory Officer Commissioning Report	Emma Gee
Report author	Julie Williams, Development Manager (Planning & Building Control)
Lead Councillor	Councillor Micky Leng, Lead Councillor for Planning and Assets
Council priority	Not applicable, but still requires a decision
Recommendations	The Committee is asked to: 1. note this report and any officer recommendations for site visits. 2. confirm if there are other sites Councillors wish to visit before reaching a decision on an application. 3. 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 and which Officers consider Councillors would benefit from visiting to inform decision making. If agreed, you will be advised whether the visit should be accompanied or not and then later advised of a date when Officers are ready to bring a report to Committee. Appendix 2 lists those sites that have previously been agreed by Committee should be visited before making a decision.

2.3. 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.

2.4. 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.

2.5. 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.

2.6. 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

3.1. The Council Plan has established five priorities for the years 2025/28. These priorities are:

- Promote more equal communities in Reading
- Secure Reading's economic and cultural success
- Deliver a sustainable and healthy environment and reduce our carbon footprint
- Safeguard and support the health and wellbeing of Reading's adults and children
- Ensure Reading Borough Council is fit for the future

3.2. In delivering these priorities, we will be guided by the following set of principles:

- Putting residents first
- Building on strong foundations
- Recognising, respecting, and nurturing all our diverse communities
- Involving, collaborating, and empowering residents
- Being proudly ambitious for Reading

3.3 Full details of the Council Plan and the projects which will deliver these priorities are published on the Council's website - Council plan - Reading Borough Council. These priorities and the Council Plan demonstrate how the Council meets its legal obligation to be efficient, effective and economical.

3.2 The processing of planning applications contributes to delivering a sustainable and healthy environment and helping the economic, cultural and vibrant success for Reading Borough.

3.3 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 - Potential Site Visits. List of applications received that may be presented to Committee for a decision in due course

Appendix 2 - Previously Agreed Site Visits with date of PAC when requested:

- 231041 - Portman Road. Unaccompanied agreed by PAC 06.09.23.

- 240846/FUL Napier Court, Napier Road. Accompanied agreed by PAC 24.07.24.

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Planning Applications Committee

04 February 2026

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 the one new appeal lodged since the last committee.

2.2. There is no Appendix 2 this time as no appeals have been decided since the last committee.

3. Contribution to Strategic Aims

3.1. The Council Plan has established five priorities for the years 2025/28. These priorities are:

- Promote more equal communities in Reading
- Secure Reading's economic and cultural success
- Deliver a sustainable and healthy environment and reduce our carbon footprint
- Safeguard and support the health and wellbeing of Reading's adults and children
- Ensure Reading Borough Council is fit for the future

3.2. In delivering these priorities, we will be guided by the following set of principles:

- Putting residents first
- Building on strong foundations
- Recognising, respecting, and nurturing all our diverse communities
- Involving, collaborating, and empowering residents
- Being proudly ambitious for Reading

3.3. Defending planning appeals made against planning decisions contributes to creating a sustainable and healthy environment with supported communities and helping the economy within the Borough as identified as the priorities within the Council 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 (lists of applications viewable on our website).

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. More guidance about costs awards is in MCHLG's Planning Practice Guidance.

9. Timetable for Implementation

9.1. Not applicable.

10. Background Papers

10.1. There are none.

APPENDIX 1

Appeals Lodged:

WARD:	Abbey
APPEAL NO:	6001748
CASE NO:	PL/25/1210
ADDRESS:	3 West Street, Reading, RG1 1TT
PROPOSAL:	Installation of black metal security shutters (Retrospective).
CASE OFFICER:	Gary Miles
METHOD:	Written Representations
START DATE:	12/01/2026

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Planning Applications Committee

04 February 2026

Title	**THIRD QUARTER PERFORMANCE REPORT - PLANNING & BUILDING CONTROL**
Purpose of the report	To note the report for information
Report status	Public report
Executive Director/ Statutory Officer Commissioning Report	Emma Gee
Report author	Julie Williams, Development Manager (Planning & Building Control)
Lead councillor	Councillor Micky Leng, Lead Councillor for Planning and Assets
Council priority	Secure Reading's economic & cultural success
Recommendations	The Committee is asked: 1. To note the report.

1. Purpose of report

1.1. To advise Committee on the work and performance of the Planning Development Management and Building Control team for the first three quarters of 2025/2026 (April to December) with comparison to the previous year.

2. Planning Development Management team

Decisions Issued

2.1 Table 1 provides a comparison of the decisions issued for all 2024/25 and quarters 1 to 3 for 2025/2026. It is notable that while Major applications are reduced there are more Minor and Other applications, which includes householder applications. Meeting performance targets consistently in the Major category, where there are fewer applications, is difficult. However is made up for by the excellent performance within the statutory timeframe or within an agreed extended timeframe for Minors and Other applications. In Q3 the proportion of granted decisions was high at 74% meaning officers worked with applicants to get the majority of applications approved.

Table 1: Decisions Issued 2024/2025 and Q1, Q2 & Q3 2025/2026

Application categories	Target	Overall 24/25	Q1 25/26 Apr-Jun	Q2 25/26 Jul-Sept	Q3 25/26 Oct-Dec
Major	**60%**	17/20 85%	**2/3** **66%**	**1/1** **100%**	**2/4** **50%**
Minor	**70%**	132/153 86%	**40/43** **93%**	**27/32** **84%**	**48/53** **91%**
Others (incl. householders)	**70%**	349/395 88%	**102/117** **87%**	**75/87** **86%**	**122/135** **90%**
Overall Totals		498/568 88%	**144/163** **88%**	**103/130** **79%**	**172/192** **90%**

Fee Income

2.2 Table 1b provides fee income from dealing with different types of applications, providing pre-application advice and responding to requests for information, such as planning histories and site background checks. The table compares last year's total income results with income so far this year. The lull in the submission of Major applications continues with a significant impact on fee income mitigated by the increase in the minor and other application fees plus pre-app fees.

Table 1b: Fee income for Q1 & Q2 2024/25 and 2025/2026

Fee Income	All year 24/25 £	Q1 25/26 £	Q2 25/26 £	Q3 25/26 £
Major Applications	473,726	25,474	192,685	16,113
Minor Applications	381,587	121,256	99,061	111,626
Other/Householders	112,174	46,993	46,865	55,123
Pre-App	122,282	53,587	62,067	101,074
Miscellaneous	14,162	3,923	5,112	14,356
Totals	£1,103,931	£251,233	£284,405	£298,292

3. Building Control

3.1 Recruiting to permanent positions for experienced Building Control inspectors remains challenging and we rely on two agency Building Inspectors (1 x level2 and 1 x Level 3 registered) for site visits plus one (Level 2 registered) helping on Plan Checking. The Team Leader is working this year to gain his level 3 registration while the assistant and two trainee Building Inspectors are working towards their own registrations building up our in house team expertise.

3.2 Table 2 shows performance for the team and the types of applications (fee and non-fee earning) dealt with for 2024/2025 and then Q1, Q2 and Q3 for this year. Fee income is improving with our team picking up more new work but also cases passed on from Approved Inspectors or through enforcement and retrospective applications (known as Regularisations). The team have developed better systems and procedures to work more efficiently with online applications and payments.

Table 2: Building Control work performance.

Case work	Total 24/25	Q1 25/26	Q2 25/26	Q3 25/26
Fee earning				
Building notices	176	36	45	25
Regularisations	82	15	23	38
Full Plans	184	56	27	37
Demolition notices	10	0	4	4
Partnerships	33	1	4	4
Fee Income	£241,547	£65,820	£76,022	£81,144

Non-Fee earning	Total 24/25	Q1 25/26	Q2 25/26	Q3 25/26
Dangerous structures attended	18	**5**	**20**	**16**
AI Initial Notices	431	**115**	**100**	**82**
Unauthorised work checks	86	**10**	**15**	**23**

4. Contribution to strategic aims

4.1 The processing of planning applications and associated work (trees, conservations areas and listed buildings) and building control activities contribute to creating a healthy environment with thriving communities and helps the economy within the Borough, identified as the themes of the Council's Corporate Plan.

5. Community engagement

5.1 Statutory consultation takes place on most planning applications and appeals. The Council's website also allows the public to view information submitted and comments on planning applications and eventually the decision reached. There is also information on policy matters and the and this can influence the speed with which applications and appeals are decided. Information on development management performance is publicly available.

6. Equality impact assessment

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 In terms of the key equalities protected characteristics, it is considered that the development management performance set out in this report has no adverse impacts.

7. Environmental and climate implications

7.1 The Council declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 26 February 2019 (Minute 48 refers). The Planning & Building Control and Planning Policy Services play a key part in mitigating impacts and adapting building techniques using adopted policies to encourage developers to build and use properties responsibly, making efficient use of land, using sustainable materials and building methods.

8. Legal implications

8.1 The collection and monitoring of performance indicators is a statutory requirement. In addition, some of the work targets referred to in this report are mandatory requirements such as the determination of planning applications and building regulations applications.

9. Financial Implications

9.1 The report includes information on fee income in the planning and building teams.

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04 February 2026

Reading Borough Council
Working better with you

Title	**PLANNING APPLICATIONS REPORT**
Ward	Abbey
Planning Application Reference:	PL/22/1916/FUL & PL/22/1917/FUL
Site Address:	PL/22/1916/FUL – Former Debenhams Department Store, west of Yield Hall Place ('Yield Hall Place 1'), The Oracle, Reading, RG2 2AG PL/22/1917/FUL – Existing Vue cinema complex west of Yield Hall Place/London Road ('Yield Hall Place 2'), The Oracle, Reading, RG2 2AG
Proposed Development	PL/22/1916/FUL - Mixed use development comprising part demolition of former department store and erection of new buildings comprising up to 218 build to rent residential dwellings (Class C3) & 1,209sqm commercial uses within Uses Class E and/or bar (Sui Generis Use). Reconfiguration and change of use of up to 5,866sqm remaining department store floorspace (Class E) to uses with within Use Class E and/or bar (Sui Generis Use) and/or experiential leisure use (Sui Generis Use). Associated public realm, infrastructure works & external alterations to shopping centre, including creation of new shopping centre entrance (amended description) (accompanied by an Environmental Statement) PL/22/1917/FUL - Mixed use development comprising demolition of existing buildings and erection of new building comprising up to 218no. build-to-rent residential dwellings (Class C3) & up to 3,046 sqm commercial floorspace comprising cinema (Sui Generis) and ground floor commercial uses within Use Class E and/or Bar (Sui Generis Use). Associated public realm and infrastructure works (amended description) (accompanied by an Environmental Statement)
Applicant	The Oracle Limited Partnership
Report author	Matt Burns, Principal Planning Officer
PL/22/1916/FUL - Yield Hall Place 1 The Oracle, Reading RG2 2AG	
Deadline:	**Target decision date:** 20th March 2023 **Extension of time date:** 13th February 2026
Recommendation	As per the 3rd December 2025 main agenda and update reports but with any changes to the s106 Heads of Terms and conditions set out below.
S106 Heads of Terms	As per the 3rd December 2025 main agenda and update reports but with the following addition to the s106 Heads of Terms: **3. Standards BtR requirements** The following additional wording is added to this obligation: • All Affordable units to be identified on plan to be attached to

	S106 agreement [prior to permission]. No future changes other than as agreed in writing by the LPA in the submission of an annual monitoring report. • Affordable Housing Covenant period –In the event of a change from Build to Rent tenure, which includes changes to affordable units, the affected units to be offered for sale to a Registered Provider and the Council. A fair market price must be offered for the proposed affordable private housing (or equivalent). In the event that a Registered Provider or the Council do not take control of the units an equivalent financial contribution shall be made to the Council to enable Affordable Housing provision elsewhere in the Borough to be determined by a mutually agreed valuation, or arbitration. • In the event that in the initial 20 year period from Practical Completion, the owner of the build to rent development notifies the Council that it intends to sell or otherwise transfer some or all of the units so that they no longer qualify as build to rent, the owner/operator shall provide a valuation of the Build to Rent accommodation immediately prior to the sale/transfer and a valuation of the value following the change to non-Build to Rent. A financial contribution equal to 30% of the increase in value shall be paid to the Council within three months of sale/transfer, subject to indexation, and the value achieved for the unit(s) converted to market sale. • Service charges – All rents to be inclusive of service charges but exclusive of utility bills and Council Tax and 'pay for' services - hire of function room, etc
Conditions	As per the 3rd December 2025 main agenda and update reports.
Informatives	As per the 3rd December 2025 main agenda and update reports.
PL/22/1917/FUL - Yield Hall Place 2 The Oracle, Reading RG2 2AG	
Deadline:	**Target decision date:** 20th March 2023 **Extension of time date:** 13th February 2026
Recommendation:	As per the 3rd December 2025 main agenda and update reports but with any changes to the s106 Heads of Terms and conditions set out below.
S106 terms	As per the 3rd December 2025 main agenda and update reports but with the following addition to the s106 Heads of Terms: **<u>3. Standards BtR requirements</u>** The following additional wording is added to this obligation: • All Affordable units to be identified on plan to be attached to S106 agreement [prior to permission]. No future changes other than as agreed in writing by the LPA in the submission of an annual monitoring report. • Affordable Housing Covenant period –In the event of a change from Build to Rent tenure, which includes changes to affordable units, the affected units to be offered for sale to a Registered Provider and the Council. A fair market price must be offered for the proposed affordable private housing (or equivalent). In the event that an RP or the Council do not take control of the units an

	equivalent financial contribution shall be made to the Council to enable AH provision elsewhere in the Borough to be determined by a mutually agreed valuation, or arbitration. • In the event that in the initial 20 year period from Practical Completion, the owner of a build to rent development notifies the Council that it intends to sell or otherwise transfers some or all of the units so that they no longer qualify as build to rent the owner/operator shall provide a valuation of the Build to Rent accommodation immediately prior to the sale/transfer and a valuation of the value following the change to non-Build to Rent. A financial contribution equal to 30% of the increase in value shall be paid to the Council within 3 months of sale/transfer, subject to indexation, and the value achieved for the unit(s) converted to market sale. • Service charges – All rents to be inclusive of service charge but exclusive of utility bills and council tax and 'pay for' services - hire of function room etc
Conditions	As per the 3rd December 2025 main agenda and update reports.
Informatives	As per the 3rd December 2025 main agenda and update reports.

1. Introduction

1.1 Both the above applications for full planning permission were deferred at 3rd December 2025 Planning Applications Committee to allow an accompanied member site visit to take place to both sites. The site visit was intended to take place on 18th December 2025 however a number of Councillors were unable attend on that date and instead the site visit took place on Thursday 22nd January 2026.

1.2 At the 3rd December meeting prior to deferral of the applications, Councillors raised some queries and questions regarding both proposed developments and this report concentrates on those matters only with the main agenda committee report and update report from the 3rd December meeting provided as appendices 1 and 2 to this report.

2. Representations Received

2.1 Since publication of the main agenda report one additional objection to both applications has been received. This is summarised below but does not raise any additional issues that are not already considered with the main agenda and update reports from 3rd December PAC:

- The appearance of the proposed development is hideous and ugly
- The owners of The Oracle should not inflict this on Reading.

3. Responses to Councillors' Points

Build to Rent (BtR) Accommodation

1.1 At the 3rd December meeting the 20 year minimum term to provide the proposed dwellings as BtR accommodation outlined with the s106 Heads of Terms for both applications was queried, as well as what would happen to the dwellings after the 20 year minimum term and how this relates to the affordable dwellings within both developments. This relates to proposed s106 obligation number 3 (Standard BtR requirements) for both applications as set out in the Recommendation boxes in the 3rd December PAC main agenda report.

3.2 The nature of BtR accommodation is discussed in paragraph 7.1.30 of the 3rd December main agenda report. Build to Rent dwellings are defined within the glossary of the NPPF (2025) as, '*Purpose built housing that is typically 100% rented out. It can form part of a wider multi-tenure development comprising either flats or houses, but should be on the same site and/or contiguous with the main development. Schemes will usually offer longer tenancy agreements of three years or more, and will typically be professionally managed stock in single ownership and management control'.* Local Plan Policy H4 (Build to Rent Schemes) outlines various specific criteria to ensure BtR developments provided a good standard of accommodation and deliver a supply of rental housing to the market as intended, including affordable housing. This includes securing BtR development in single ownership providing solely for the rental market for a minimum 20 year term with provision for clawback of affordable housing contributions should this requirement not be met.

3.3 The supporting text to Policy H4 under paragraphs 4.4.29 to 4.4.32 explains why securing BtR accommodation on a long-term basis (i.e. 20 years) is needed.

> *4.429 Build to Rent developments are long term investment vehicles that it is hoped will be attractive to financial institutions. Financial institutions will be looking for large-scale, professionally managed developments. Such developments will bring new providers into the UK housing market (financial institutions play major roles on housing provision in much of Europe and North America), thus increasing competition. They will bring higher quality and better managed accommodation and associated services to the private rental market. They will operate with longer tenancies as the model seeks to retain occupants for as long as possible.*
>
> *4.4.30 Private rented sector (PRS) housing meets the housing needs of residents who cannot afford to buy or do not want to buy private homes or who cannot get access to social housing or subsidised housing in Reading. It can benefit the local and regional economy as it enables greater household mobility. However, there are many issues associated with private renting in the Borough revolving around poor quality and poorly managed accommodation with limited security of tenure and unjustified rent increases.*
>
> *4.4.31 The Council wishes to encourage a private rented sector which provides high quality, professionally managed accommodation and a greater level of security for tenants than that which is offered by much of the current PRS market. We will support institutional investment in the sector where benefits are secured for residents and the economy of the Borough and where this produces high quality development with positive benefits for the Borough. Such schemes will normally be larger scale developments of more than 50 units to achieve the level of quality and facilities and to efficiently provide the high quality of management that is needed to support such accommodation.*
>
> *4.4.32 It is accepted that as Build to Rent developments are dependent on long term rental income rather than early sales, their funding is inevitably long term, and operates to different viability models compared to for sale schemes. Government policy therefore sees a need for some flexibility, particularly in relation to affordable housing provision. Nevertheless, where such justification is being made, the Council will expect the viability appraisal to also provide information on the viability of the development as a for sale scheme.*

3.4 In the event that in the initial 20 year period of providing the dwellings as BtR units, the owner of a BtR development notifies the Council that it intends to sell or otherwise transfer some or all of the units so that they no longer qualify as build to rent accommodation, then the s106 heads of terms under obligation 3 include a mechanism to require that written agreement to this taking place is obtained from the Council. The obligation also secures a mechanism so that in the event this happens, the Council receives an equivalent financial contribution to share in any increase in value as a result of the dwellings changing from build to rent to general market sale dwellings. This is required because the

affordable housing proposals for the development were considered solely on the basis as the dwellings being BtR accommodation. The mechanism would not apply if the dwellings were to change from build to rent to market sale outside of the 20 year period.

3.5 The s106 heads of terms under obligation 1 and 3 require that the affordable dwellings within the development are provided in perpetuity. However, in the event that the affordable dwellings within either development are sought to be changed from BtR tenure then obligation 3 also includes a 'cascade mechanism' to ensure the units remain as affordable housing within an appropriate tenure, or in the event this is not possible and the units are to be sold on the open market, then the Council receives an equivalent financial contribution towards provision of affordable housing elsewhere within the Borough. Both this and the mechanism referred to under paragraph 3.4 will ensure that the Council receives the equivalent or more affordable housing (in the form of a financial contribution) should the development move away in full or in part from the BtR tenure in future.

3.6 Officer can also confirm, as set out under s106 obligation 1 that the rents for the affordable rented dwellings within both developments shall be capped at the lower of 80% Market Rent or LHA levels (or equivalent) and that this is inclusive of service charges.

3.7 On this matter the Applicant advises that the BtR operator will invest in the building on a long term basis which is likely to be at least 20 years and will accord with the requirements of Policy H4 and the related obligations in the Section 106 agreement. They state that it is not possible at this stage to commit to the units being retained beyond 20 years at this time, but there is no intention at the current moment for the operation of the BtR dwellings (including the affordable homes) to automatically cease at end of the 20 year period and that what happens will be dependent on market conditions / housing requirements at the time.

3.8 It has also been queried as to how the two month notice period referred to under s106 obligation 3 that is required to be given to end a tenancy of any BtR dwelling would work for future occupiers of affordable dwellings within both developments and whether this would allow an occupier of an affordable dwelling to move to a different home without having to 'double pay' on rent for a month. RBC Housing Officers advise that notice periods vary between registered affordable housing providers and operators. They advise that if a tenant was moving between properties and that both require two months' notice to be given, then it is possible that double payment of rent may occur, as can be the case for market dwellings as well. RBC Housing Officers also advise that the forthcoming Renters Rights Act which is to become law from 1st May 2026 sets out two months' notice as standard for all renters. The s106 Heads of Terms under proposed obligation 3 for both applications within the main agenda report sets out that the notice period required is to be agreed in writing by the LPA, therefore Officers will ensure RBC Housing Officers have input to the drafting of the s106 agreement so that a reasonable notice period can be agreed which is acceptable to all parties involved.

Sustainability and Energy Efficiency

3.9 Officers have received a query seeking to understand why different sustainability and energy efficient standards are being applied to the commercial and residential parts of the development. This is explained in paragraphs 7.8.1 to 7.8.3 of the 3rd December main agenda report. It was also queried why we are not holding the proposed dwellings to the updated energy efficiency standards proposed as part of the ongoing partial update to the Local Plan in relation to emerging updated Policies H5 (Standards for New Housing) and CC2 (Sustainable Design and Construction). As set out in paragraphs 6.9 to 6.11 of the 3rd December main agenda report, changes to the local plan update are still at an early stage so only limited weight can be afforded to any emerging policies. The RBC Planning Policy Manager advises that the relevant emerging updated Policies H5 (Standards for New Housing) and CC2 (Sustainable Design and Construction) should not be afforded weight at this time. However, as set out in the main agenda report, as

referenced above, both proposed developments comply with the current versions of these policies within the Local Plan 2019 and the adopted Sustainable Design and Construction SPD (2021).

Standard of Accommodation

3.10 At the 3rd December meeting the level of compliance of the proposed new dwellings with the Nationally Described Space Standards was queried with concerns raised that not all dwellings would comply. This matter is discussed and explained in paragraph 7.7.31 of the 3rd December main agenda report and paragraphs 6.1 to 6.5 of the 3rd December update report where officers conclude that the failure to comply fully with the Nationally Described Space Standards may make some dwellings less attractive to some potential occupiers (for instance medium-sized families) but that compliance with the National Standards is not required by Policy H5 (Standards for New Housing) for new dwellings in the Central Area.

3.11 Full floor plans for both the YHP1 and YHP2 proposals are attached at the end of the 3rd December PAC main agenda report but a closer plan view showing a typical layout of 1 bed, 2 bed and 3 bed units within both developments have been provided by the Applicant and is attached at the end of this report.

Inclusive Access

3.12 Members asked how the YHP1 proposals would affect access to The Oracle for users of the Shopmobility/Readibus service given the proposal, as explained in paragraph 7.3.6 of the 3rd December main agenda report, to replace the existing gate with bollards at the entrance to Yield Hall Place from Minster Street.

3.13 Officers can advise that the proposed bollards are to be located along the kerbline in roughly the same position as the existing barrier and gate (see figure 1 below) therefore restricting access along Yield Hall Place to vehicular traffic but will provide a benefit to pedestrian and cycles as they will be able to pass between the bollards whereas the barrier/gate at present results in an obstruction.

3.14 The Readibus currently stops on Minster Street within the existing bus stops to allow access to the Shopmobility entrance within the Oracle via the back of the NEXT store on Yield Hall Place/Minster Street. The proposed bollards will not therefore restrict access to the existing bus stops, but by rationalising the location of the bollards around the entrance this will have a positive impact for those accessing Shopmobility via this entrance.

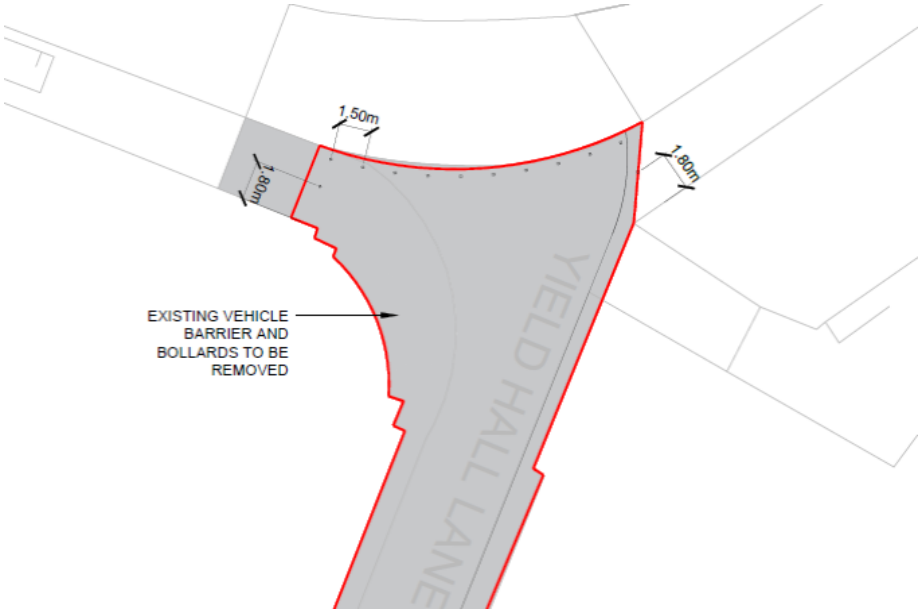


Figure 1– proposed bollards to Minster Street/Yield Hall Place junction

3.15 Members have requested further information on the layout, mix accessibility of the 11 wheelchair user dwellings proposed within both YHP1 and YHP2 (overall total of 22 wheelchair user dwellings for both developments combined) as well as the layout and accessibility of blue badge parking spaces proposed to be provided within The Oracle.

3.16 Recommended condition 47 for YHP1 and condition 29 for YHP2 require full details of the location and layout of all the wheelchair user dwellings to be submitted and agreed with the LPA prior to first occupation of any dwelling within each development. Paragraph 7.7.32 of the 3rd December main agenda report outlines the accessible elements to be incorporated within both developments. The highlighted orange area shown on floor plans in figures 2 and 3 below show the residential lobby areas for both YHP1 and YHP2, both with level access from the riverside (and from the IDR in respect of YHP2) and the orange lines show the location and most direct route to the lifts and stairs up to the residential units to the upper floors of both proposed developments.

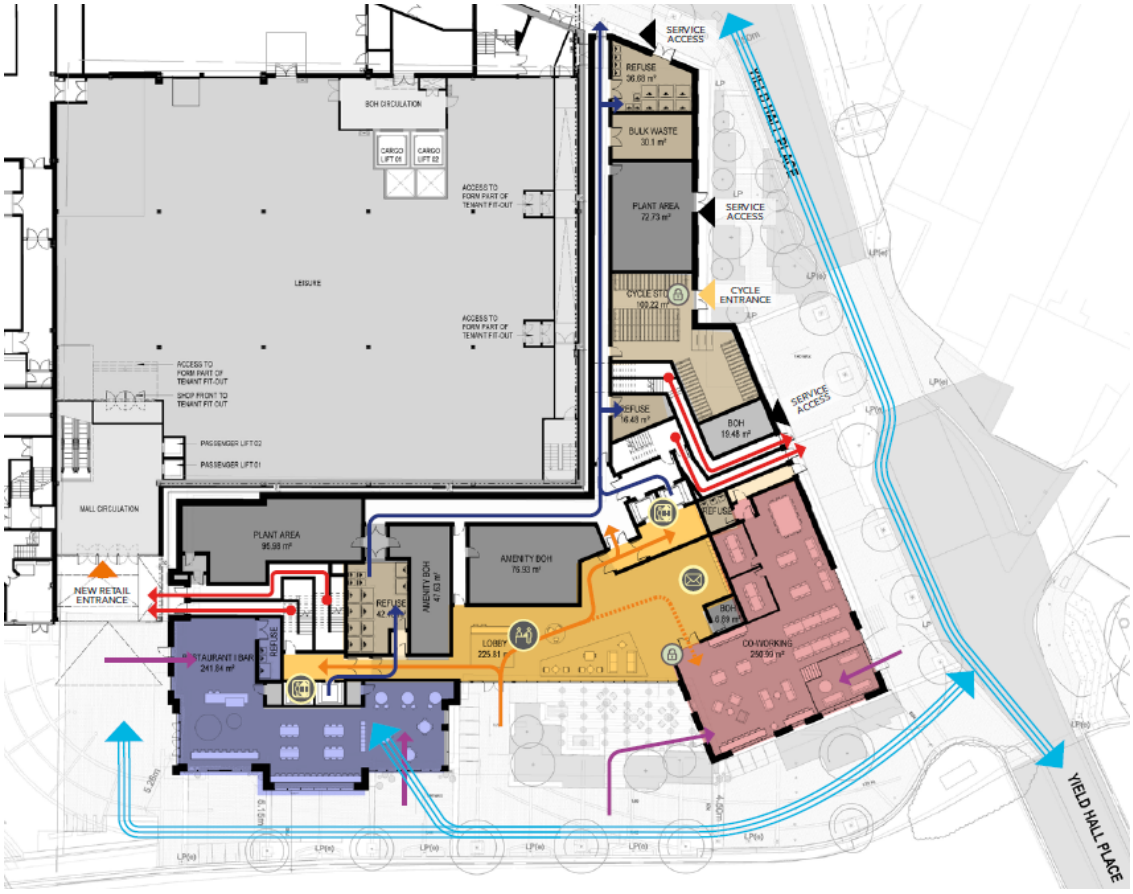


Figure 2 - YHP1 – Proposed ground floor plan showing access to the building

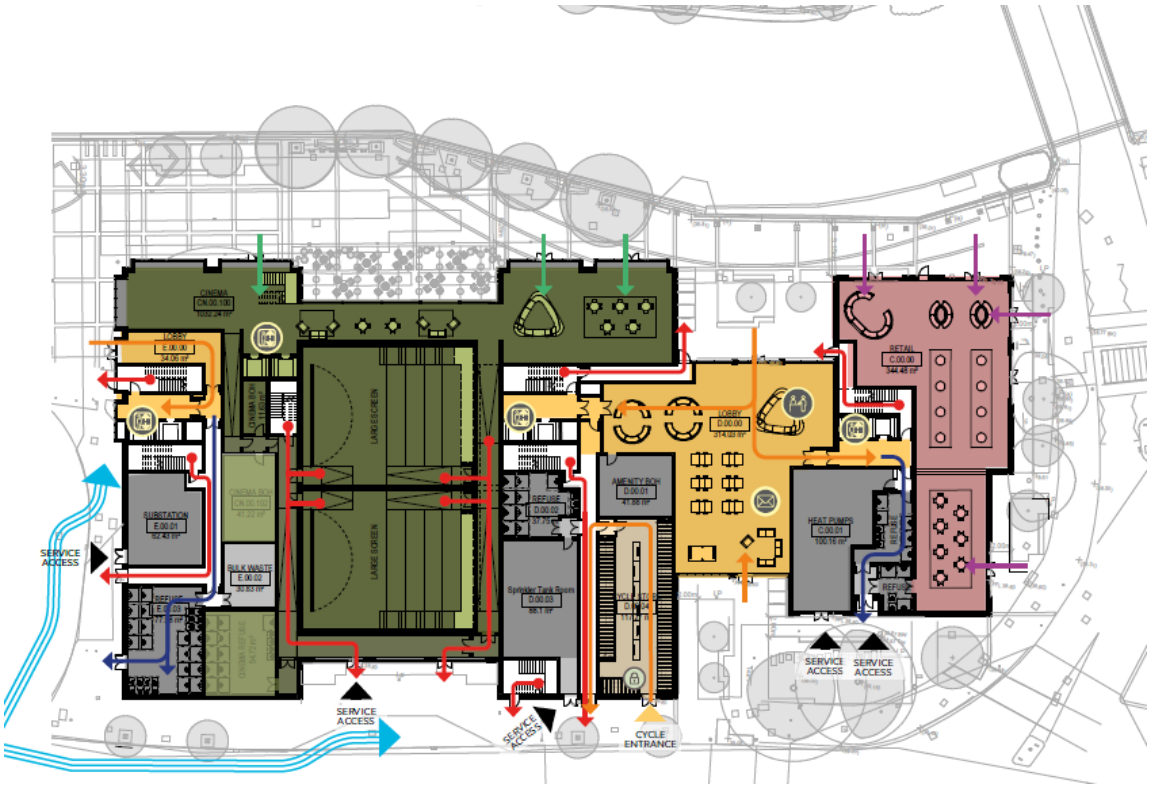


Figure 3 - YHP2 – Proposed ground floor plan showing access to the building

3.17 Officers have asked the applicant to confirm if detailed location of the wheelchair user dwellings within both developments and mix of units is able to be confirmed at this stage of the proposals and any further information in respect of this will be provided in an update report.

3.18 Paragraphs 5.1 and 5.2 of the 3rd December update report outline how blue badge parking for the occupants of the accessible dwellings within both developments is to be provided within the existing car parks at The Oracle and references s106 obligation 17 for YHP1 and 14 for YHP2 which require full details of the location and access arrangements for 11 blue badge parking spaces to be provided for each development. Since the 3rd December meeting, the applicant has submitted proposals for blue badge parking for both developments. This information is being reviewed by officers and an update on this matter will be provided in an update report.

<u>Number of dwellings proposed in relation to emerging Policy CR14g (The Oracle Riverside East)</u>

3.19 Members have asked how the number of dwellings proposed within both YHP1 and YHP1 combined (418) is justified given emerging Policy CR14g allocates the applications sites for between 250-370 dwellings.

3.20 Paragraphs 7.122 to 7.1.26 outline the position in respect of emerging Policy CR14g. Paragraphs 6.9 to 6.11 of the 3rd December main agenda report are also relevant here which are clear that only very limited weight can be attached to emerging policies. In this respect Policy CR14g of the current Local Plan is the relevant policy against which to assess the current application as explained in the paragraphs referenced above.

3.21 Notwithstanding the above, it should be noted that the supporting text to emerging Policy CR14g states under paragraph 5.4.33 of the Draft Local Plan Update 2025 that, "*Where dwelling or floorspace figures are included alongside the allocations, these are intended as a guide, and usually reflect an indicative maximum capacity. They are based on an initial assessment taking into account the characteristics of each site. However, the capacity of sites will ultimately depend on various factors that need to be addressed at application stage, including detailed design and layout".* The 3rd December main agenda

and update reports have considered the characteristics of both applications sites and relevant material planning considerations and policies in detail in reaching the proposed officer recommendations.

Overshadowing and visual dominance to the riverside

3.22 Since the 3rd December meeting, a query was raised as to how overshadowing and visual dominance to the riverside area have been considered. Paragraphs 7.7.10 of the 3rd December main agenda report considers overshadowing impacts on the public realm areas surrounding the site, including the riverside. Visual impacts of both proposed developments are discussed within section 2 of the 3rd December main agenda report in terms of both local and local range views and section 3 of that report also considers public realm works proposed both on and off-site as part of both applications and the settings within which the developments would be viewed and experienced.

3.23 The applicant agrees that the quality of the riverside area is important as an area for visitors to travel through and dwell and from a commercial perspective given there are external seating areas for the restaurants / cafes along the riverside. They advise that throughout the design process, careful consideration has been given to any overshadowing from the buildings onto the riverside area, to ensure the Riverside remains a high quality area of public space within the town and that an overshadowing assessment was submitted with the application which demonstrates a suitable relationship.

Public Realm Works to the London Street/IDR (Queens Road) Junction

3.24 Since the meeting on the 3rd December officers have received a query as to what is proposed to the London Street/IDR (Queens Road) junction. This is set out within paragraphs 7.3.13 to 7.3.15 and 7.3.17 to 7.3.20 of the 3rd December main agenda report, listed under s106 obligation 8 for YHP2 and figure 4 below shows the soft and hard landscaping works proposed around this junction. Paragraph 7.5.21 sets out that the proposed developments, either individually or cumulatively would not result in any increase in vehicle trips compared to the existing uses at both sites. This is due to the fact that retail floorspace creates more traffic movements (trips) than residential. Full proposed plans showing the on-site hard and soft landscaping for both proposals are also attached at the end of this report.



Figure 4 – Hard and Soft Landscaping proposed for YHP2 around the London Street/IDR (Queens Road) junction

Cycle Parking

3.25 Clarification has been sought in respect of the total cycle parking provision for future residential occupiers of both proposed developments. This is discussed in paragraph 7.5.22 of the 3rd December main agenda report which sets out that 246 cycle parking space are proposed across both the YHP1 and YHP2 developments. To clarify further, this is in excess of the standards within the RBC Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD (2011) which require 0.5 cycle spaces per 1-2 bed flat and 1 cycle space per 3 bed flat. With the total mix of dwellings across both developments providing 414 x one and two bedroom flats (requiring 207 cycle parking spaces) and 22 x three bedroom units (requiring 22 cycle parking spaces) resulting in a total of 229 cycle parking spaces required for both developments in accordance with the SPD standards. The proposed total provision of 246 cycle parking spaces across both developments is therefore in excess of RBC's adopted standards.

Materials

3.26 Following the meeting on 3rd December a query was received regarding the proposed materials to be used within both developments. The proposed materials for the different parts of both developments is discussed in paragraphs 7.2.38 to 7.2.46 of the 3rd December main agenda report. Conditions 3 and 4 of the YHP1 recommendation and condition 3 of the YHP2 recommendation require that full details of the materials for all external finishes of both developments, including materials samples, are to be submitted to and agreed with the LPA prior to the commencement of either development. This also includes a requirement for sectional mock-ups of the façades of the different elements of the proposed buildings to be made available to view on site prior to approval.

Replacement cinema within YHP2

3.27 Members asked what justification has been put forward with the YHP2 application for the small size of the proposed replacement cinema compared to the existing cinema at The Oracle. This is discussed in paragraphs 7.1.41 and 7.1.49 of the 3rd December main agenda report. However, the following further explanation as to the rationale behind the proposed changes to the cinema offer of The Oracle can also be provided.

3.28 The Vue cinema opened alongside the shopping centre in 1999 providing an 11-screen multiplex cinema with 1,800 seats over four storeys. The cinema is now over 20 years old and the Applicant advises is in need of significant investment to upgrade the existing facilities, both in terms of physical environment for customers and technological infrastructure. The Applicant states that the cinema is facing increased competition from more modern facilities within the Thames Valley including the Showcase in Wokingham and Cineworld at the Lexicon, Bracknell whilst markets trends overall show cinemas experiencing lower footfall as a result of the growth of home streaming services and cost of living challenges.

3.29 The proposed YHP2 development would re-provide the cinema (Sui Generis Use) at the western end of the building, similar to existing, but on a smaller scale over two storeys offering 7 screens and 511 seats compared to the 10 screens and 1,800 seats provided by the existing cinema. Whilst a replacement cinema in terms of use it would incorporate an upgraded physical environment and technological infrastructure provide an enhanced offer in terms of the quality of the cinema experience.

3.30 The Applicant's economic assessment of the impact of the proposals upon the vitality and viability of the town centre states that whilst the cinema is to be redeveloped to create a smaller premises, employment levels at the cinema are not expected to be affected with no net job losses. This is because the proposed new premises will be providing the occupier with a building of the right size better suited to its current needs. It is therefore assumed, for the purposes of this assessment, that the economic impacts currently generated by the Vue Cinema will remain unchanged and therefore any associated

employment and productivity impacts have been discounted from the assessment of net additional impacts.

3.31 The Applicant recognises that the proposals would see the capacity of the cinema will decrease significantly but explains that this is in response to the operator requirements (currently Vue), existing usage levels of the cinema and market trends as discussed above and to reflect the configuration of more modern competing cinema facilities. The cinema will continue to be operated by Vue as a multiplex cinema, providing a choice of films across seven screens.

3.32 The Applicant also advises that within their shopping centres throughout the UK they have experience of cinema operators engaging in 'surrender discussions' on units which were too large and that the cinema at The Oracle would fall into this category and is considered oversized for a town centre. From the applicant's discussions with Vue, an experienced cinema operator, they understand that a smaller cinema offer, with a widened food and beverage offer and more luxurious seating is expected to generate a greater demand for cinema at The Oracle.

3.33 The Officer conclusion remains as per the main agenda report which concludes that overall, the YHP2 proposals would preserve and enhance the vitality and viability of the Reading Central Area.

Cycle Hub

3.34 At the meeting on the 3rd December it was queried whether or not a cycle hub could be provided at The Oracle as part of either proposed development.

3.35 The Council has been seeking a location for a Cycle Hub within the Town Centre, and this is identified in the adopted Reading Transport Strategy 2040 (June 2024). Policy TR4 (Cycle Routes and Facilities) of the RBC Local Plan 2019 requires that development makes full use of opportunities to improve access for cyclists to, from and within development and to integrate cycling through the provision of new facilities. Paragraphs 7.5.6 to 7.5.18 of the 3rd December main agenda report outlines how both YHP1 and YHP2 will integrate with and enhance the cycle network in and around The Oracle.

3.36 Adopted Policy TR4 does not make specific reference to the need for a cycle hub, however this is referenced under the changes within emerging Policy TR4 (Cycle Routes and Facilities) of the draft Local Plan partial update (2025) which refers to a number of projects and facilities that development could incorporate, contribute to or provide to improve access for cyclists to, from and within new development. The supporting text to this emerging policy under paragraph 4.5.20 sets out that potential cycling projects include, "*Cycle parking mobility hubs and facilities"* and that this includes "*provision of secure, covered cycle hubs at transport interchanges, with the potential for manned security. Hubs can provide a large number of secure spaces with double height racks and include facilities such as CCTV, lighting, electric charging points, bicycle repair strands and pumps. This project also involves the establishment of residential cycle parking facilities, particularly in areas of terraced housing".*

3.37 Provision of a cycle hub is not proposed as part of either application. As discussed in paragraphs 6.9 to 6.11 of the 3rd December main agenda report only very limited weight can be attached to emerging policies given the early stages of the draft Local Plan partial update and therefore provision of a cycle hub has not formed part of negotiations with the applicant with RBC Transport Officers satisfied that the proposals already satisfy the requirements of Policy TR4, as discussed above.

3.38 In relation to this matter the Applicant has advised that they consider cycle parking around the wider Oracle complex falls outside of the scope of these applications. The Applicant is however commencing on a separate wider scheme of works reviewing the public realm

around the shopping centre and a review of cycle provision would fall within that scope of works. In terms of a cycle hub, they advise that they understand there is an ongoing Council aspiration to deliver a cycle hub within the town centre. This is not, however, a policy requirement of this scheme. Initial liaison with the RBC Transport Development Control Manager has identified that the eastern most proposed commercial unit within YHP2 may present an appropriate location for such a Hub given this sits directly adjacent to the existing cycle network. The applicant states that they have not engaged in marketing of this units at this time given the stage of the project but that at the relevant time they will review all commercial interest in the units and would consider any applications from cycle hub operators at that time.

Heritage and Townscape Visual Impact Assessment (HTVIA)

3.39 At the meeting on 3rd December some of the views shown of the YHP1 and YHP2 proposals within the Heritage and Townscape Visual Impact Assessment (HTVIA) were questioned with regard to their clarity given the proposed buildings were shown to be faded into the background/sky whereas some views showed the buildings including their elevation details. A number of these views are shown and discussed in paragraphs 7.2.47 to 7.2.86 of the 3rd December PAC main agenda report.

3.40 The applicant advises that the visuals provided accompanying the HTVIA comprise a mix of fully 'rendered' (photomontage) views which show elevational detail but also some 'wireline' views which show an outline and shaded massing infill for some longer range views. They advise that and these wireline images are intentionally shown in this way with wirelines being a typical approach for longer range views.

Unit Mix and Affordable Housing

3.41 The mix and overdominance of one bedroom dwellings was of concern for members, as well as the proposed level of affordable housing provision. These matters are covered in paragraphs 7.4.1 to 7.4.11 of the 3rd December PAC main agenda report.

3.42 In relation to unit mix, the applicant states that Policy CR6 is a guide, with the overall intention of the policy to to provide a mix of units. Whilst the applications provide a greater number of one bedroom properties than suggested by the policy, a genuine mix of units is proposed across both schemes and these will be dispersed throughout the blocks, ensuring choice for future residents. The applicant also considers that whilst the proportion of one bedroom properties exceeds the policy guide, this does not necessarily equate to an overdominance. YHP2 will provide 44% one bed properties, 4% above the guide and YHP1 will provide half of all units as one bed properties. This mix is considered by the applicant to be reflective of market demands, informed by commercial advice, operator experience and viability considerations and they wish that it be noted that the affordable housing unit mix within both proposals aligns with the Policy CR6 guidance.

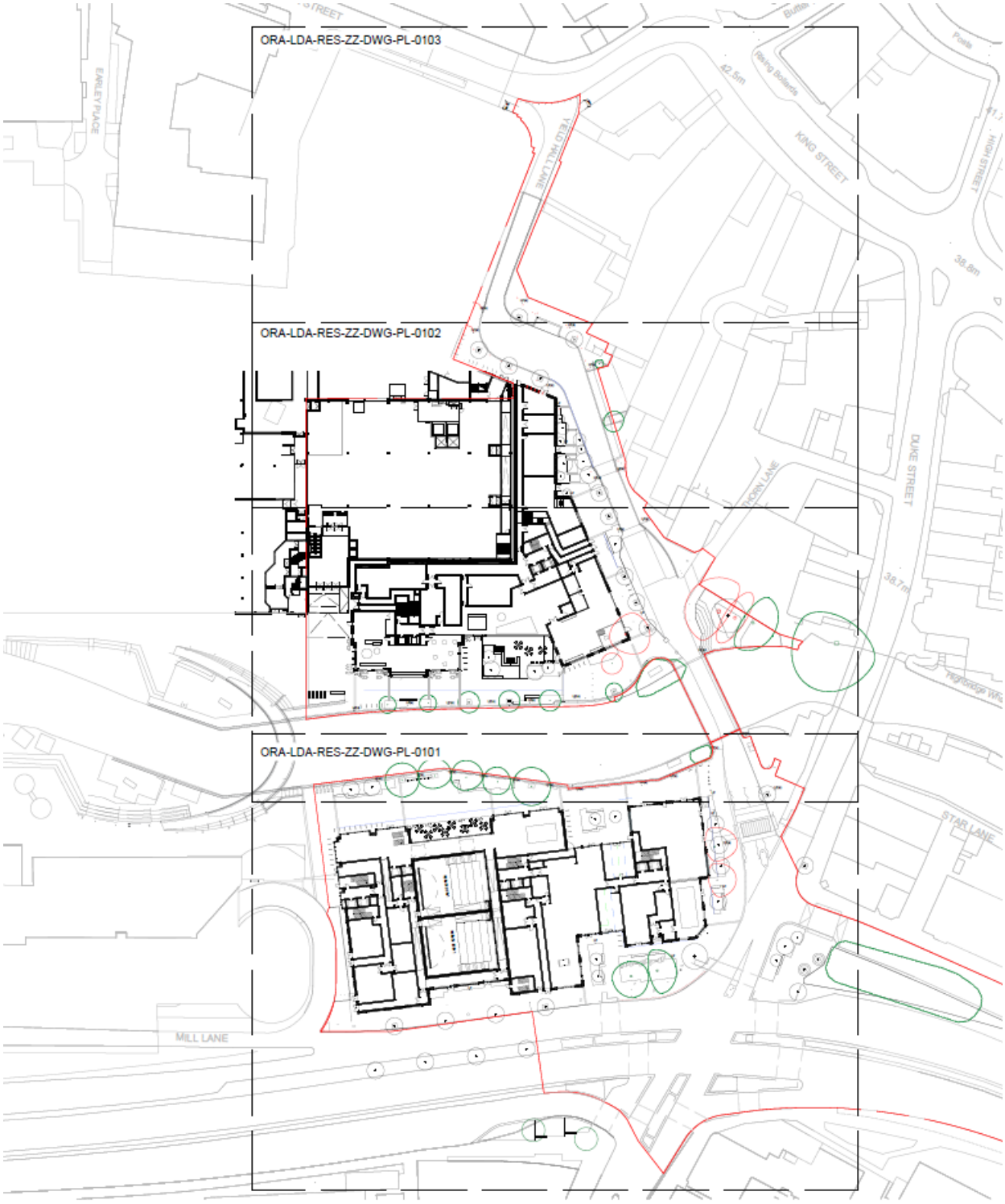
3.43 In terms of the level of affordable housing provision within both proposed developments the applicant confirms they are satisfied that the viability assessment review undertaken as part of the applications demonstrates that increasing the affordable housing level in either application is not viable and would prejudice delivery of the developments. They advise that the 10% provision proposed at Local Housing Allowance rent levels is considered to already go beyond that which the scheme can viably accommodate, and this is agreed by RBC's viability advisors. As such, they remains committed to providing 10% affordable housing across both schemes, at Reading Local Housing Allowance levels recognising the identified need for affordable housing within the Borough. The applicant is also committed to a deferred payment mechanism obligation, which will enable further affordable housing units to be provided if the viability of the scheme improves.

3.44 The applicant also advises that it should be noted that challenging viability and the impact upon affordable housing delivery is not just a matter affecting Reading but is being experienced nationally. Viability of schemes in recent years has been adversely affected by the growing cost of construction, uncertainty around fire regulations, high interest rates, and increased (and at times competing) policy requirements. This affects housing delivery, particularly on brownfield sites, and has implications on affordable housing delivery. They note that in October 2005, the Mayor of London announced emergency measures to increase housebuilding in the capital, recognising the significant constraints to viability. They state that this will in turn ensure that a degree of affordable housing is delivered in the capital, contributing to meeting housing need and that providing increased affordable housing on the proposed YHP1 and YHP2 schemes will prejudice the delivery of development, which could ultimately resulting in zero affordable housing being delivered for Reading if the developments do not come forward.

4. Conclusion

4.1 The above report responds to the clarifications and questions raised at the 3rd December 2025 PAC meeting in relation to both applications. There have been no changes to the proposed development since the 3rd December meeting and the officer recommendations for both application remain as per that set out in the Recommendation boxes at the top of the 3rd December PAC main agenda and update report but with reference to the additional s106 Heads of Terms proposed as part of this report.

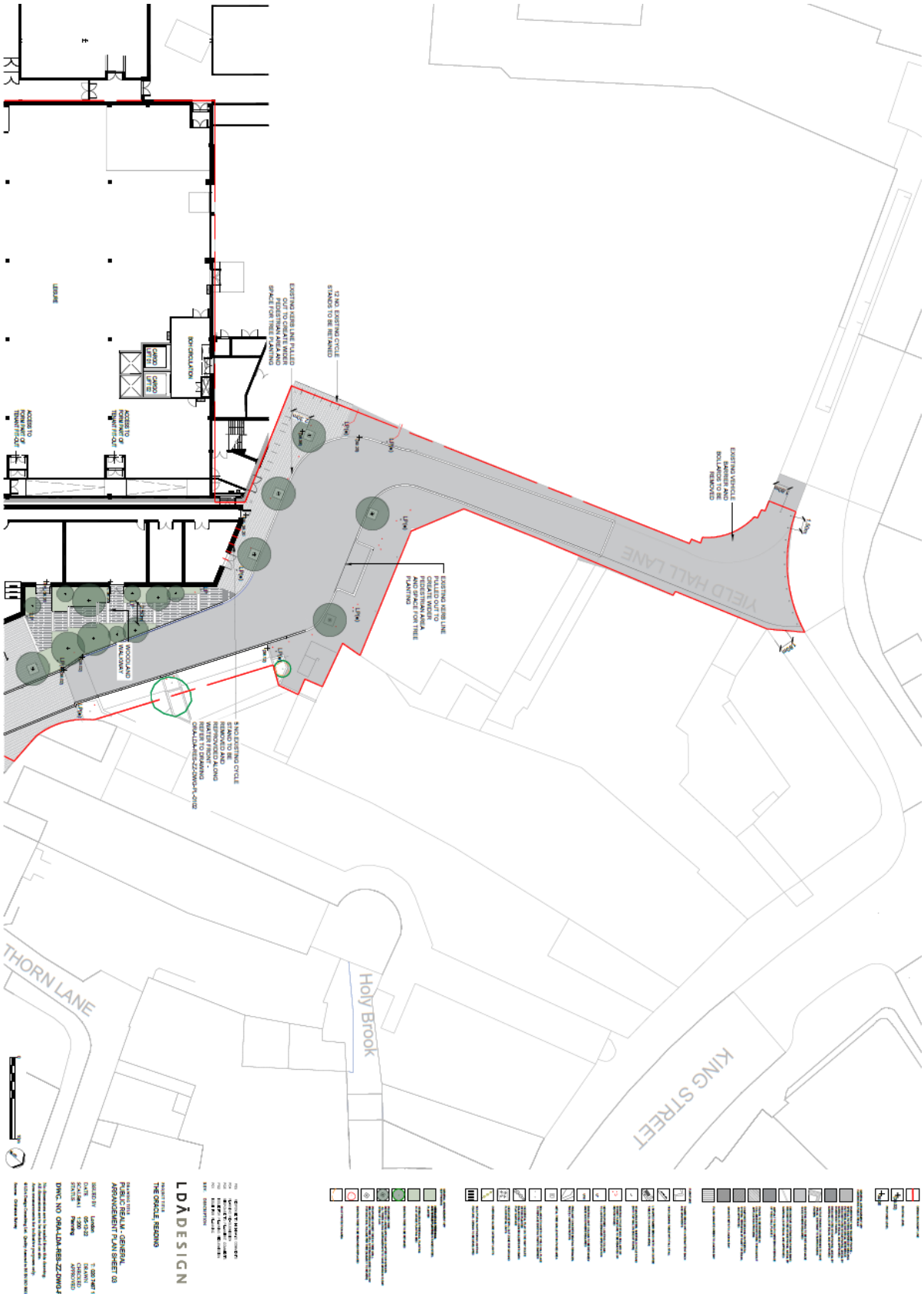
Plans and drawings



Proposed hard and soft landscaping overview (YHP1 and YHP2)



Proposed hard and soft landscaping (YHP1)

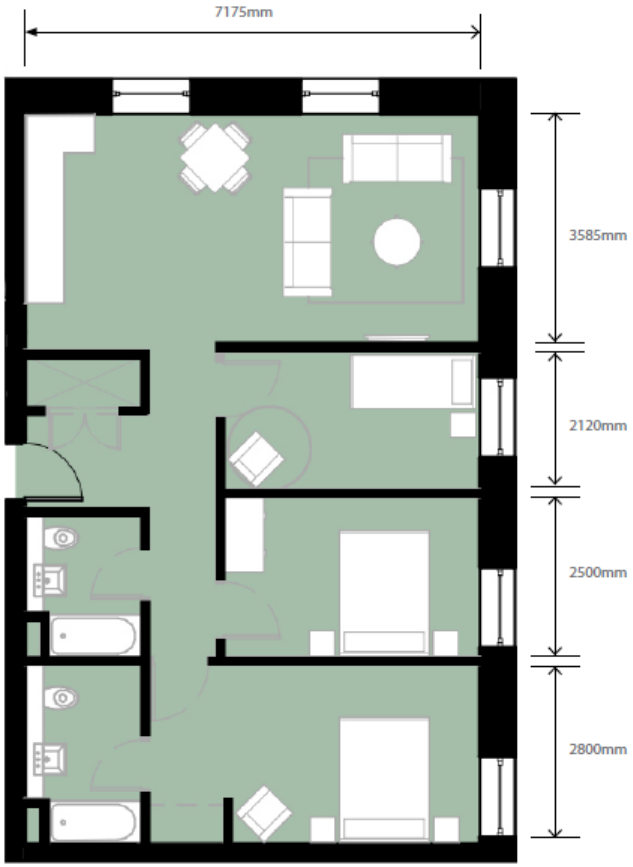


Proposed hard and soft landscaping (YHP1)

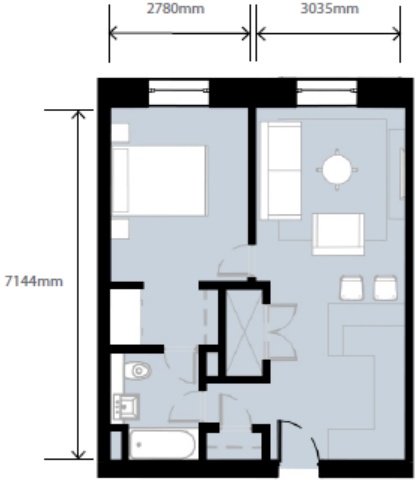


Proposed hard and soft landscaping (YHP2)

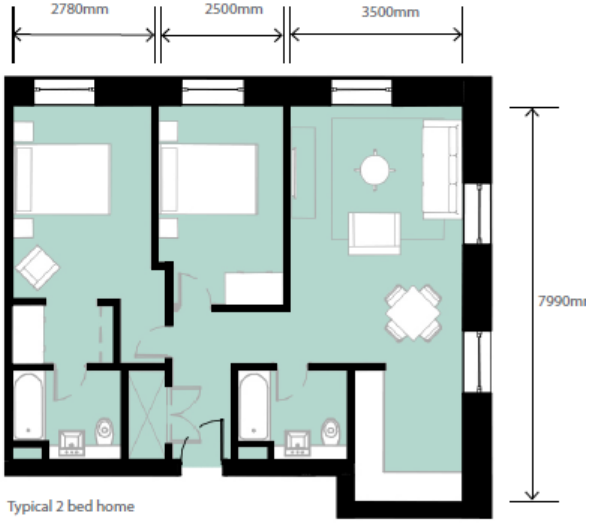
Unit Typologies



Typical 3 bed home



Typical 1 bed home



Typical 2 bed home







The Almere by Packaged Living

Typical 1, 2 and 3 bed unit layouts for both the YHP1 and YHP2 proposals

03 December 2025

Reading Borough Council
Working better with you

Title	**PLANNING APPLICATIONS REPORT**
Ward	Abbey/Katesgrove
Planning Application Reference:	PL/22/1916/FUL & PL/22/1917/FUL
Site Address:	PL/22/1916/FUL – Former Debenhams Department Store, west of Yield Hall Place ('Yield Hall Place 1'), The Oracle, Reading, RG2 2AS PL/22/1917/FUL – Existing Vue cinema complex west of Yield Hall Place/London Road ('Yield Hall Place 2'), The Oracle, Reading, RG2 2AG
Proposed Development	PL/22/1916/FUL - Mixed use development comprising part demolition of former department store and erection of new buildings comprising up to 218 build to rent residential dwellings (Class C3) & 1,209sqm commercial uses within Uses Class E and/or bar (Sui Generis Use). Reconfiguration and change of use of up to 5,866sqm remaining department store floorspace (Class E) to uses with within Use Class E and/or bar (Sui Generis Use) and/or experiential leisure use (Sui Generis Use). Associated public realm, infrastructure works & external alterations to shopping centre, including creation of new shopping centre entrance (amended description) (accompanied by an Environmental Statement) PL/22/1917/FUL - Mixed use development comprising demolition of existing buildings and erection of new building comprising up to 218no. build-to-rent residential dwellings (Class C3) & up to 3,046 sqm commercial floorspace comprising cinema (Sui Generis) and ground floor commercial uses within Use Class E and/or Bar (Sui Generis Use). Associated public realm and infrastructure works (amended description) (accompanied by an Environmental Statement)
Applicant	The Oracle Limited Partnership
Report author	Matt Burns, Principal Planning Officer
PL/22/2916/FUL - Yield Hall Place 1 The Oracle, Reading RG2 2AG	
Deadline:	**Target decision date:** 20th March 2023 **Extension of time date:** 13th February 2026
Recommendation	**Subject to:** **1. Confirmation of satisfactory details of the operation of the Deferred Payment Mechanism (DPM) terms; and** **2. Confirmation from the Local Lead Flood Authority that SuDS issues are satisfactory** Delegate to the Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection Services (ADPTPPS) to:

	i) **GRANT** full planning permission, subject to the satisfactory completion of a s106 legal agreement and delegate to ADPTPPS to make such minor changes to conditions or such additional conditions required, make such minor changes to Heads of Terms and details of the legal agreement as may be reasonably required to issue the permission; or ii) Refuse full planning permission if the legal agreement is not completed by 13/02/2026 (unless officers on behalf of the Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection Services agree to a later date for completion of the legal agreement)
S106 Heads of Terms	**1. <u>Affordable Housing</u>** Not less than 22 units (10% of the total) affordable housing units to be provided on site at Discounted Market Rent level, capped at the lower of 80% Market Rent or LHA or equivalent, inclusive of service charges. • Not less than 9 affordable housing units to be provided in Block A before any BtR (non-affordable) units provided • Not less than 13 affordable housing units to be provided in Block B before any BtR (non-affordable) units provided • Mix of affordable housing to be 9 x 1 bed, 12 x 2 bed and 1 x 3 bed units • Affordable housing to be supplied at no more than LHA rent levels in perpetuity in accordance with Policy H4. • Layout of units within each block to be as per proposed plans (Policies CC9, H3, H4 and the Affordable Housing SPD) **2. <u>Affordable Housing Deferred Payment Mechanism</u>** The provision of affordable housing (via a commuted sum to go towards affordable housing elsewhere in the Borough), subject to a Deferred Payment Mechanism (DPM) to potentially increase the overall provision to a maximum of equivalent 30% policy compliance. Details to be set out in the Update Report. (Policies: CC9, H3, and the Affordable Housing SPD) **3. <u>Standard BTR requirements</u>** – *Nominations and Lettings – Discounted Market Rent (LHA*) First Lets: • Either a typical unit, show apartment or the marketing suite will be made available for viewings • Three months before Practical Completion, the Council will be notified of expected date units will be available. • The “Marketing Period” will start two months before Practical completion and the Landlord will provide information on rents, specification, floor plans and management details. • For the first 4 weeks of the Marketing Period the affordable homes will be exclusively marketed to Council nominees, and the following will apply:

	• The Council has 10 working days to advertise the properties. This includes arranging viewing days for Applicants; • The Council then has 5 working days to confirm eligibility of the Applicants against the 'Qualifying Criteria' and then nominate those Applicants to the Landlord; • Subject to appropriate checks by the Landlord that the Qualifying Criteria has been met, Applicants will have then have 2 working days to confirm if they wish to take the property. • If the Landlord considers that the Qualifying Criteria has not been met, they will notify the Council who will be granted an additional 2 working days to nominate an alternative Applicant for this particular property. • Where more than one Applicant (all of whom pass the qualifying criteria) wants the same property, priority will be as per the Priority Hierarchy: 1. Households on the Council's Housing Waiting List 2. Households where at least one person both lives and works in the Borough 3. Households where at least one person either lives or works in the Borough 4. Households where at least one person lives or works in a neighbouring local authority 5. All other unrestricted household. • After the initial 4-week period, any remaining available affordable homes can be marketed by both the Council and the Landlord. • Within this period the Council may still nominate Applicants, however priority will be determined on a first come first served basis, subject to the Qualifying Criteria being met. Subsequent Lets: • Existing residents will provide 2 months' notice of their intention to activate a break clause, at which point the property can be marketed. • As above, for the first 4 weeks of any marketing period for subsequent lets of the affordable homes will be ring fenced to Council nominees. *Qualifying Criteria for all tenants* 1. Can afford the rents proposed and pass affordability checks (to be defined in the agreement) [affordability to include money provided through the benefits system] and 2. Are an appropriate household size for the available property (to be defined in the agreement) and 3. Suitable references & credit checks (to be defined in the agreement) and 4. Have no rent arrears or history of rent arrears and 5. No history of anti-social behaviour (to be defined in the agreement) and 6. Satisfactory face-to-face interview with the Landlord's representative (to be defined in the agreement) *Management Strategy:* 3 months before Practical Completion the Landlord to submit a Management Strategy to the Council for approval (not to be unreasonably withheld) to include the following:

	- Details of the individual monthly rent and service charge (noting that all rents are inclusive of service charges) and - Management, maintenance and servicing arrangements for the affordable units/ occupiers (e.g. on-site presence hours, bin disposal, visitor parking etc) - Details as to how the affordable homes will be marketed to prospective occupiers (for both first and subsequent lettings) and the different forms of media proposed to be used. - No dwelling to be occupied in any part of the development until the Strategy has been approved in writing by the Council. No dwelling to be occupied other than in accordance with the approved Strategy. In accordance with Policy H4. *General Build to Rent Provisions* - 20 year minimum as BTR from Practical Completion. - Subject to legislative changes, assured shorthold Tenancies (ASTs) offered at 3 years in length. Tenants may opt for shorter tenancy. Include 6 month tenant-only, no fee, break clause (2 month notice). [as per NPPG guidance]. Unless otherwise agreed in writing by the LPA. - Annual statement to RBC, confirming the approach to letting the affordable units, their ongoing status, and clearly identifying how the scheme is meeting the overall affordable housing level required in the planning permission. [as per NPPG Paragraph: 006 Reference ID: 60-006-20180913] - All tenancies shall include provisions enabling all residents to have the right to access and use the Communal Facilities within all residential areas, subject to reasonable management requirements and for the avoidance of doubt the charges and other terms of use shall be the same for all residents (regardless of tenure). - To provide and manage the Communal Facilities for the lifetime of the development. Except where alternative amenity facilities of equivalent effect and a timetable for their provision and arrangements for their management have been agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority AND no earlier than the expiration of 20 years from Practical Completion. - Definition and demarcation of all communal facilities on plans. Clarification of nature/function of each to be included in the s106 agreement. (Policy H4) **4. <u>Employment and Skills Plan</u>** To secure a construction and end user phase Employment and Skills Plan (ESP) or equivalent financial contributions (construction phase - £61, 915 / end user phase - £22, 928). As calculated in the Council's Employment Skills and Training SPD (2013). Construction phase plan/contribution to be provided prior to commencement of development of each phase 1A and 1B. End user plan/contribution to be provided prior to first occupation of any commercial unit within phase 1A and phase 1B. Both contributions index linked from date planning permission is granted. **(**Policy CC9 and the Employment Skills and Training SPD)

	5. Heat Network Safeguarding for the possible connection of the development to a Reading Central Area Heat Network. Prior to commencement of development (barring demolition) , a feasibility study for future connection to a Reading Central Area District Heat Network for consideration: - Feasibility study to consider connection of the development to a Reading Central Area Heat Network using all up to date and relevant data to the Heat Network) - Feasibility Study to set out the full schedule of costs for connection to a Reading Central Area Heat Network - If a connection is considered to be feasible and no later than three months from receipt of the Study, the Council shall have confirmed whether the development is approved for connection to the heat network - If approved for connection, the developer shall provide a scheme to ensure connection to the Reading Central Area Heat Network, and no residential unit shall be occupied until the development is connected to a working Reading Central Area Heat Network. (Policy CC4 and the Sustainable Design and Construction SPD) **6. Carbon Off Setting Contribution (residential dwellings only)** As per the Sustainable Design and Construction SPD 2019. If zero carbon is not achieved the scheme must instead achieve a minimum of a 35% improvement in regulated emissions over the Target Emissions Rate in the 2013 Building Regulations, plus provide a financial contribution of £1,800 per remaining tonne towards carbon offsetting within the Borough (calculated as £60/tonne over a 30-year period). Contribution to be index linked from the date planning permission is granted. (Policy H5 and the Sustainable Design and Construction SPD) **7. Local Health Care Infrastructure** Contribution of £188, 352 to support a solution, identified by the NHS Integrated Care Board (ICB) or any subsequent body that may take over the NHS ICB function for Reading Borough, to provide extra primary clinical capacity needed to mitigate the increased impact of the development on healthcare facilities within Abbey or adjacent wards. Payable on commencement of development and index linked from the date planning permission is granted. (Policy CC9) **8. Public Realm / Open Space / Leisure** Contribution of £1.2 million towards off-site works to improve nearby public realm/open space/leisure facilities. Consisting of:

	- Hard/soft landscaping works to Star Lane/rear of Queens Road Car Park Area referred to in the draft RBC Public Realm Strategy which includes i) provision of central amenity green space lawn area and benches, ii) new directional signage and iii) meadow and boundary planting. (£500k) - Improvements to surfacing and layout of the cycle/pedestrian routes along the river between The Oracle and Waterloo Meadows which is the closest major park and area of open space to the development containing a play area and other recreational facilities. (£500k) - Improvements, including replacement play equipment, to St Giles Play Area at St Giles Close (200k) Payable in full on commencement of which ever development is implemented first of YHP1 (PL/22/1916) and YHP2 (PL/22/1917). Index linked from the date planning permission is granted. (Policies EN9, CR3 and CC9) **9. <u>Transport/Highway Matters</u>** Within 6 months of commencement of the development to have entered into a S278 Highways or any other agreement that maybe agreed with the Highway Authority to facilitate the delivery of the following: • Provision of bollards with a minimum spacing of 1.5m at the junction of Yield Hall Place and Minster Street as agreed on drawing ORA-LDA-RES-ZZ-DWG-PL-0103 Rev P05. No part of the development to be occupied until the Highway works have been completed **10. <u>Car Club</u>** Prior to occupation of any residential dwelling to submit for approval details of a car club for two vehicles within The Oracle car park and a car club strategy. Spaces to be provided prior to occupation of any residential dwelling. **13. <u>Public Art</u>** Prior to commencement of development (barring demolition), submission and approval by the LPA of a scheme for inclusion of Public Art within the public realm areas of the site. Subject to an award of tender to artist(s) via an art feasibility study (of no greater value than £10,000). RBC to agree or to reject any proposed scheme within 3 months. Completion/installation of public art no later than first occupation of any residential or commercial unit. (Policies CC7, CR2, CR3 and CC9) **14. <u>Monitoring fee</u>**

	Contribution towards monitoring costs plus a separate commitment to pay the Council's reasonable legal costs and any further viability review costs in connection with the proposed S106 Agreement. To be payable whether or not the Agreement is completed **15. <u>All Contributions index linked</u>** All financial contributions index-linked from the date of permission. **16. <u>Other</u>** Completion of YHP1 in its entirety, using the phasing 1A and 1B once there has been commencement of Phase 1A (within 5 years).
Conditions	1. Time Limit for implementation – 3 years. 2. Approved plans. 3. <u>Phase 1 A * Pre-commencement (barring demolition)</u> submission and approval of details of all external materials (including samples of all external materials and sectional mock-ups available to view on-site) 4. <u>Phase 1 B * Pre-c</u>ommencement (barring demolition) submission and approval of details of all external materials (including samples of all external materials and sectional mock-ups available to view on-site) 4. * <u>Pre-commencement</u> submission and approval of a demolition and construction method statement 5. *<u>Pre-commencemen</u>t (barring demolition), submission and approval of a habitat and ecological enhancement scheme 7. <u>* Pre-commencement</u> submission and approval of a contaminated land assessment 8. <u>* Pre-commencement</u> submission and approval of contaminated land remediation scheme 9. Implementation of approved remediation scheme 10.. Reporting of any unexpected contamination 11. * <u>Pre-commencement (barring demolition to ground level)</u> submission and approval of an archaeological written scheme of investigation and subsequent implementation 10. * <u>Pre-commencement</u> (barring demolition) submission and approval of a public realm/ landscaping scheme 12. *<u>Pre-commencement</u> (barring demolition) submission and approval of a landscape and ecological management plan 14. * <u>Pre-commencement (barring demolition)</u>, submission and approval of a SuDS scheme and subsequent implementation 16. * <u>Pre-commencement</u> submission and approval of a Security Strategy 17. <u>* Phase 1B - Pre-commencement (barring demolition)</u> submission and approval of a noise mitigation scheme (internal) to protect dwellings from noise emissions from non-residential uses at ground floor 18. <u>* Phase 1B - Pre-commencement (barring demolition)</u> submission and approval of a noise (external) and ventilation strategy to include mitigation for overheating 19. <u>* Phase 1B - Pre-commencement (barring demolition)</u> submission and approval of design stage SAP energy assessment in relation all proposed dwellings. 20. Pre-occupation of any residential dwelling submission and approval of as-built stage SAP energy assessment

	21. * Phase 1A - Pre-commencement (barring demolition) submission and approval of design stage certification demonstrating adherence of all non-residential units to a BREEAM Excellent standard 22. *Phase 1B - Pre-commencement (barring demolition) submission and approval of design stage certification demonstrating adherence of all non-residential units to a BREEAM Excellent standard 23. Phase 1A - Pre-occupation submission and approval of as-built certification demonstrating compliance of all non-residential units to a BREEAM Excellent standard 24. Phase 1B - Pre-occupation submission and approval of as-built certification demonstrating compliance of all non-residential units to a BREEAM Excellent standard 25. * Pre-commencement submission and approval of a demolition and construction environmental management plan (CEMP) 26. * Phase 1B Pre-commencement (barring demolition) submission and approval of a clean water infrastructure phasing plan 27. *Pre-commencement (barring demolition) submission and approval of an air quality mitigation scheme 29* Pre-occupation of any part of the development submission and approval of scheme to provide 28 cycle parking spaces adjacent to the Bridge Street elevation of The Oracle. Provision of the spaces prior to first occupation of any commercial or residential unit. Unless already provided as part of YHP2 30. * Phase 1 A - Pre-commencement submission and approval of a site waste management plan (SWMP) 31. * Phase 1B – Pre-commencement submission and approval of a site waste management plan (SWMP) 32. * Pre-commencement submission and approval of details of external appearance of Phase 1A. 33. *Phase 1B - Pre-commencement (barring demolition) submission and approval of building maintenance unit details 34. Pre-occupation of any residential unit implementation of cycle parking 35. Pre-occupation of any residential unit submission and approval of all addresses (for parking permits) 36. All occupiers to be notified of not automatic entitlement to a parking permit . 37. Pre-occupation of any commercial units submission and approval of delivery and servicing management plan 38. Pre-occupation of any dwelling revision of layout of multi-storey car parking spaces as per proposed plans 39. Pre-occupation of any dwelling implementation of parking and loading bay restrictions to east of Yield Hall Place 40. All external doors to open away from the street 41. Pre-occupation of any residential unit submission and approval of a moving in / moving out management plan 42. Parking Permits 1 (pre-occupation) 43. Parking Permits 2 (compliance condition) 44. Vehicle Loading facilities (as specified) (compliance condition) 45. Pre-occupation submission and approval of boundary treatment details (to be approved) including implementation 47. Pre-occupation of any residential dwelling, submission and approval of details of provision of a minimum of 11 ‘wheelchair accessible’ units. 48. Pre-occupation, of any commercial unit containing kitchen or cooking facilities, submission and approval of an odour assessment and management plan 49. Pre-occupation submission and approval of details of all external lighting

	51. Phase 1B - Pre-occupation submission and approval of a car park cleaning management plan 52. Noise assessment (including specific reference to structure borne noise) to be submitted and approved prior to the first occupation of any Class E(d) gym use within any 'application floor space' unit 53. Phase 1A - Pre-occupation submission and approval of vermin proofing details for all bin stores 54. Phase 1B – Pre-occupation submission and approval of vermin proofing details for all bin stores 55. Pre-occupation of any commercial unit provision of associated commercial refuse store 56. Pre-occupation of any residential unit provision of residential refuse stores 57. Phase 1A - Pre-occupation of any commercial unit submission and approval of a commercial waste management strategy (including details of bin or tow tugs) 58. Phase 1B – Pre-occupation of any commercial unit submission and approval of a commercial waste management strategy (including details of bin or tow tugs) 59. Pre-occupation of any residential unit submission and approval of a residential waste management strategy 60. Within 5 months of first occupation of any commercial unit submission and approval of a site travel plan 61. Annual review of travel plan following approval under condition 60 above. 62 . Phase 1 A - Pre-occupation of any part of the development submission and approval of a CCTV strategy 63. Phase 1B – Pre-occupation of any part of the development submission and approval of a CCTV strategy 64. Pre-occupation of any residential dwelling completion of all commercial units 65. Pre-occupation of any commercial or residential unit provision of all on-site public realm works 67. Restriction on hours of deliveries and waste collection (not to take place between the hours of 2300 and 0600 Monday to Saturday or between 2230 and 0600 Sundays and Bank Holidays) 68. Noise Assessment to be submitted and approved prior to installation of any mechanical plant 69. No flat roof area to be used as a balcony or roof terrace unless where already stated/shown 70. No pilling to take place unless a piling method statement has been submitted and approved 71. Retention of all trees other than those approved for removal 72. All vegetation clearance to take place outside of the bird nesting season 73. All commercial units apart from the proposed co-working space unit to be for a use within Class E(a), E(b), E(c), E(d), E(e), E(f) and/or Sui Generis Bar Use only 74. Unit shown on approved plans as 'co-working space' to be for a use within Class E(a), E(b), E(c), E(d), E(e), E(f) and E(g)(i) only 75. Hours of use of any Class E(a), E(b), E(c), E(d), E(e), E(f), E(g)(i) and/or Sui Generis Bar Use 'application floor space' being Monday to Saturday 08:00hours – 23:00 hours and Sunday, Bank Holidays and other statutory holidays 08:00 hours – 22:00 hours 76. Restriction preventing the future inclusion of mezzanine floors / increases in floor area, unless specifically shown on the approved plans. Otherwise separate permission is required to be sought and approved.

	77. No more than 20% of floorspace within the proposed flexible Class E and/or Sui Generis Bar units within the retained Debenhams floorspace to be for Sui Generis Drinking Establishment Use. 78. Demolition/Construction hours (compliance condition) 79. No burning of materials on site during demolition/construction (compliance condition) 80. Mix of units restricted to 96 x 1 bed units (44%), 111 x 2 bed units (51%) and 11 x 3 bed units (5%) 81. Pre-occupation of any residential dwelling submission and approval of photovoltaics details. 82. Development not to be carried out other than in full accordance with the principles of the submitted fire statement. All fire safety mitigation measures to be implemented prior to occupation of any dwelling (including sprinklers) 83. Development not to be carried out other that in full accordance with all the flood mitigation measures set out in the submitted flood risk assessment 84. Development not to be carried out other than in full accordance with the submitted energy statement 85. Development not to be carried out other than in full accordance with the submitted wind microclimate report. No dwelling to be occupied until all mitigation measures recommended within the report have been implemented. 86 * Pre-commencement (barring demolition) submission and approval of a GSHP feasibility study 87. Development to be carried out in accordance with submitted phasing plan
Informatives	1. Positive and Proactive Working – approval 2. Pre-commencement conditions 3. Highways 4. S106 Legal Agreement 5. Terms and conditions 6. Building Regulations 7. Complaints about construction 8. Encroachment 9. Noise between residential properties – sound insulation 10. Community Infrastructure Levy 11. Parking Permits 12. No advertisement consent granted – separate consent may be required in the future 13. Thames Water recommended informative 14. Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service informative 15. Marine Maritime Organisation informative 16. Canal and River Trust informative
PL/22/1917/FUL - Yield Hall Place 2 The Oracle, Reading RG2 2AG	
Deadline:	**Target decision date:** 20th March 2023 **Extension of time date:** 13th February 2026
Recommendation:	**Subject to:** **1. Confirmation of satisfactory details of the operation of the Deferred Payment Mechanism (DPM) terms; and** **2. Confirmation from the Local Lead Flood Authority that SuDS issues are satisfactory**

	Delegate to the Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection Services (ADPTPPS) to: i) **GRANT** full planning permission, subject to the satisfactory completion of a s106 legal agreement and delegate to ADPTPPS to make such minor changes to conditions or such additional conditions required, make such minor changes to Heads of Terms and details of the legal agreement as may be reasonably required to issue the permission; or ii) Refuse full planning permission if the legal agreement is not completed by 13/02/2026 (unless officers on behalf of the Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection Services agree to a later date for completion of the legal agreement)
S106 terms	**1. <u>Affordable Housing</u>** Not less than 22 units (10% of the total) affordable housing units to be provided on site at Discounted Market Rent level, capped at the lower of 80% Market Rent or LHA or equivalent, inclusive of service charges. • No less than 7 affordable housing units to be provided in Block C before any BtR (non-affordable) units provided • No less than 7 affordable housing units to be provided in Block D before any BtR (non-affordable) units provided • No less than 8 BtR (non-affordable) units to be provided in Block E before any BtR (non-affordable) units to be provided • Mix of affordable housing to be 9 x 1 bed, 12 x 2 bed and 1 x 3 bed units • Affordable housing to be supplied at no more than LHA rent levels in perpetuity in accordance with Policy H4. • Layout of units within each block to be as per proposed plans (Policies CC9, H3, H4 and the Affordable Housing SPD) **2. <u>Affordable Housing Deferred payment mechanism</u>** The provision of affordable housing (via a commuted sum to go towards affordable housing elsewhere in the Borough), subject to a Deferred Payment Mechanism (DPM) to potentially increase the overall provision to a maximum of equivalent 30% policy compliance. Details to be set out in the Update Report. (Policies: CC9, H3, and the Affordable Housing SPD) **3. <u>Standard BTR requirements</u> –** *Nominations and Lettings – Discounted Market Rent (LHA*) First Lets: • Either a typical unit, show apartment or the marketing suite will be made available for viewings • Three months before Practical Completion, the Council will be notified of expected date units will be available. • The “Marketing Period” will start two months before Practical completion and the Landlord will provide information on rents, specification, floor plans and management details.

	• For the first 4 weeks of the Marketing Period the affordable homes will be exclusively marketed to Council nominees, and the following will apply: • The Council has 10 working days to advertise the properties. This includes arranging viewing days for Applicants; • The Council then has 5 working days to confirm eligibility of the Applicants against the 'Qualifying Criteria' and then nominate those Applicants to the Landlord; • Subject to appropriate checks by the Landlord that the Qualifying Criteria has been met, Applicants will have then have 2 working days to confirm if they wish to take the property. • If the Landlord considers that the Qualifying Criteria has not been met, they will notify the Council who will be granted an additional 2 working days to nominate an alternative Applicant for this particular property. • Where more than one Applicant (all of whom pass the qualifying criteria) wants the same property, priority will be as per the Priority Hierarchy: 1. Households on the Council's Housing Waiting List 2. Households where at least one person both lives and works in the Borough 3. Households where at least one person either lives or works in the Borough 4. Households where at least one person lives or works in a neighbouring local authority 5. All other unrestricted household. • After the initial 4-week period, any remaining available affordable homes can be marketed by both the Council and the Landlord. • Within this period the Council may still nominate Applicants, however priority will be determined on a first come first served basis, subject to the Qualifying Criteria being met. Subsequent Lets: • Existing residents will provide 2 months' notice of their intention to activate a break clause, at which point the property can be marketed. • As above, for the first 4 weeks of any marketing period for subsequent lets of the affordable homes will be ring fenced to Council nominees. *Qualifying Criteria for all tenants* 1. Can afford the rents proposed and pass affordability checks (to be defined in the agreement) [affordability to include money provided through the benefits system] and 2. Are an appropriate household size for the available property (to be defined in the agreement) and 3. Suitable references & credit checks (to be defined in the agreement) and 4. Have no rent arrears or history of rent arrears and 5. No history of anti-social behaviour (to be defined in the agreement) and 6. Satisfactory face-to-face interview with the Landlord's representative (to be defined in the agreement) *Management Strategy:*

	3 months before Practical Completion the Landlord to submit a Management Strategy to the Council for approval (not to be unreasonably withheld) to include the following: - Details of the individual monthly rent and service charge (noting that all rents are inclusive of service charges) and - Management, maintenance and servicing arrangements for the affordable units/ occupiers (e.g. on-site presence hours, bin disposal, visitor parking etc) - Details as to how the affordable homes will be marketed to prospective occupiers (for both first and subsequent lettings) and the different forms of media proposed to be used. - No dwelling to be occupied in any part of the development until the Strategy has been approved in writing by the Council. No dwelling to be occupied other than in accordance with the approved Strategy. In accordance with Policy H4. *General Build to Rent Provisions* - 20 year minimum as BTR from Practical Completion. - Subject to legislative changes, assured shorthold Tenancies (ASTs) offered at 3 years in length. Tenants may opt for shorter tenancy. Include 6 month tenant-only, no fee, break clause (2 month notice). [as per NPPG guidance]. Unless otherwise agreed in writing by the LPA. - Annual statement to RBC, confirming the approach to letting the affordable units, their ongoing status, and clearly identifying how the scheme is meeting the overall affordable housing level required in the planning permission. [as per NPPG Paragraph: 006 Reference ID: 60-006-20180913] - All tenancies shall include provisions enabling all residents to have the right to access and use the Communal Facilities within all residential areas, subject to reasonable management requirements and for the avoidance of doubt the charges and other terms of use shall be the same for all residents (regardless of tenure). - To provide and manage the Communal Facilities for the lifetime of the development. Except where alternative amenity facilities of equivalent effect and a timetable for their provision and arrangements for their management have been agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority AND no earlier than the expiration of 20 years from Practical Completion. - Definition and demarcation of all communal facilities on plans. Clarification of nature/function of each to be included in the s106 agreement. (Policy H4) **4. <u>Employment and Skills Plan</u>** To secure a construction and end user phase Employment and Skills Plan (ESP) or equivalent financial contributions (construction phase - £51, 515 / end user phase - £10, 491). As calculated in the Council's Employment Skills and Training SPD (2013). Construction phase plan/contribution to be provided prior to commencement of development. End user plan/contribution to be provided prior to first occupation of any commercial unit. Both contributions index linked from date planning permission is granted.

(Policy CC9 and the Employment Skills and Training SPD)

5. **Heat Network**

Safeguarding for the possible connection of the development to a Reading Central Area Heat Network.

Prior to commencement of development (barring demolition) , a feasibility study for future connection to a Reading Central Area District Heat Network for consideration:

- Feasibility study to consider connection of the development to a Reading Central Area Heat Network using all up to date and relevant data to the Heat Network)
- Feasibility Study to set out the full schedule of costs for connection to a Reading Central Area Heat Network
- If a connection is considered to be feasible and no later than three months from receipt of the Study, the Council shall have confirmed whether the development is approved for connection to the heat network
- If approved for connection, the developer shall provide a scheme to ensure connection to the Reading Central Area Heat Network, and no residential unit shall be occupied until the development is connected to a working Reading Central Area Heat Network.

(Policy CC4 and the Sustainable Design and Construction SPD)

6. **Carbon Off Setting Contribution (residential dwellings only)**

As per the Sustainable Design and Construction SPD 2019. If zero carbon is not achieved the scheme must instead achieve a minimum of a 35% improvement in regulated emissions over the Target Emissions Rate in the 2013 Building Regulations, plus provide a financial contribution of £1,800 per remaining tonne towards carbon offsetting within the Borough (calculated as £60/tonne over a 30-year period). Contribution to be index linked from the date planning permission is granted.

(Policy H5 and the Sustainable Design and Construction SPD)

7. **Local Health Care Infrastructure**

Contribution of £188, 352 to support a solution, identified by the Integrated Care Board (ICB) or any subsequent body that may take over the NHS ICB function for Reading Borough, to provide extra primary clinical capacity needed to mitigate the increased impact of the development on healthcare facilities within Abbey or adjacent wards. Payable on commencement of development and index linked from the date planning permission is granted.

(Policy CC9)

8. **Public Realm / Open Space / Leisure**

	Contribution of £1.2 million towards off-site works to improve nearby public realm/open space/leisure facilities. Consisting of: - Hard/soft landscaping works to Star Lane/rear of Queens Road Car Park Area referred to in the draft RBC Public Realm Strategy which includes i) provision of central amenity green space lawn area and benches, ii) new directional signage and iii) meadow and boundary planting. (£500k) - Improvements to surfacing and layout of the cycle/pedestrian routes along the river between The Oracle and Waterloo Meadows which is the closest major park and area of open space to the development containing a play area and other recreational facilities. (£500k) - Improvements, including replacement play equipment, to St Giles Play Area at St Giles Close (200k) Payable in full on commencement of which ever development is implemented first of YHP2 (PL/22/1917) and YHP1 (PL/22/1916). Index linked from the date planning permission is granted. (Policies EN9, CR3 and CC9) Prior to commencement of development submission and approval of a public realm scheme for the IDR(Queens Road)/London Street junction. Scheme to include: • Low level hard and soft landscaping in front of the black history mural on Mill Lane • Planting of 5 trees within the central reservation of the IDR (Queens Road) to the west of the London Street junction • Feasibility study for removal of crash barriers to crossing islands and around the IDR (Queens Road)/London Street junction and replacement with low level planters Once scheme is approved Applicant to fund and enter into an agreement under s278 of the Highways Act All agreed public realm works to be completed prior to first occupation of any commercial or residential unit within YHP2, whichever is the sooner. **9. <u>Transport/Highway Matters</u>** Not to commence development unless and until the area of highway to be stopped up as illustrated on drawing 332110757_5500_SK048 Rev P03 has been approved by the Secretary of State (via section 247 TCPA) Within 6 months of commencement of the development to have entered into a S278 Highways Agreement to facilitate the delivery of the following: • Improvements to the IDR / London Street / Duke Street signalised junction potentially consisting of the removal of guard railings, adjustment and landscaping to islands, surface dressing to existing crossing points, a raised table on Queens Road service road and tree planting. Including those works set out under section 8 above.

	• Relocation of existing signage as agreed on drawing 332110757_5500_SK053 Rev P01 • Provision of kassel or treif kerbs along the IDR as agreed on drawing 332110757_5500_SK055 Rev P01 • Removal of existing High Mast lighting column and replacement with standard street lighting columns No occupation of the development until all Highway works have been completed **10. Car Club** Prior to occupation of any residential dwelling to submit for approval details of a car club for two vehicles within The Oracle car park and a car club strategy. Spaces to be provided prior to occupation of any residential dwelling. **11. Public Art** Prior to commencement of development (barring demolition), submission and approval by the LPA of a scheme for inclusion of Public Art within the public realm areas of the site. Subject to an award of tender to artist(s) via an art feasibility study (of no greater value than £10,000). RBC to agree or to reject any proposed scheme within 3 months. Completion/installation of public art no later than first occupation of any residential or commercial unit. (Policies CC7, CR2, CR3 and CC9) **12. Monitoring fee** Contribution towards monitoring costs plus a separate commitment to pay the Council's reasonable legal costs and any further viability review costs in connection with the proposed S106 Agreement. To be payable whether or not the Agreement is completed **13. All Contributions index linked** All financial contributions index-linked from the date of permission.
Conditions	1. Time Limit for implementation – 3 years. 2. Approved plans. 3. *Pre-commencement (barring demolition) submission and approval of details of all external materials (including samples of all external materials and sectional mock-ups available to view on-site) 4. * Pre-commencement submission and approval of a demolition and construction method statement 5. * Pre-commencement (barring demolition) submission and approval of a habitat and ecological enhancement scheme 6. * Pre-commencement submission and approval of a contaminated land assessment 7. * Pre-commencement submission and approval of contaminated land remediation scheme 8. Implementation of approved remediation scheme

	9. Reporting of any unexpected contamination 10. * Pre-commencement (barring demolition to ground level) submission and approval of an archaeological written scheme of investigation and subsequent implementation 11. * Pre-commencement (barring demolition) submission and approval of a detailed hard and soft landscaping scheme 12. * Pre-commencement (barring demolition), submission and approval of a landscape and ecological management plan 13. * Pre-commencement (barring demolition), submission and approval of a SuDS scheme and subsequent implementation 14. * Pre-commencement (barring demolition) submission and approval of a Security Strategy 16. * Pre-commencement (barring demolition) submission and approval of a noise mitigation scheme (internal) to protect dwellings from noise emissions from non-residential uses at ground floor 17. * Pre-commencement (barring demolition) submission and approval of a noise (external) and ventilation strategy to include mitigation for overheating 19. * Pre-commencement submission (barring demolition) and approval of a cinema noise assessment and mitigation scheme 18. * Pre-commencement (barring demolition) submission and approval of design stage SAP energy assessment in relation all proposed dwellings. 19. Pre-occupation of any residential dwelling submission and approval of as-built stage SAP energy assessment 20. * Pre-commencement (barring demolition) submission and approval of design stage certification demonstrating adherence of all non-residential units to a BREEAM Excellent standard 21. Pre-occupation submission and approval of as-built certification demonstrating compliance of all non-residential units to a BREEAM Excellent standard 22. * Pre-commencement submission and approval of a demolition and construction environmental management plan (CEMP) 23. * Pre-commencement (barring demolition) submission and approval of a clean water infrastructure phasing plan 24. * Pre-commencement (barring demolition) submission and approval of a waste water infrastructure phasing plan 24. * Pre-commencement submission and approval of an air quality mitigation scheme 25* Pre-occupation of any part of the development submission and approval of scheme to provide 28 cycle parking spaces adjacent to the Bridge Street elevation of The Oracle. Provision of the space prior to first occupation of any commercial or residential unit. Unless already provided as part of YHP1. 26. * Pre-commencement submission and approval of a scheme or retention and re-use of the Tramways Generating Station date plate. 27. * Pre-commencement submission and approval of a site waste management plan (SWMP) 28. * Pre-commencement (barring demolition) submission and approval of building maintenance unit details 28. Pre-occupation submission and approval of boundary treatment details (to be approved) including implementation 29. Pre-occupation of any residential dwelling, submission and approval of details of provision of a minimum of 11 ‘wheelchair accessible’ units. 30. Pre-occupation, of any commercial unit containing kitchen or cooking facilities, submission and approval of an odour assessment and management plan

	31. Pre-occupation submission and approval of details of all external lighting 32. Pre-occupation of any residential unit submission and approval of a car park cleaning management plan 33. Noise assessment (including specific reference to structure borne noise) to be submitted and approved prior to the first occupation of any Class E(d) gym use within any 'application floor space' unit 34. Pre-occupation provision of obscure glazing to certain dwellings within block C 37. Pre-occupation of any residential unit submission and approval of a moving in / moving out management plan 38. Parking Permits 1 (pre-occupation) 39. Parking Permits 2 (compliance condition) 40. Vehicle Loading facilities (as specified) (compliance condition) 22. Pre-occupation of any residential unit implementation of cycle parking 37. Pre-occupation submission and approval of all addresses (for parking permits) 38. All occupiers to be notified of not automatic entitlement to a parking permit . 40. Pre-occupation of any commercial units submission and approval of delivery and servicing management plan 41. Pre-occupation of any dwelling revision of multi-storey car parking space as per proposed plans 42. All external doors to open away from the street 43. Pre-occupation of any part of the development providing of 4m wide cycle route through the development as per proposed plans 44. *Pre-commencement (barring demolition) submission and approval of a lighting strategy for replacement of lighting mast with standard lighting columns around the IDR/Duke Street/London Street junction. 44. Pre-occupation submission and approval vermin proofing details for all bin stores 45. Pre-occupation of any commercial unit provision of associated commercial refuse store 46. Pre-occupation of any residential unit provision of residential refuse stores 47. Pre-occupation of any commercial unit submission and approval of a commercial waste management strategy (including details of bin or tow tugs) 48. Pre-occupation of any residential unit submission and approval of a residential waste management strategy 49. Within 5 months of first occupation of any commercial unit submission and approval of a site travel plan 50. Annual review of travel plan following approval under condition 49 above. 51. Pre-occupation submission and approval of a CCTV strategy 52. Pre-occupation of any residential dwelling provision of all commercial units 53. Pre-occupation of any commercial unit or residential dwelling provision of all on-site public realm works 54. Restriction on hours of deliveries and waste collection (not to take place between the hours of 2300 and 0600 Monday to Saturday or between 2230 and 0600 Sundays and Bank Holidays) 55. Noise Assessment to be submitted and approved prior to installation of any mechanical plant 56. No flat roof area to be used as a balcony or roof terrace unless where already stated/shown 57. Retention of all trees other than those approved for removal

	58. All vegetation clearance to take place outside of the bird nesting season 59. All commercial units apart from the proposed cinema floorspace unit to be for a use within Class E(a), E(b), E(c), E(d), E(e), E(f) and/or Sui Generis Drinking Establishment Use only 60. Unit shown on approved plans as cinema floorspace to be for Sui Generis Cinema use only 61. Hours of use of any Class E(a), E(b), E(c), E(d), E(e), E(f), E(g)(i) and/or Sui Generis Drinking Establishment Use 'application floor space' being Monday to Saturday 08:00hours – 23:00 hours and Sunday, Bank Holidays and other statutory holidays 08:00 hours – 22:00 hours 62. Hours of use of the proposed Sui Generis Use Cinema floorspace to be 0900hours – 0000hours each day 63. Restriction preventing the future inclusion of mezzanine floors / increases in floor area, unless specifically shown on the approved plans. Otherwise separate permission is required to be sought and approved. 64. Demolition/Construction hours (compliance condition) 35. No burning of materials on site during demolition/construction (compliance condition) 66. Mix of units restricted to 111 x 1 bed units (51%), 96 x 2 bed units (44%) and 11 x 3 bed units (5%). 67. Pre-occupation of any residential dwelling submission and approval of photovoltaics details. 68. Development not to be carried out other than in full accordance with the principles of the submitted fire statement. All fire safety mitigation measures to be implemented prior to occupation of any dwelling (including sprinklers). 69. Development not to be carried out other that in full accordance with all the flood mitigation measures set out in the submitted flood risk assessment 70. Development not to be carried out other than in full accordance with the submitted energy statement 71. Development not to be carried out other than in full accordance with the submitted wind microclimate report. No dwelling to be occupied until all mitigation measures recommended within the report have been implemented. 86 * Pre-commencement (barring demolition) submission and approval of a GSHP feasibility study
Informatives	1. Positive and Proactive Working – approval 2. Pre-commencement conditions 3. Highways 4. S106 Legal Agreement 5. Terms and conditions 6. Building Regulations 7. Complaints about construction 8. Encroachment 9. Noise between residential properties – sound insulation 10. Community Infrastructure Levy 11. Parking Permits 12. No advertisement consent granted – separate consent may be required in the future 13. Thames Water recommended informative 14. Royal Berkshire Fire Service informative 15. Marine Maritime Organisation informative

1. Executive summary

1.1 The report considers two planning applications, each for major mixed-use residential led schemes for redevelopment of the eastern end of The Oracle. One application relates to the site of the former Debenhams department store on the north side of the river Kennet and is referred to as Yield Hall Place 1 and the other application relates to the site of the Vue cinema and restaurant units on the south side of the river and is referred to as Yield Hall Place 2. The proposals are two separate planning applications but are considered together as one report given the close relationship between the two sites which are supported by various linked areas of public realm and both form part of, and are managed as part of, the wider The Oracle shopping centre by the same operator (Hammerson). Many of the documents submitted in support of both planning applications are combined, considering both applications.

1.2 Each proposal would provide 218 residential dwellings towards meeting the Council's housing needs, including 22 affordable dwellings on each site. The proposals also incorporate provision of a range of commercial units within flexible uses which seek to update and diversify both sides of the shopping centre and assist in securing its existing and future important role in the overall vitality and viability of the Central Area, as well as Readings role as a key regional centre within the Thames Valley. Both applications incorporate significant public realm improvements, extensive hard and soft landscaping, tree planting and provision of significant on-site biodiversity net gain.

1.3 Whilst the proposals would be of high quality design resulting in a range of street-level improvements to the riverside, Yield Hall Place and the IDR (Queens Road) both applications incorporate tall building elements which as a result of their scale are found to result in incidences of visual harm to views from a variety of locations within the Central Area, as well as less than substantial harm to the setting of a wide range of listed buildings and to the historic character and appearance of both the Market Place/London Street and St Marys Butts/Castle Street conservation areas. The sites are not located within areas defined as being appropriate for tall buildings under Policy CR10 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 and therefore both proposals represent development that is a departure from the adopted Local Plan. As such the proposals needs to present material considerations that would justify this departure from the Development Plan. Shortfalls are also identified for both applications in terms of unit mix with an overdominance of one 1 bedroom units and in terms of standard of accommodation with some dwellings subject to sub optimal receipt of daylight, albeit these dwellings are in the minority.

1.4 The applications have been carefully considered by your officers, and the planning balance for both in terms of benefits and harms, is considered to be finely poised, however planning permission is recommended to be granted for both applications subject to conditions and completion of a s106 legal agreement.

2. Introduction and site description

2.1 The proposals subject of this report relates to two separate applications for full planning permission on two separate application sites located at the eastern end of The Oracle shopping centre on either side of the River Kennet. The separate sites are referred to as Yield Hall Place 1 or YHP1 (application ref. 22/1916) and Yield Hall Place 2 or YHP2 (application ref. 22/1917) for this purposes of this report. The Oracle shopping centre opened in September 1999 and comprises a two level shopping centre with riverside frontages located either side of the River Kennet. The Oracle is managed by Hammerson (the applicant for both these planning applications). The red line site area and location plan for each application is shown in Figures 1 and 2 below. The land outlined in blue is that within the wider shopping centre and surrounding area that is also managed by Hammerson.

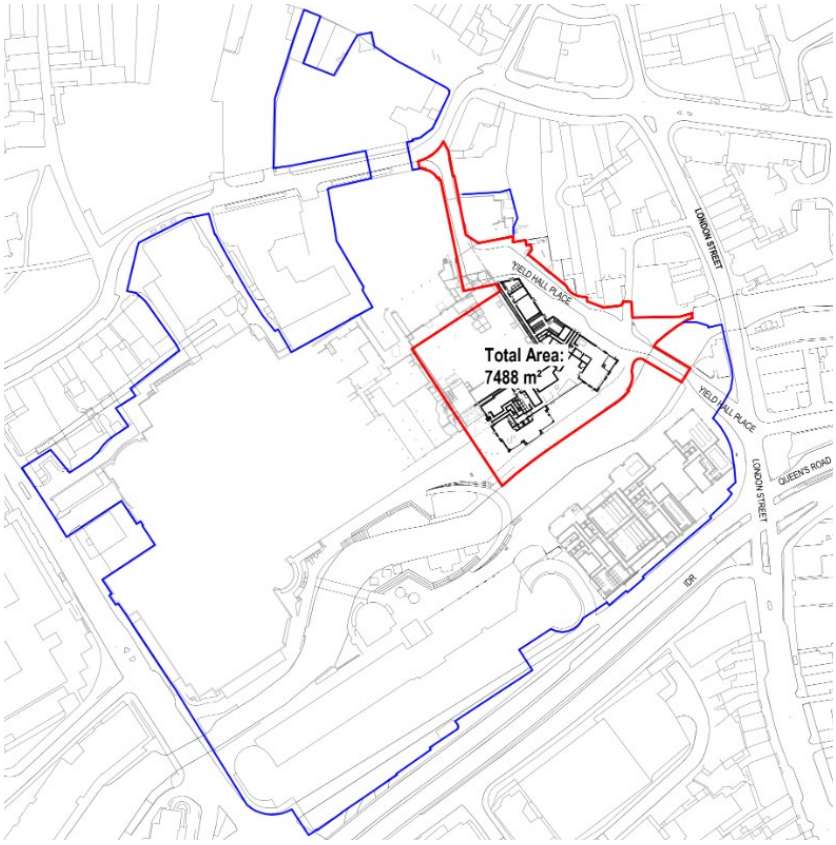


Figure 1 – YHP1 (application ref. 22/1916) - Site Location Plan (red line area)

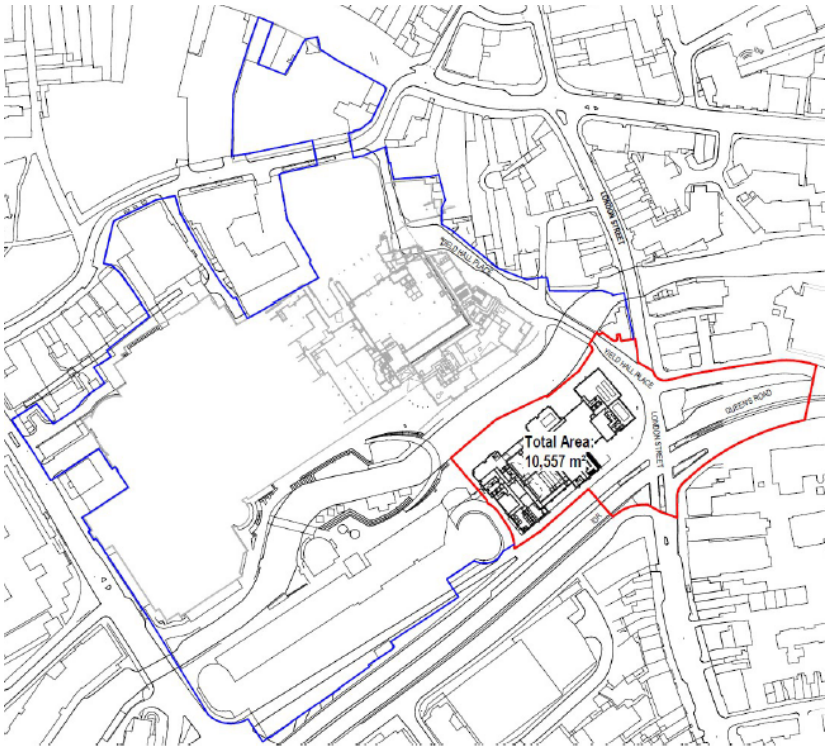


Figure 2 – YHP2 (application ref. 22/1917) – Site Location Plan (redline area).

2.2 Application ref. 22/1916 on the site referred to hereafter as YHP1 (the Yield Hall Place 1 application) relates to the eastern end of The Oracle Shopping Centre on the north side of the River Kennet, including land up to the northern edge of the river channel and areas of public realm to the north, east and south along Yield Hall Place and Yield Hall Place Bridge which crosses over the River Kennet to the south. The site currently comprises a 6-8 storey (equivalent residential storeys) building with predominantly brick and glasswork façade and operated as a Debenhams department store until 2020. The unit is now vacant following the cessation of Next Home and Beauty and two restaurant units which also operated from this part of the shopping centre at riverside level.

2.3 Immediately to the west of YHP1 are a variety of other shops, bars, restaurants and hot food takeaways that comprise the rest of The Oracle Riverside shopping centre on the north side of the river. To the north-east, beyond Yield Hall Place lies further retail and leisure activities in the form of restaurants, bars, and 'Escape Rooms' located within the Kings Walk Shopping Centre.

2.4 Yield Hall Place itself to the east provides pedestrian and service vehicle access to Minster Street further north of the site, and facilitates pedestrian flows from the town centre, providing connections to Broad Street. Public pedestrian access exists within the shopping centre as well as along the riverside frontage with connections to Bridge Street, Yield Hall Place, Minister Street and London Street. Vehicular access to the site is achieved from Yield Hall Place.

2.5 Small trees, vegetation beds and large potted plants a located along the riverside frontages with larger trees situated to the east between Yield Hall Place and London Street. Steel protected railings are positioned along the edge of the riverside pedestrian walkways where public bike racks and benches are also found.

2.6 Application ref. 22/1917 on the site referred to as YHP2 relates to the eastern end of The Oracle Shopping Centre on the south side of the River Kennet including land up to the southern edge of the river channel and areas of public realm to the east and south along Yield Hall Place, London Street and Queens Road (IDR). The site is located directly opposite YHP1 on the opposite side of the River Kennet and currently comprises a 4 storey (6-8 residential storeys equivalent) cinema complex, with a cladded grey and brick façade. This block predominately houses a Vue multiplex cinema, with further restaurant and bar units housed at ground floor level.

2.7 Immediately to the west of and adjacent to YHP2 is the Oracle Riverside multi-storey car park. The multi-storey car park comprises around 1,600 car parking spaces located over 7 floors. There are also further restaurants and hot-food takeaway units situated on the south side of the riverside frontage. To the east of the site on the opposite side of London Street is Grosvenor Casino at no. 1 Queens Road, as well as clusters of commercial buildings (mainly offices) along the IDR. London Street is across the IDR to the south via a series of pedestrian crossings and runs south up-hill and contains terraces of more modest older buildings, predominantly of between 2 and 4 storeys, with commercial uses at street level with offices and residential uses above. The IDR runs parallel along the south boundary of the site and becomes ramped to the west, rising up over the roundabout junction between Southampton Street and Bridge Street (the Oracle Roundabout) from where access to the Oracle Riverside multi-storey car park and service area is also obtained. Further west along the IDR is the John Lewis Depot warehouse building on Mill Lane and the Premier Inn Hotel building of between 4 and 6 storeys, located between Letcombe Street and Southampton Street.

2.8 Yield Hall Place to the east provides direct pedestrian access to the YHP2 site. Public pedestrian access exists within the shopping centre as well as along the riverside frontage with connections to Bridge Street, Yield Hall Place, Queens Road (IDR) and London Street.

2.9 Similar to YHP1, small trees, vegetation beds and large potted plants are located along the riverside frontage with larger trees situated on a verge to the south of Queens Road opposite Grosvenor Casino within the public realm areas in the eastern part of the application site. Steel railings are positioned along the edge of the riverside pedestrian walkways where public bike racks and benches are also found. The south bank of the Kennet is part of the Sustrans National Cycle Route 4 (NCN4).

2.10 Figure 3 below shows the existing buildings within the application sites for YHP1 and YHP2 in context.

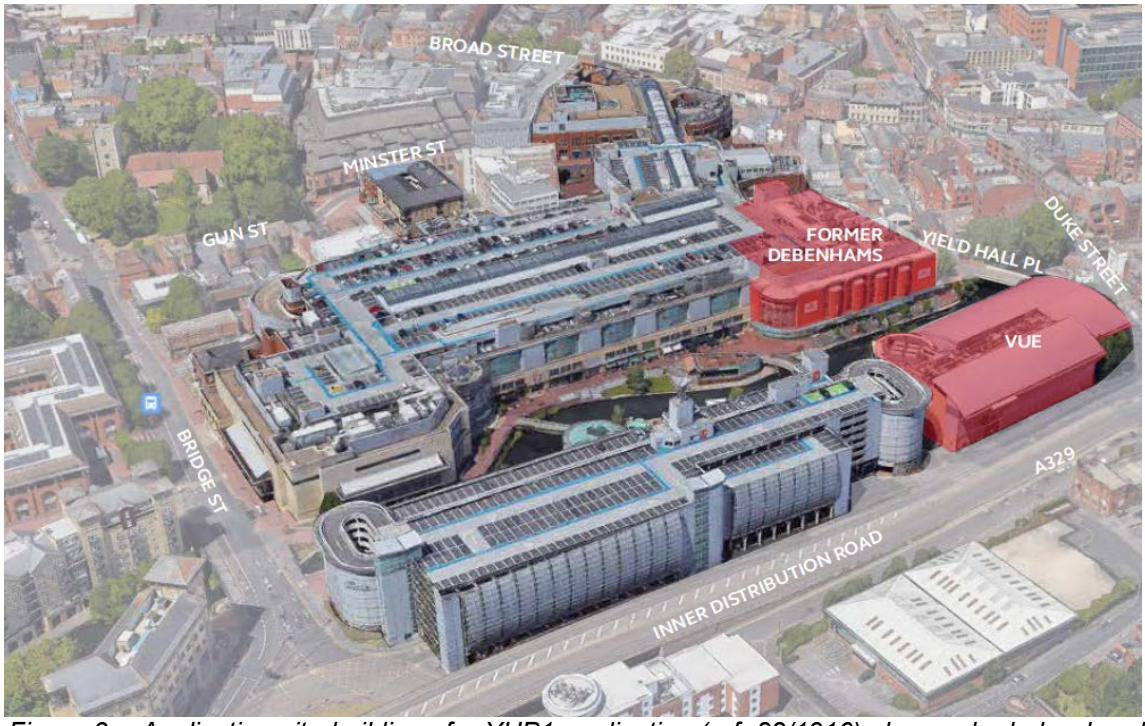


Figure 3 – Application site buildings for YHP1 application (ref. 22/1916) shown shaded red and labelled as 'Former Debenhams' and application site buildings for YHP2 application (ref. 22/1917) shown shaded red and labelled as 'Vue'.

2.11. The Reading Borough Local Plan (2019), at paragraph 5.1.4 specifies that the opening of the Oracle helped to establish Reading as one of the leading shopping locations in the UK. The application sites are subject to the following site constraints / designations:

- Within the boundary of Reading Central Area (Policies CR1-10)
- Inside the primary shopping area (Policy CR1)
- Inside the central core (Policy CR1)
- Inside the office core (Policy CR1)
- The Riverside frontage is designated as a primary frontage in Central Reading (Policy CR7)
- All of The Oracle shopping centre site on the south side of the River Kennet is allocated for development under Policy CR14g – The Oracle Extension, Bridge Street and Letcombe Street, which specifies development of the area between the River Kennet and Mill Lane for retail, with use of the site at Letcombe Street for a public car park. The site at YHP2 forms part of this site allocation area.
- The easternmost part of the site is partly within the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area (Policies EN1 & EN3 are relevant). The St Mary's Butts / Castle Street Conservation Area lies 70m north-west of the application site.
- There are no listed buildings (or other heritage assets) within the red line application site area but those nearby include (Policy EN1):
    - Nos.24-52 Queen's Crescent – Grade II Listed Building
    - Church of St Laurence – Grade I Listed Building
    - Church of St Giles, Southampton Street – Grade II Listed Building
    - Church of St Mary, St Marys Butts – Grade I Listed Building
    - Telephone Exchange, Minster Street – Grade II Listed Building
    - George Hotel, King Street – Grade II Listed Building
    - Seven Bridges House, 19 Bridge Street – Grade II Listed Building

- Nos. 1 (Old Coroner's Court), 2-4, 33, 35, 37-39, 41, 49-53, 44-46, 48-52, 54-58, 62-66, 68, 70, 72, 74-76, 80, 86 & 88 London Street – All Grade II Listed Buildings
- Nos.48-49, 50-51 & 52 Market Place – All Grade II Listed Buildings
- No.10 High Street – Grade II Listed Building
- No.s 7-15 Gun Street – All Grade II Listed Buildings
- Culverted section of the Holy Brook to the rear of no.s 1-31 Castle Street – Grade II Listed Building
- High Bridge, Duke Street – Scheduled Ancient Monument

- Within the viewing corridor of View 2 within Policy EN5 (Protection of Significant Views with Heritage Interest) – the view northwards down Southampton Street from Whitley Street towards St Giles Church, St Mary's Church and Greyfriars Church.
- The River Kennet is an area of identified biodiversity interest (Policy EN12) and waterspace (Policy EN11)
- A number of parts of the site are potentially contaminated land (Policy EN16)
- Within areas of Flood Zone 1, 2 and 3 (Policy EN18)
- Within an area with archaeological potential (Policy EN2)
- Within an air quality management area (Policy EN15)
- Within a British Waterways consultation area
- Within a smoke control area
- Within a licensing cumulative impact area

2.12. Both applications are being considered at Planning Applications Committee as they constitute 'major' developments, given the floorspaces involved.

3. The proposals

3.1 The information submitted in support of both planning applications sets out that the proposals are together intended to reimagine the eastern end of The Oracle shopping centre to reinvigorate the town centre offer, introduce a curated residential quarter within and create a positive outward facing gateway to the town centre from the south. The combined proposals would provide a mixed-use town centre scheme providing commercial and hospitality space, including replacement cinema, restaurants and co-working space, 436 new homes, with reconfigured retail and leisure space, and enhanced public realm through the site including to the River Kennet riverside, Yield Hall Place and IDR, intended to enhance, modernise and future proof the retail officer of The Oracle .

3.2 It is outlined that the combined proposals would ensure continued investment into The Oracle to meet the needs of residents and visitors and to contribute positively to the vitality and viability of Reading Town Centre in its role as a regional town centre, serving the Thames Valley and beyond.

<u>Planning Application ref. 22/1916 – Yield Hall Place 1 (YHP1)</u>

3.3 This application seeks full planning permission for a mixed use development comprising part demolition of former department store (Debenhams) and erection of new buildings comprising up to 218 build to rent residential dwellings (Class C3) & 1,209sqm of flexible commercial uses within Uses Class E and/or bar (Sui Generis Use). Reconfiguration and change of use of up to 5,866sqm remaining department store floorspace (Class E) to flexible uses with within Use Class E and/or bar (Sui Generis Use) and/or experiential leisure use (Sui Generis Use). The proposals also include associated public realm,

infrastructure works & external alterations to shopping centre, including creation of new shopping centre entrance.

3.4 More specifically the proposals include:

- Part demolition of the former Debenhams department store, where it fronts onto Yield Hall Place to the east and Oracle Riverside Frontage (south elevation) (see Figure 4 below)
- Reconfiguration of retained Debenhams floorspace to create 1 x new flexible Class E unit and 1 x unit proposed for a leisure use (Class E and / or Sui Generis). The application supporting information sets out that the proposed leisure use is intended to be operated by an 'experiential' leisure operator new to the Reading and may include a bar element and as such a Class E or Sui Generis use is sought for this unit.



Figure 4 - Areas to be demolished shown shaded green and areas of retained Debenhams floor space (3 floors) shown in white

- Construction of 2 blocks of development, comprising one block of 21 storeys in height (Block A) and one block of between 8 and 9 storeys in height (Block B) connected by a single storey riverside element (see Figure 5 below)

Yield Hall Place 1 (YHP1) : Blocks A, B.

Yield Hall Place 2 (YHP2) : Blocks C, D, E.



Figure 5 - Proposed blocks of development shown shaded pink (proposals for YHP2 shown shaded orange

- Provision of new commercial floorspace at ground (riverside) level to provide 1 x flexible Class E and / or Sui Generis unit, 1 x co-working space (Class E), new mall entrance to the retail and leisure units to be provided within the retained and reconfigured former Debenhams floor space from ground floor riverside level as well as back of house and plant rooms.

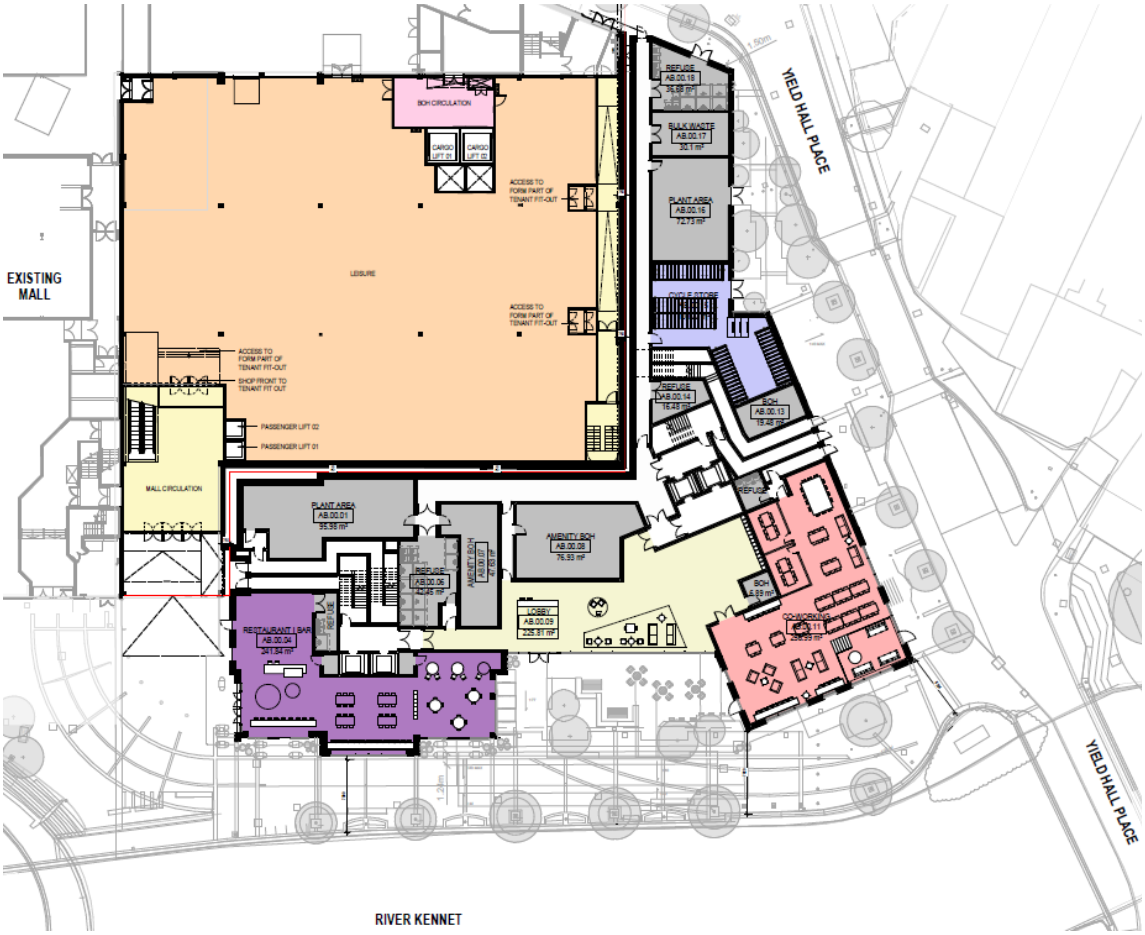


Figure 6 – YHP1 - Proposed Ground Floor Layout Plan - Large proposed leisure use unit shown shaded orange (double height unit with double height new retail unit above), proposed restaurant unit shown shaded purple, proposed co-working space shown shaded pink, new riverside entrance to the proposed leisure and retail units shown shaded yellow and back of house and plant rooms shown shaded grey

- Provision of 218 Build to Rent C3 use class residential dwellings. A mix of 111 x 1 bed units (51%), 96 x 2 bed units (44%) and 11 x 3 bed units (5%). Creation of residential lobby and access from ground floor riverside level (shown shaded yellow on Figure 6 above)
- Provision of 22 dwellings (10% of total dwellings to be provided) as affordable units – 9 x 1 bed (40%), 12 x 2 bed (55%) and 1 x 3 bed (5%) with rents capped at LHA levels.
- Internal and external private amenity space for the building residents, comprising roof terraces with both indoor and outdoor space (see Figure 7 below)

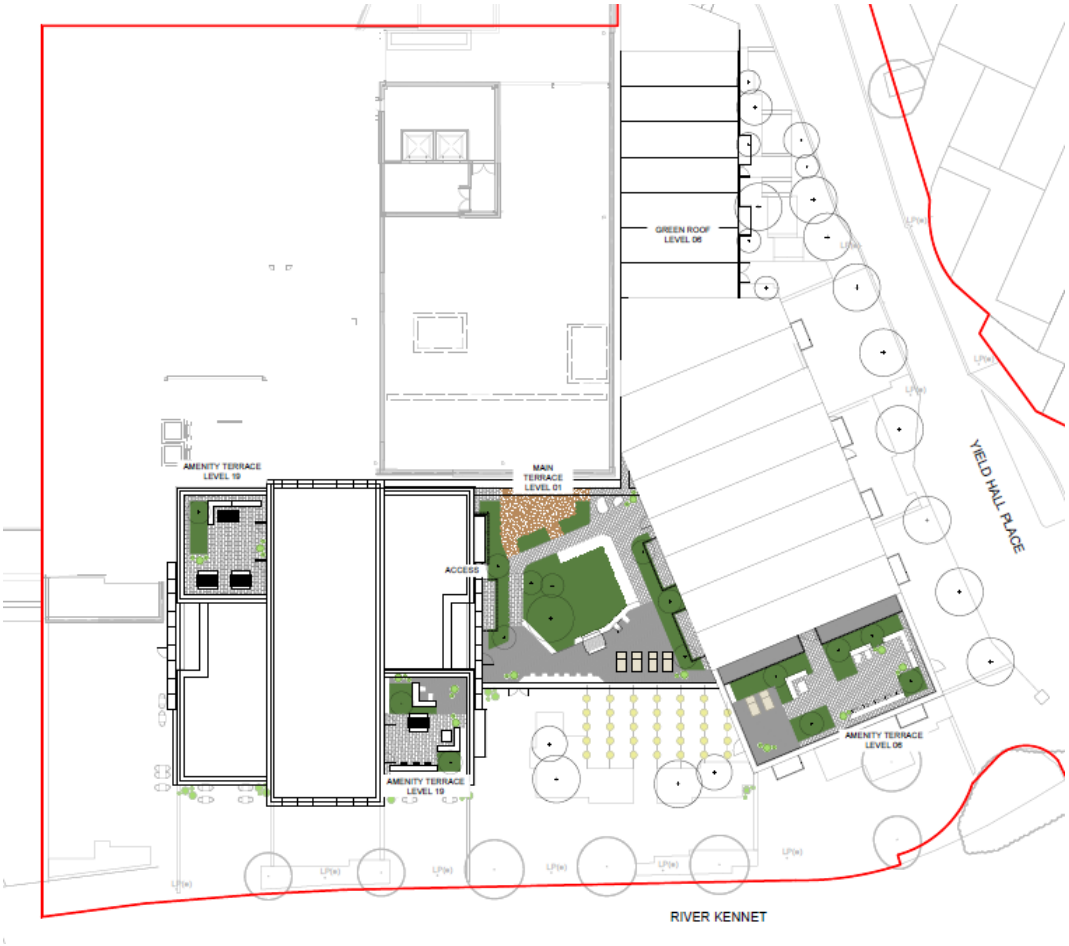


Figure 7 - YHP1 - Plan showing proposed communal roof top external amenity terraces for occupiers of the residential dwellings at 1st floor roof level, 6th floor roof level and 19th floor roof level

- Provision of 120 secure on-site residential cycle parking spaces within a ground floor level lockable store accessible from Yield Hall Place (shown shaded blue on Figure 6 above)
- Car free development proposed with no new car parking however two existing spaces will be converted to car club spaces
- Servicing for Yield Hall Place 1 to be from a combination of existing locations with the proposed leisure and restaurant use serviced directly from the main Oracle service yard under the shopping centre as the former Debenhams unit was. Servicing and deliveries for the proposed residential and co-working deliveries to be received from the existing servicing bay on Yield Hall Place. Refuse and recycling collections to be undertaken from the north of the building from Yield Hall Place (shown shaded grey on Figure 6 above).
- Landscaping is proposed to the amenity roof terraces and riverside frontage and a green roof is proposed at 6th floor level (see Figure 7 above).
- Public realm improvements, including landscaping, to the Riverside and Yield Hall Place (see Figure 8 below)

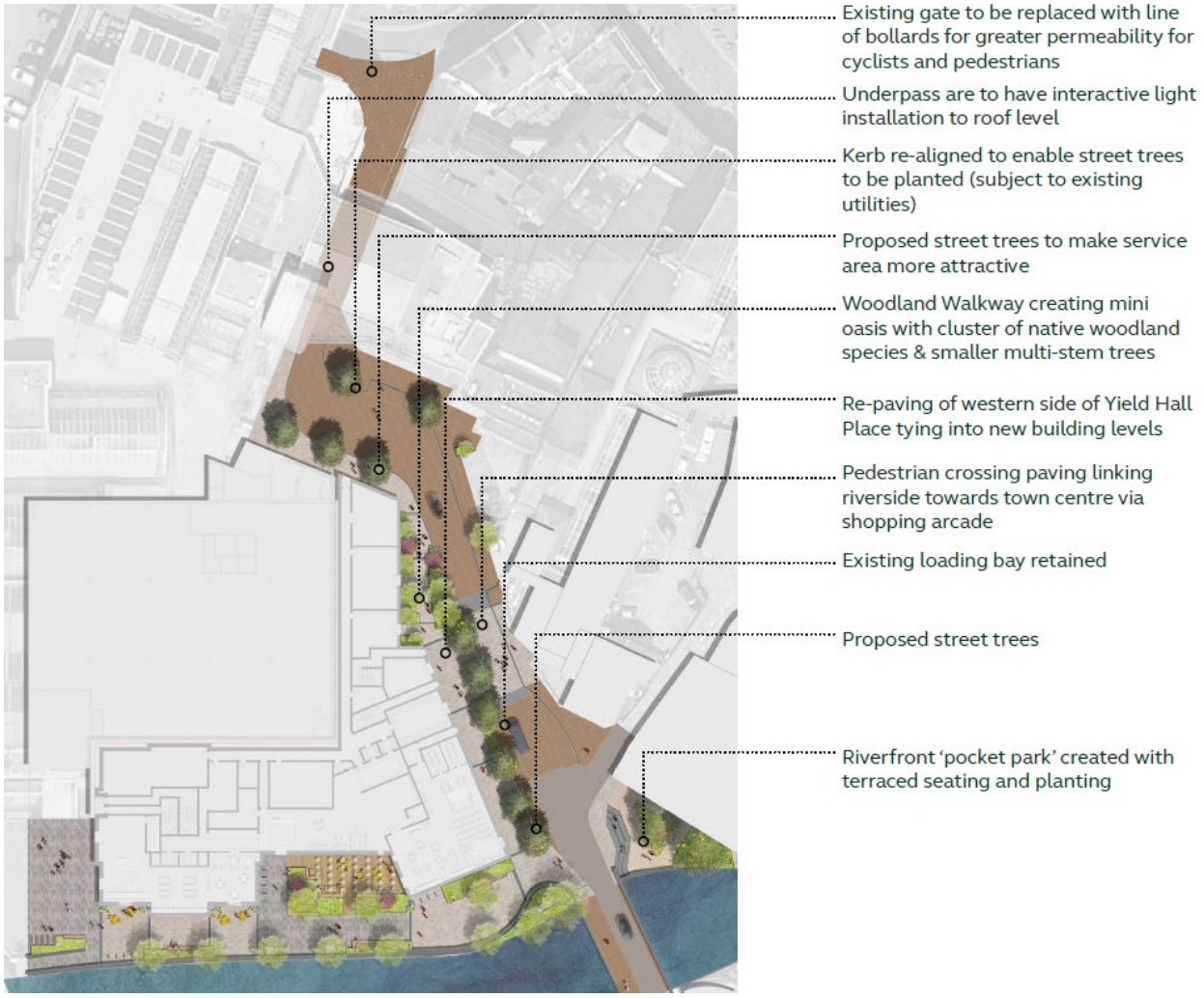


Figure 8 – YHP1 – Proposed public realm enhancements and landscaping to riverside and Yield Hall Place

Planning Application ref. 22/1917 – YHP2

3.5 This application seeks full planning permission for a mixed use development comprising demolition of the existing multiplex cinema and restaurant buildings and erection of a new building comprising up to 218 build-to-rent residential dwellings (Class C3) & up to 3,046 sqm commercial floorspace comprising cinema (Sui Generis) and ground floor commercial uses within a flexible Class E and/or Bar (Sui Generis Use). The proposals also include associated public realm, and infrastructure works to the riverside frontage, London Street and the IDR.

3.6 More specifically the proposals include:

- Demolition of existing cinema complex and restaurant units and construction of a building incorporating 16, 13 and 6 storey elements connected by single and two storey linking elements (see Figure 5 above and Figure 9 below)



Figure 9 – YHP2 – Riverside elevation (looking south)

- Replacement provision of 2,600 sqm of Cinema (Sui Generis) at ground floor and mezzanine level, alongside flexible commercial floorspace (Class E / Sui Generis restaurant and / or bar) located at ground level (see Figure 10 below). Cinema accessed from riverside and IDR frontages with commercial floor space accessed from riverside and Yield Hall Place elevations.

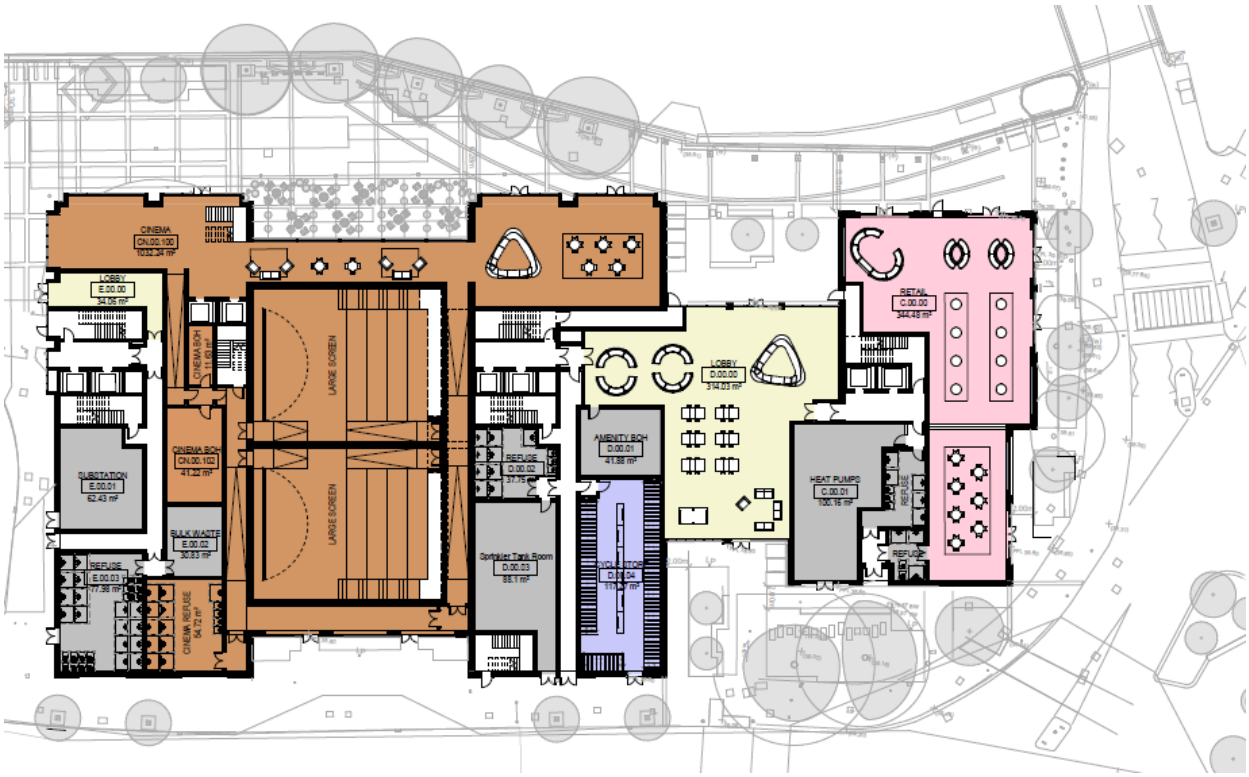


Figure 10 – YHP2 – Proposed Ground Floor Plan. Proposed cinema shown shaded orange/brown, proposed retail/restaurant/bar floorspace show shaded pink, back of house and plant rooms shown shaded grey, cycle stores shaded purple and new residential lobby and access shown shaded yellow

- Provision of 218 Build to Rent C3 use class residential units. A mix of 96 x 1 bed units (44%), 111 x 2 bed units (51%) and 11 x 3 bed units (5%). Creation of residential lobby

and accesses from both riverside and IDR at ground floor level (shown shaded yellow on Figure 10 above).

- Provision of 22 dwellings (10% of total dwellings to be provided) as affordable units – 9 x 1 bed (40%), 12 x 2 bed (55%) and 1 x 3 bed (5%) with rents capped at LHA levels.
- Internal and external private amenity space for the building residents, comprising roof terraces with both indoor and outdoor space (see Figure 11 below)



Figure 11 – YHP2 - Plan showing proposed communal roof top external amenity terraces for occupiers of the residential dwellings at 1st floor roof level, 11th floor level and 14th floor level

- Provision of 126 secure on-site cycle parking spaces within a ground floor level lockable stores accessible from the riverside and IDR elevations at ground floor level (shown shaded blue on Figure 10 above)
- Car free development proposed with no car parking proposed
- In terms of servicing for Yield Hall Place 2, bulky deliveries and refuse collections for the residential units are proposed to be undertaken from the existing The Oracle servicing area, accessed from Mill Lane off the IDR to the south. This area along with the existing adjacent service yard located under the Riverside Car Park would be used for servicing of the cinema as is the existing arrangement. An additional kerbside is also proposed to be provided adjacent to the south elevation of YHP2 on the IDR for use by smaller delivery vehicles serving the residential units.
- Landscaping is proposed to the amenity roof terraces and riverside frontage and a green roof is proposed to the floor 1 roof level above the residential lobby area
- Public realm improvements, including landscaping, to the Riverside, Yield Hall Place, London Street and the IDR (see Figure 12 below)

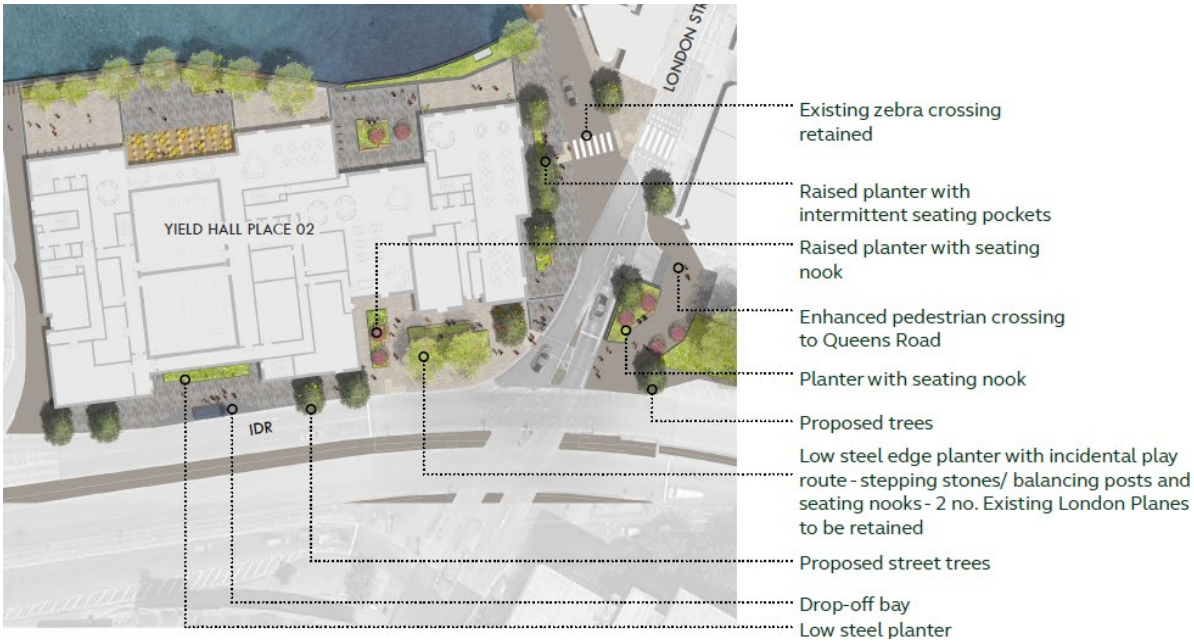


Figure 12 – YHP2 – Proposed public realm enhancements and landscaping

3.7 The YHP1 and YHP2 proposals are two separate standalone planning applications and, if granted, would be subject to sperate planning permissions. The proposals are considered together within this report given the close relationship between the two sites which are supported by various linked areas of public realm and both form part of, and are managed as part of, the wider The Oracle shopping centre by the same operator (Hammerson). Many of the documents submitted in support of both planning applications are combined, considering both applications. The supporting documents also include a proposed phased approach to implementation of both planning applications which is as follows and as shown on the phasing plan in Figure 13 below.

Proposed Phase 1A (area shaded yellow in Figure 4 below) (YHP1)

- Demolition of part of the existing Debenhams store up to the red dotted line cut line' (see Figure 4 below)
- Construction of external wall along the red dotted cut line.
- Reconfiguration of the retained Debenhams floor areas to provide new retail space at lower and upper mall level, leisure space at riverside level.
- Provision of Landscaping for that phase

Proposed Phase 1B (area shaded yellow in Figure 4 below) (YHP1)

- Construction of the new buildings, dwellings, front and back of house facilities and co-working space on Yield Hall Place 1 site.
- Provision of Landscaping for that phase

Proposed Phase 2 (area shaded blue in figure 4 below) (YHP2)

- Demolition of the existing cinema, restaurant space and associated service areas on the Yield Hall Place 2 site.
- Construction of the new cinema, café/restaurant space, new homes, amenity, and back of house spaces.
- Provision of Landscaping for that phase

3.8 The YHP1 and YHP2 proposals are separate planning applications and there is no linked phasing between the two applications and either or both permissions could be implemented. There is phasing proposed to the YHP1 development where demolition of parts of the building not to be re-used and then conversion of retained floor space (part of former Debenhams department store) to the proposed flexible commercial and leisure uses is proposed to take place as phase 1A ahead of the more substantial YHP1 works to provide the riverside frontage commercial units and residential units above (phase 1B).

3.9 This report will consider the two proposals separately as well as any cumulative impacts and how the various works proposed as part of both applications in and around the sites will be secured between the two applications.

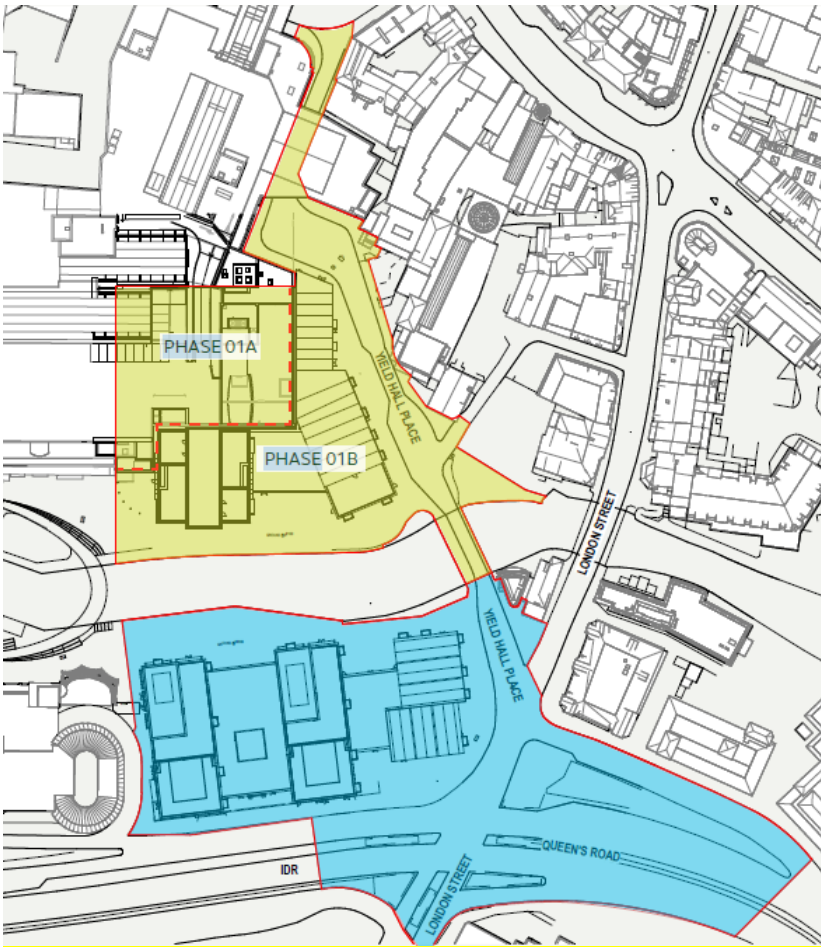


Figure 13 – Proposed Phasing Plan (Phase 1A and 1B shown shaded yellow (YHP1) and Phase 2 shown shaded blue (YHP2)

Environment Impact Assessment Matters

3.9 Both application submissions are subject to Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), which is used to assess the likely significant effects of the (combined, entire) proposed development upon the environment. The Environmental Statement (ES) is required to provide the LPA with sufficient information about the potential effects of the development prior to a decision being made on the planning application. The information provided as part of the ES has been taken into account in the determination of the application and was consulted on in accordance with Regulations.

Community Infrastructure Levy

3.10 In terms of the Reading Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), only the proposed residential floor space of both applications is liable for CIL in accordance with the Council's adopted CIL Charging Schedule (2015). Existing floor space to be demolished can be off-set against the proposed new floor space, but overall, it is projected that the levy due for application ref. 22/1916 at YHP1 would be approximately £2,899,933 and the levy due for application ref. 22/1917 at YHP2 would be £2,320,324. The actual levy payable for both applications may in reality be less, given - subject to the Applicant completing the appropriate forms - any floorspace provided as affordable housing would be exempt (providing the requisite exemption is correctly applied for).

3.11 The following plans have been received:

Planning application ref. 22/1916 - YHP1

- DEMOLITION & RETENTION PLANS TOR-CRL-ZZ-ZZ-DR-AR-1005000-P10
- ELEVATIONS - YIELD HALL PLACE 1 – EAST TOR-CRL-A1-ZZ-DR-AR-2001001-P13
- ELEVATIONS - YIELD HALL PLACE 1 – NORTH TOR-CRL-A1-ZZ-DR-AR-2001002-P13
- ELEVATIONS - YIELD HALL PLACE 1 – SOUTH TOR-CRL-A1-ZZ-DR-AR-2001003-P12
- ELEVATIONS - YIELD HALL PLACE 1 – WEST TOR-CRL-A1-ZZ-DR-AR-2001004-P13
- ELEVATIONS - YIELD HALL PLACE 1 - EAST COURTYARD TOR-CRL-A1-ZZ-DR-AR-2001005-P12
- ELEVATIONS - YIELD HALL PLACE 1 - WEST COURTYARD TOR-CRL-A1-ZZ-DR-AR-2001006-P12
- EXISTING ELEVATION - YIELDHALL PLACE 1 TOR-CRL-ZZ-ZZ-DR-AR-2001000
- EXISTING - YIELD HALL PLACE 1 - LEVEL 00 TOR-CRL-A1-00-00-DR-AR-1001200
- EXISTING - YIELD HALL PLACE 1 LOWER MALL TOR-CRL-A1-01-01-DR-AR-1001201
- EXISTING - YIELD HALL PLACE 1 - UPPER MALL TOR-CRL-A1-02-02-DR-AR-1001202
- EXISTING - YIELD HALL PLACE 1 CAR PARK LEVEL 01 TOR-CRL-A1-03-03-DR-AR-1001203
- EXISTING - YIELD HALL PLACE 1 CAR PARK LEVEL 02 TOR-CRL-A1-04-04-DR-AR-1001204
- EXISTING - YIELD HALL PLACE 1 - SECTION 1 & 2 TOR-CRL-A1-ZZ-ZZ-DR-AR-1003001
- EXISTING - YIELD HALL PLACE 1 - SECTION 3 & 4 TOR-CRL-A1-ZZ-ZZ-DR-AR-1003002
- YIELD HALL PLACE 1 - PROPOSED PLAN - GF LEVEL TOR-CRL-A1-00-DR-AR-1201000-P14
- YIELD HALL PLACE 1 - PROPOSED PLAN - MEZZ. LEVEL TOR-CRL-A1-ZZ-DR-AR-1201001-P14
- YIELD HALL PLACE 1 - PROPOSED PLAN - LEVEL 01 TOR-CRL-A1-01-DR-AR-1201002-P14
- YIELD HALL PLACE 1 - PROPOSED PLAN - LEVEL 02 TOR-CRL-A1-02-DR-AR-1201003-P14
- YIELD HALL PLACE 1 - PROPOSED PLAN - LEVEL 03 TOR-CRL-A1-03-DR-AR-1201004-P14
- YIELD HALL PLACE 1 - PROPOSED PLAN - LEVEL 04 TOR-CRL-A1-04-DR-AR-1201005-P14
- YIELD HALL PLACE 1 - PROPOSED PLAN - LEVEL 05 TOR-CRL-A1-05-DR-AR-1201006-P14
- YIELD HALL PLACE 1 - PROPOSED PLAN - LEVEL 06 TOR-CRL-A1-06-DR-AR-1201007-P14
- YIELD HALL PLACE 1 - PROPOSED PLAN - LEVEL 07 TOR-CRL-A1-07-DR-AR-1201008-P14
- YIELD HALL PLACE 1 - PROPOSED PLAN - LEVEL 08 TOR-CRL-A1-08-DR-AR-1201009-P14
- YIELD HALL PLACE 1 - PROPOSED PLAN - LEVEL 09 TOR-CRL-A1-09-DR-AR-1201010-P14
- YIELD HALL PLACE 1 - PROPOSED PLAN - LEVEL 10 TOR-CRL-A1-10-DR-AR-1201011-P14
- YIELD HALL PLACE 1 - PROPOSED PLAN - LEVEL 11 TOR-CRL-A1-11-DR-AR-1201012-P14
- YIELD HALL PLACE 1 - PROPOSED PLAN - LEVEL 12 TOR-CRL-A1-12-DR-AR-1201013-P14
- YIELD HALL PLACE 1 - PROPOSED PLAN - LEVEL 13 TOR-CRL-A1-13-DR-AR-1201014-P14
- YIELD HALL PLACE 1 - PROPOSED PLAN - LEVEL 14 TOR-CRL-A1-14-DR-AR-1201015-P14
- YIELD HALL PLACE 1 - PROPOSED PLAN - LEVEL 15 TOR-CRL-A1-15-DR-AR-1201016-P14
- YIELD HALL PLACE 1 - PROPOSED PLAN - LEVEL 16 TOR-CRL-A1-16-DR-AR-1201017-P14
- YIELD HALL PLACE 1 - PROPOSED PLAN - LEVEL 17 TOR-CRL-A1-17-DR-AR-1201018-P14
- YIELD HALL PLACE 1 - PROPOSED PLAN - LEVEL 18 TOR-CRL-A1-18-DR-AR-1201019-P14
- YIELD HALL PLACE 1 - PROPOSED PLAN - LEVEL 19 TOR-CRL-A1-19-DR-AR-1201020-P15

- YIELD HALL PLACE 1 - PROPOSED PLAN GENERAL ARRANGEMENT - ROOF PLANTOR-CRL-A1-ZZ-DR-AR-1201021-P14
- YIELD HALL PLACE 1 - LONGITUDINAL SECTION TOR-CRL-A1-ZZ-DR-AR-3001001-P13
- YIELD HALL PLACE 1 - CROSS SECTION TOR-CRL-AA-ZZ-DR-AR-3000001-P13
- BAY STUDY 01 TOR-CRL-A1-ZZ-DR-AR-2200001-P13
- BAY STUDY 02 TOR-CRL-ZZ-ZZ DR-AR-2200002-P13
- BAY STUDY 03 TR-CRL-ZZ-ZZ DR-AR-2200003-P13
- SITE-LOCATION PLAN_YIELD HALL PLACE 1 TOR-CRL-A1-ZZ-DR-AR-0100006_SITE-LOCATION PLAN_YIELD HALL PLACE 1_P14
- YIELD HALL PLACE
- PROPOSED PLAN GENERAL ARRANGEMENT - SITE PLAN TOR-CRL-ZZ-ZZ-DR-AR-1200050

Highway Drawings
- 332110757_5500_SK018-P06 Mill Lane Western Loading Areas
- 332110757_5500_SK020-P04 Yield Hall Place Loading Facility
- 332110757_5500_SK043 Mill Lane Western Loading Areas
- 332110757_5500_SK046 Mill Lane Western Loading Areas
- 332110757_5500_SK049 Yield Hall Place Bin Carry Distance
- 332110757_5500_SK050 Yield Hall Place Bin Carry Distance
- 220767-P-10a Tree survey Tree Survey
- 220767-P-10a Tree Schedule Tree Schedule
- 332110757_5500_SK025 - P07 Swept Path Analysis Pumping Appliance (Sept. 2025)
- 332110757_5500_SK048 P03 Public Highway to be stopped up (Sept. 2025)
- ORA-LDA-RES-ZZ-DWG-PL-0100 Public Realm – General Arrangement Plan Key LDA (Sept. 2025)
- ORA-LDA-RES-ZZ-DWG-PL-0101 Public Realm – General Arrangement Plan Sheet 01 (Sept. 2025)
- ORA-LDA-RES-ZZ-DWG-PL-0102 Public Realm – General Arrangement Plan Sheet 02 (Sept. 2025)
- ORA-LDA-RES-ZZ-DWG-PL-0103 Public Realm – General Arrangement Plan Sheet 03 (Sept. 2025)
- ORA-LDA-RES-ZZ-DWG-PL-0121 Amenity Roof Terraces – General Arrangement (Sept. 2025)
- ORA-LDA-RES-ZZ-DWG-PL-0122 Yield Hall Place 01 Amenity Roof Terraces (Sept. 2025)
- ORA-LDA-RES-ZZ-DWG-PL-0125 Yield Hall Place 02 Amenity Roof Terraces (Sept. 2025)
- ORA-LDA-RES-ZZ-DWG-PL-0300 Softworks Key Plan (Sept. 2025)
- ORA-LDA-RES-ZZ-DWG-PL-0301 Tree Plan Sheet 01 (Sept. 2025)
- ORA-LDA-RES-ZZ-DWG-PL-0302 Tree Plan Sheet 02 (Sept. 2025)
- 332110757_5500_SK048 P03 Public Highway to be stopped up (Nov. -2025)
- 332110757_5500_SK054 P03 Yield Hall Place required area for parking/loading restriction (Nov. 2025)
- 332110757_5500_SK055 Kerb Arrangement for Mill Lane A329
- 332110757-5501-C010-P02 Cycle Parking Location (Nov. 2025)
- 1167-D330-2_Proposed South East Elevation Phase 1A Cut Line elevation
- 1167-D330-3_Proposed North East Elevation Phase 1A Cut Line elevation
- TOR-CRL-A2-02-DR-AR-1202003 Yield Hall Place 2 IELD HALL PLACE 2 – PROPOSED
- PLAN - C - LEVEL 02
- TOR-CRL-A2-03-DR-AR-1202004 YIELD HALL PLACE 2 – PROPOSED
- PLAN - C - LEVEL 03
- -TOR-CRL-A2-04-DR-AR-1202005 YIELD HALL PLACE 2 – PROPOSED
- PLAN - C - LEVEL 04
- 1468-4024 Rev F01 – Studies GA Carpark Level 1 Zones E, B & G 1468-4027 Rev Q04 – Studies GA Carpark Level 2 Zones E, B & G
- TOR-CRL-A1-04-DR-AR Parking Studies Level 4
- TOR-CRL-A1-05-DR-AR Parking Studies Level 5
- 1468-4011 Rev F01 GA Riverside Level Zones E, B & G
- TOR-CRL-A1-00-DR-AR-1200001 P10 - Yield Hall Place 1 – Existing Service Yard – GF Level
- TOR-CRL-A2-00-DR-AR-1202000 P15 Yield Hall Place 2 – Proposed Plan – GF Level
- 332110757_5500_SK019_P05 Drop off Facility Mill Lane

- 332110757_5500_SK029 Swept Path Analysis Ridged Truck passing refuse Truck

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- DEMOLITION & RETENTION PLANS TOR-CRL-ZZ-ZZ-DR-AR-1005000-P11
- ELEVATIONS - YIELD HALL PLACE 2 – EAST TOR-CRL-A2-ZZ-DR-AR-2002001-P13
- ELEVATIONS - YIELD HALL PLACE 2 – NORTH TOR-CRL-A2-ZZ-DR-AR-2002002-P13
- ELEVATIONS - YIELD HALL PLACE 2 – SOUTH TOR-CRL-A2-ZZ-DR-AR-2002003-P13
- ELEVATIONS - YIELD HALL PLACE 2 – WEST TOR-CRL-A2-ZZ-DR-AR-2002004-P13
- ELEVATIONS - YIELD HALL PLACE 2 - EAST COURTYARD TOR-CRL-A2-ZZ-DR-AR-2002005-P13
- ELEVATIONS - YIELD HALL PLACE 2 - EAST COURTYARD 2 TOR-CRL-A2-ZZ-DR-AR-2002006-P13
- ELEVATIONS - YIELD HALL PLACE 2 - WEST COURTYARD TOR-CRL-A2-ZZ-DR-AR-2002007-P13
- ELEVATIONS - YIELD HALL PLACE 2 - WEST COURTYARD 2 TOR-CRL-A2-ZZ-DR-AR-2002008-P14
- EXISTING ELEVATION – YIELD HALL PLACE 2 TOR-CRL-ZZ-ZZ-DR-AR-2002000
- EXISTING - YIELD HALL PLACE 1 - LEVEL 00 T0R-CRL-A2-00-00-DR-AR-1002200
- EXISTING - YIELD HALL PLACE 2 LOWER TOR-CRL-A2-01-01-DR-AR-1002201
- EXISTING - YIELD HALL PLACE 2 - UPPER TOR-CRL-A2-02-02-DR-AR-1002202
- YIELD HALL PLACE 2 - PROPOSED PLAN - GF LEVELN TOR-CRL-A2-00-DR-AR-1202000-P14
- YIELD HALL PLACE 2 - PROPOSED PLAN - MEZZ. LEVEL TOR-CRL-A2-ZZ-DR-AR-1202001-P15
- YIELD HALL PLACE 2 - PROPOSED PLAN - LEVEL 01 TOR-CRL-A2-01-DR-AR-1202002-P12
- YIELD HALL PLACE 2 - PROPOSED PLAN - LEVEL 02 TOR-CRL-A2-02-DR-AR-1202003-P12
- YIELD HALL PLACE 2 - PROPOSED PLAN - LEVEL 03 TOR-CRL-A2-02-DR-AR-1202004-P15
- YIELD HALL PLACE 2 - PROPOSED PLAN - LEVEL 04 TOR-CRL-A2-05-DR-AR-1202006-P14
- YIELD HALL PLACE 2 – PROPOSED PLAN - C - LEVEL 04 TOR-CRL-A2-04-DR-AR-1202005-P15
- YIELD HALL PLACE 2 - PROPOSED PLAN - LEVEL 05 TOR-CRL-A2-05-DR-AR-1202007-P14
- YIELD HALL PLACE 2 - PROPOSED PLAN - LEVEL 06 TOR-CRL-A2-06-DR-AR-1202008-P14
- YIELD HALL PLACE 2 - PROPOSED PLAN - LEVEL 07 TOR-CRL-A2-07-DR-AR-1202009-P14
- YIELD HALL PLACE 1 - PROPOSED PLAN - LEVEL 08 TOR-CRL-A2-08-DR-AR-1202010-P14
- YIELD HALL PLACE 2 - PROPOSED PLAN - LEVEL 09 TOR-CRL-A2-09-DR-AR-1202011-P14
- YIELD HALL PLACE 2 - PROPOSED PLAN - LEVEL 10 TOR-CRL-A2-10-DR-AR-1202012-P14
- YIELD HALL PLACE 2 - PROPOSED PLAN - LEVEL 11 TOR-CRL-A2-11-DR-AR-1202013-P14
- YIELD HALL PLACE 2 - PROPOSED PLAN - LEVEL 12 TOR-CRL-A2-12-DR-AR-1202014-P14
- YIELD HALL PLACE 2 - PROPOSED PLAN - LEVEL 13 TOR-CRL-A2-13-DR-AR-1202015-P14
- YIELD HALL PLACE 2 - PROPOSED PLAN - LEVEL 14 TOR-CRL-A2-14-DR-AR-1202016-P14
- YIELD HALL PLACE 2 - PROPOSED PLAN GENERAL ARRANGEMENT - ROOF PLAN TOR CRL A2 15 DR AR 1202017-P14
- YIELD HALL PLACE 2 - CROSS SECTION TOR CRL A2 ZZ DR AR 3000002-P13
- YIELD HALL PLACE 2 - LONGITUDINAL SECTION TOR CRL A2 ZZ DR AR 3002001-P13
- BAY STUDY 01 TOR-CRL-A1-ZZ-DR-AR-2200001-P10
- BAY STUDY 02 TOR CRL A2 ZZ DR AR 3000002-P13
- BAY STUDY 03 TOR CRL A2 ZZ DR AR 3002001-P13

- SITE-LOCATION PLAN_YIELD HALL PLACE 2 TOR-CRL-A1-ZZ-DR-AR-0100006_SITE-LOCATION PLAN_YIELD HALL PLACE 1_P14
- YIELD HALL PLACE -PROPOSED PLAN GENERAL ARRANGEMENT - SITE PLAN TOR-CRL-ZZ-ZZ-DR-AR-1200050-P12

Highway Drawings

- 332110757_5500_SK018-P06 Mill Lane Western Loading Areas
- 332110757_5500_SK020-P04 Yield Hall Place Loading Facility
- 332110757_5500_SK043 Mill Lane Western Loading Areas
- 332110757_5500_SK046 Mill Lane Western Loading Areas
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- ORA-LDA-RES-ZZ-DWG-PL-0103 Public Realm – General Arrangement Plan Sheet 03 (Sept. 2025)
- ORA-LDA-RES-ZZ-DWG-PL-0121 Amenity Roof Terraces – General Arrangement (Sept. 2025)
- ORA-LDA-RES-ZZ-DWG-PL-0125 Yield Hall Place 02 Amenity Roof Terraces (Sept. 2025)
- ORA-LDA-RES-ZZ-DWG-PL-0300 Softworks Key Plan (Sept. 2025)
- ORA-LDA-RES-ZZ-DWG-PL-0301 Tree Plan Sheet 01 (Sept. 2025)
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- 332110757-5501-C010-P02 Cycle Parking Location (Nov. 2025)
- TOR-CRL-A2-02-DR-AR-1202003 Yield Hall Place 2 Proposed Plan – C – Level 02
- TOR-CRL-A2-03-DR-AR-1202004 Yield Hall Place 2 Proposed Plan – C – Level 03
- TOR-CRL-A2-04-DR-AR-1202005 Yield Hall Place 2 Proposed Plan – C – Level 04
- 1468-4024 Rev F01 – Studies GA Carpark Level 1 Zones E, B & G
- 1468-4027 Rev Q04 – Studies GA Carpark Level 2 Zones E, B & G
- TOR-CRL-A1-04-DR-AR Parking Studies Level 4
- TOR-CRL-A1-05-DR-AR Parking Studies Level 5
- 1468-4011 Rev F01 GA Riverside Level Zones E, B & G
- TOR-CRL-A2-00-DR-AR-1202000 P15 Yield Hall Place 2 – Proposed Plan – GF Level
- 332110757_5500_SK019_P05 Drop off Facility Mill Lane
- 332110757_5500_SK029 Swept Path Analysis Ridged Truck passing refuse Truck

Supporting Documents for both applications:

- Design and Access Statement inc. Landscape Strategy (CRTKL February 2024)
- Statement of Community Involvement (Turley December 2022) (Covered within Planning Statement)
- Heritage, Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment (Turley Heritage December 2022) (Covered within Environmental Statement)
- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (HDA Consultancy/Tyler Grange December 2022) (Covered within Environmental Statement)
- Framework Travel Plan (Stantec February 2024)
- Transport Statement Stantec February 2024)
- Foul and Surface Water Drainage Strategy (Stantec February 2024)
- Fire Statement (Jensen Hughes February 2024)
- Sustainability and Energy Statement Rolton / Turley Sustainability November 2025)
- Air Quality Assessment (Hydrock December 2022)

- Daylight / Sunlight Report (GIA March 2024)
- Financial Viability (CBRE February 2024)
- Wind Report (GIA February 2024)
- Economic Statement (Turley Economics February 2024)
- Arboricultural Impact Assessment (TMA Trees) (September 2025)

4. Planning History

4.1 The shopping Centre opened in 1999. There have been numerous planning applications at the wider Oracle site since its inception which include:

4.2 97/0017/FD / 970419 – Demolition of existing buildings, redevelopment and change of use to provide: shopping centre (Class A1, A2 & A3), 41 residential units, leisure facilities including multi screen cinema (Class D2), car parking (2390 spaces) and community uses together with associated landscaping etc. Granted following the completion of a s106 legal agreement 04/04/1997.

4.3 230682/VAR - Application under Section 73 of Town and Country Planning Act (1990) to remove condition no. 62 of planning permission ref. 970419 (Demolition of existing buildings, redevelopment and change of use to provide: shopping centre (Class A1, A2 & A3), 41 residential units, leisure facilities including multi screen cinema (Class D2), car parking (2390 spaces) and community uses together with associated landscaping etc) to allow the sub-division of 'department store' floorspace. Imposition of new planning condition(s) to restrict use of 'department store' floorspace within Use Class E(a)(b)(d)(e), with a minimum unit size of 1,000 sqm (GIA).

4.4 24/0461/FUL - Installation of security fencing at Riverside car park, The Oracle. Granted 11/07/2024

4.5 24/0520/FUL - Demolition of the glass atrium at rooftop level of Holybrook carpark and infilling of opening, provision of 10 new car parking spaces and minor external alterations to former House of Fraser unit. Granted 24/07/2024.

4.6 24/0741/VAR - Application under Section 73 of Town and Country Planning Act (1990) to vary condition no. 80 (Opening Hours) of planning permission 230682 (Removal of condition 62 of permission 970419 [Demolition of existing buildings, redevelopment and change of use to provide: shopping centre (Class A1, A2 & A3), 41 residential units, leisure facilities including multi screen cinema (Class D2), car parking (2390 spaces) and community uses together with associated landscaping etc)] to allow the subdivision of 'department store' floorspace. Imposition of new planning condition(s) to restrict use of 'department store' floorspace within Use Class E(a)(b)(d)(e), with a minimum unit size of 1,000 sqm (GIA)) to allow Class E(d) uses at Riverside level within the former House of Fraser department store to extend opening hours from 00:00 to 00:30 Mondays to Saturdays, from 23:00 to 00:30 on Sundays and from 23:00 to 02:30 on New Years Eve. Granted 29/07/2024.

4.7 24/1283/NMA - Non-material amendments to permission 230682 (granted on 22/11/2023) to alter the wording of condition 38 (pedestrian routes into and within the car parks) to remove the former House of Fraser escalator pedestrian entrances at Holybrook Car Park levels 6 and 7 following separate permission 240520 (granted on 24/07/2024). Granted 21/10/2024

5 Consultations

5.1 Consultees have in the main considered and commented upon both the YHP1 and YHP2 application proposals together given the similarities and close relationship between the two developments and given many of the documents submitted in support of the applications by the Applicant take the same approach. The comments summarised below relate to both proposed developments but where there are differences or particular issues relating to one of the applications identified within the consultee comments then these are specifically stated.

Statutory

5.2 **Environment Agency**

No objection to either the YHP1 or YHP2 applications subject to pre-commencement conditions to secure submission and approval of a Demolition and Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), detailed SuDS scheme and Landscape and Ecological Management Plans and subsequent implementation of both developments in accordance with the approved documents. A further condition is recommended to require both developments to be implemented in accordance with the approved flood mitigation measures outlined in the submitted Flood Risk Assessment.

5.3 **HSE Fire Safety**

Advise that they are content with the Fire Safety Measures outlined in the Fire Statement submitted in support of the YHP1 and YHP2 applications and that this is sufficient for this stage of both proposed developments.

5.4 **Historic England**

Object to both the YHP1 and YHP2 applications. Consider that the scale and visual dominance of the tower elements of both proposals would be harmful to the historic character and appearance of the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area and the St Marys Butts/Castle Street Conservation Area and to setting of various Listed Buildings within these Conservation Areas. The level of harm identified is Less than Substantial. The Council will need to assess whether this harm is justified and weigh it against the public benefits of both proposals (as required by paragraph 215 of the NPPF). As per paragraph 212 of the NPPF great weight should be given to the conservation of heritage assets. In determining the applications the Council should also bear in mind the statutory duty of section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to have special regard to the desirability of preserving listed buildings or their setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which they possess, section 72(1) 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 section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 to determine planning applications in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

5.5 **Ministry of Defence**

No objection, to either the YHP1 or YHP2 applications. The proposed developments would not impact upon defence interests.

5.6 **Marine Management Organisation**

Provision of standing advice that the applicant may need to apply for a marine license for both the YHP1 and YHP1 proposed developments.

5.7 **Canal and River Trust**

Recommend that an informative is attached to planning permission for both developments to seek that the Applicant contacts the Canal and River Trust before commencing the development to ensure that demolition and construction practices comply with the Trust's code for working near canals and rivers.

5.8 **RBC Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA)**

Object to both the YHP1 and YHP2 proposed developments.

The proposed drainage strategy includes the provision of a green roof and attenuation tanks at ground floor level that result in the run-off rate from the site reducing below the current brownfield runoff rate. However, it is noted that the micro drainage calculations provided indicate the overall discharge from different manholes than those identified on the proposed drainage design drawings and the level of attenuation appears to have been reduced in size compared to the previously proposed SuDS scheme. Therefore, an

updated micro drainage calculation is required to ensure that the proposal does not result in flooding.

Irrespective of the above the National standards for sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) which were updated on 30th July 2025 state:

3.21 For previously developed sites a 'relaxation factor' shall be applied to the target 50% and 1% AEP greenfield runoff rates where evidence is provided that demonstrates why greenfield runoff or 3l/s/ha rates cannot be achieved and this is agreed with the approving body.

3.21.1 This relaxation factor shall be no greater than 5 times the greenfield runoff rate.

The existing combined greenfield run off rate is identified as 2.85 l/s which at 5 times that amount would equate to 14.25 l/s. The proposed combined discharge rate of 46.8 l/s therefore this exceeds the maximum permitted and a revised drainage layout is required. The submitted drainage drawings do not identify the location of the green roofs on the site and therefore updated drawings should be submitted.

Both applications include private drainage within the Public Highway extent, it is appreciated that this is the same as the existing situation, but this should be relocated to within the application site unless the drainage is to be adopted by Thames Water. Again, as a redesign of the drainage scheme is required this should be incorporated within the drainage proposals for both developments.

In accordance with Policy EN18, the SuDs proposals should link into the green network across the site and whilst the proposals include green roofs, the extent of which is still to be confirmed, there are further extensive landscaped areas within the public realm which could be connected to the drainage system.

Furthermore, the above National Standards for SuDS now stipulates that the first priority is for surface water to be 'collected for non-potable uses'. This has not been included within the SuDs proposals and therefore this must be included within the design.

The applicant in response has stated that the proposed tree planters shown within the landscape design for both developments will be incorporated into the drainage strategy and that some rain water downpipes located close to the edge of the buildings and tree pits can be routed into the tree pits which will filter the surface water and allow water to be absorbed by the trees, thereby providing water treatment and storage benefits. In addition, the applicant states that an irrigation strategy will be developed further for the roof gardens which will seek to incorporate rainwater harvesting into the irrigation strategy where appropriate and feasible. The applicant wishes to undertake this at the detailed design stage via planning condition however, given that the SuDS schemes as a whole require redesigning this should be incorporated within the design now to demonstrate compliance with national and local policies and standards.

Based on the information provided to date the LLFA object to both proposed developments should the above not be addressed.

5.9 **RBC Transport Strategy (Local Highway Authority)**

<u>YHP1</u>

No objection subject to:

Completion of a s106 legal agreement to secure the following:

- Not to commence development unless and until the area of highway to be stopped along the IDR has been approved by the Secretary of State (via s247 of the TCPA)
- Within 6 months of commencement of the development to have entered into a S278 Highways or any other agreement that maybe agreed with the Highway Authority to facilitate the delivery of the provision of bollards with a minimum spacing of 1.5m

at the junction of Yield Hall Place and Minster Street as agreed on drawing ORA-LDA-RES-ZZ-DWG-PL-0103 Rev P05.
- No part of the development to be occupied until the Highway works have been completed
- Prior to occupation of any residential dwelling to submit for approval details of a car club for two vehicles within The Oracle car park and a car club strategy. Spaces to be provided prior to occupation of any residential dwelling

Conditions to secure the following:

- Pre-commencement submission and approval of a construction method statement
- Pre-occupation of any dwelling provision of all residential cycle parking
- Pre-occupation of any dwelling notification of all addresses to LPA
- Pre-occupation of any dwelling notification of occupants that no entitlement to a parking permit
- Within 5 months of occupation submission and approval of a travel plan
- Annual review of travel plan
- Pre-occupation of any commercial unit submission and approval of a delivery and servicing plan
- Pre-occupation of any dwelling revision of layout of parking spaces within existing multi-storey car park
- Pre-occupation of any dwelling implementation of parking and loading restrictions to the East of Yield Hall Place as per proposed plans
- All doors to open away from the highway/street

<u>YHP2</u>

No objection subject to:

Completion of a s106 legal agreement to secure the following:

- Not to commence development unless and until the area of adopted highway land to the IDR has been stopped up and approved by Secretary of State (s247 of the TCPA).
- Prior to occupation of any residential dwelling to submit for approval details of a car club for two vehicles within The Oracle car park and a car club strategy. Spaces to be provided prior to occupation of any residential dwelling
- Within 6 months of commencement of the development to have entered into a S278 Highways Agreement to facilitate the delivery of the following:
    - Improvements to the IDR / London Street / Duke Street signalised junction potentially consisting of the removal of guard railings, adjustment and landscaping to islands, surface dressing to existing crossing points, a raised table on Queens Road service road and tree planting (all off-site public realm works).
    - Relocation of existing signage as agreed on drawing 332110757_5500_SK053 Rev P01
    - Provision of kassel or treif kerbs along the IDR as agreed on drawing 332110757_5500_SK055 Rev P01
    - Removal of existing High Mast lighting column and replacement with standard street lighting columns
- No occupation of the development until the Highway works have been practically complete.

Conditions to secure the following:

- Pre-commencement submission and approval of a construction method statement
- Pre-occupation of any dwelling provision of all residential cycle parking
- Pre-occupation of any dwelling notification of all addresses to LPA

- Pre-occupation of any dwelling notification of occupants that no entitlement to a parking permit
- Within 5 months of occupation submission and approval of a travel plan
- Annual review of travel plan
- Pre-occupation of any commercial unit submission and approval of a delivery and servicing plan
- Pre-occupation of any part of the development provision of 4m wide cycle route through The Oracle as per proposed plans
- Pre-commencement submission and approval of lighting strategy for removal of high mast column and replacement with standard lighting columns
- All doors to open away from the highway/street

Non-Statutory

5.10 **Sport England**

Do not wish to comment on either the YHP1 or YHP2 applications given the number of dwellings proposed falls below the statutory remit for Sport England to provide comments. Advise that the proposals should be determined in accordance with the Council's Local Plan policies for social infrastructure.

5.11 **Thames Water**

No objection to either the YHP1 or YHP2 applications.

Advise that there is sufficient existing network capacity in terms of waste water networks and sewage treatment for the YHP1 proposals. Thames Water has been unable to obtain information form the Applicant to confirm the needs and network capacity position in respect of the YHP2 proposals and therefore Thames Water recommend a condition is attached to planning permission for that development to require submission and approval by the LPA, in consultation with Thames Water, of either confirmation that foul water capacity exists off-stie to serve the development or a development and infrastructure phasing plan to ensure the development does not outpace delivery of essential waste water infrastructure.

In terms of clean water advise that there is existing network capacity to serve 50 new dwellings but beyond that upgrades to the water network will be required. Therefore, recommend that a condition is attached to planning permission for both developments to require that prior to occupation of any residential dwellings a development and infrastructure phasing plan is submitted to and agreed with the LPA in consultation with Thames Water to ensure that the proposed developments do not outpace the delivery of essential clean water infrastructure.

In addition, it is advised that the YHP1 proposals are located within 15m of a strategic sewer and therefore a condition should be attached to planning permission for this development to stipulate that no piling should take place until a piling method statement has been submitted to and approved by the LPA in consultation with Thames Water.

5.12 **Berkshire Archaeology**

No objection to either the YHP1 or YHP2 applications subject to a condition being placed on the planning permissions for both developments to secure submission and approval of a written scheme of archaeological investigation and its subsequent implementation.

5.13 **Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service**

Provision of standing advice in relation to both the YHP1 and YHP2 proposals and advises that both proposed developments will need to obtain separate Building Regulations approval in relation to fire safety matters at the later regulatory stages for each development.

5.14 **Reading's Economy & Destination Agency (REDA**)

The scale and ambition of both the YHP1 and YHP2 proposals will add to the economic strength of Reading city centre, particularly as it provides more cultural and leisure opportunity for our day visitors. We know from research that this is the kind of experiential approach that people seek as part of their retail and leisure visit, encouraging longer dwell time and return visits as well as strengthening Reading's image as a destination.

REDA believes this is good for the economy and long term viability of the centre and the work of the Business Improvement Districts which bound the north and west of The Oracle. There is also good opportunity for this work to support the ambitions of the draft town centre strategy and the Reading 2050 vision.

Due to the extent of the redevelopment, we would expect to enter into an Employment, Skills and Training Plan with the developers, as required by the RBC Employment, Skills and Training SPD (2013) for both the construction and end user phases of both proposed developments. Such plans should include targets to deliver more low carbon skills and training in carbon literacy to enable sustainable development.

5.15 **Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce**

Support both the YHP1 and YHP2 applications for the following reasons:

(i) We recognise the importance and value our town centres make to the economic well-being and place-shaping of the Thames Valley.
(ii) The proposed mixed use mixed-use town schemes will enhance, modernise and future proof the retail offer of The Oracle.
(iii) The provision of new commercial floorspace at riverside level, including restaurants and/or bars, coworking/ business space, will supplement the strong daytime and enhance the night-time economy of Reading town centre.
(iv) The inclusion of extensive public realm improvements, along Yield Hall Place and the Riverside Frontage will build on the Council's excellent track record of opening-up this area and bring wider benefits to Reading town centre.
(v) We welcome the proposed build-to-rent tenure residential units with integrated amenity and event spaces for use by residents. We believe this will assist in alleviating pressures on HMO and other rental properties across the Borough and in freeing up stock of family housing.

5.16 **RBC Environmental Protection**

No objection to either the YHP1 or YHP2 applications subject to conditions to secure the following being attached to the planning permission for both developments.

Pre-commencement submission and approval of:

- A noise mitigation and ventilation scheme to protect future occupiers of the residential dwellings from external noise sources
- A noise mitigation scheme to protect future occupiers of the residential dwellings from internal noise from the proposed commercial uses to the lower floor of both buildings
- An air quality mitigation scheme to demonstrate measures to mitigate for the vehicle movements resulting from the proposed developments
- A contaminated land assessment to identify any contaminants present on both sites
- A contamination remediation scheme to make both sites safe for the proposed uses
- Evidence of subsequent implementation of the remediation measures
- Demolition and Construction Method Statement to mitigate for the impacts of the demolition and construction work on existing residential occupiers near both sites

Pre-occupation of any commercial unit submission and approval of:

- An odour assessment and management pan to protect future occupiers of the residential dwellings from commercial kitchen/cooking odours
- An external lighting scheme to protect future occupiers from glare and light pollution
- Details of vermin proofing measures for all bin stores

- Car Park Cleaning Management Plan to include measures to protect future occupiers of the residential dwellings from noise resulting from cleaning of the car parks within The Oracle

Other conditions:

- No installation of any mechanical plant until an appropriate noise assessment has been submitted and approved
- Any previously unidentified contamination found during demolition and construction of the proposed developments to be report to the LPA to determine next steps
- All demolition and construction work to take pace during the Council's standard working hours (0800-1800 Monday to Friday, 0800-1300 Saturdays and not at any time on Sundays or Bank Holidays)
- No burning of demolition or construction waste on-site

For YHP2 only a further specific pre-commencement condition is recommended to secure submission and approval of a scheme of noise mitigation to protect future occupiers of the residential dwellings from noise from the proposed cinema

5.17 **RBC Planning (Natural Environment) Team**

No objection to either the YHP1 or YHP2 applications subject to conditions being attached to the planning permission for both developments to secure pre-commencement submission and approval of an arboricultural method statement, detailed hard and soft landscaping scheme, a landscape management plan and details of integration of proposed soft landscaping features within the SuDS design. A further condition is also recommended to secure retention of all on-site trees not identified for removal as part of either proposed development.

5.18 **RBC Leisure/Parks/Neighbourhood Services**

Responses received from various officers which facilitated agreement of the proposed contribution of £1.2 million towards various off-site public realm/leisure improvements within the vicinity of both application sites, to be secured by s106 legal agreement.

5.19 **RBC Housing**

Note that the overall amount of affordable housing proposed to be provided by both the YHP1 and YHP2 applications is below the Policy H3 requirement. Notwithstanding this consider the proposed tenure, mix and location of the affordable housing units within both developments to be acceptable.

RBC Ecology Adviser

5.20 No objection to either the YHP1 or YHP2 applications subject to conditions being attached to the planning permission for both developments to secure pre-commencement submission and approval of a demolition and construction environmental management plan, habitat enhancement, scheme of hard and soft landscaping and scheme of wildlife friendly external lighting.

5.21 **RBC Conservation Officer**

Object to both the YHP1 and YHP2 applications because of their scale, height, built form and massing which would detract from the character of the adjacent historic environment which is defined by the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area and St Mary's Butts/Castle Street Conservation area and various listed buildings and their settings within these conservation areas.

The proposals would dominate and compete visually with the modest scale of numerous nearby listed buildings. They would create significant vertical and horizontal discontinuity with the conservation areas and the historic core of Reading. It is not considered that the

proposals would provide a well-defined conservation benefit or public benefit in the form of social and environmental aspects of a new built within a historic environment. The proposed architectural design of the blocks would neither integrate into the historic and modern surroundings nor bring an innovative and/or contemporary language to Reading.

Advise that both the YHP1 and YHP2 proposals would result in Less than Substantial Harm at a 'moderate to high level' to the character, appearance and setting of the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area and settings of the Grade II listed buildings at no.s 1 (Coroners Court building) and 2-4 London Street and High Bridge. Less than Substantial Harm is also identified and at a moderate level to the the setting of the St Mary's Butts/Castle Street Conservation Area including the setting of Grade I listed Church of St Mary's and Grade II Listed Buildings at 7-15 Gun Street and the Telephone Exchange building and George Hotel on Minster Street. Less than Substantial Harm at a low level is identified to the settings of other listed buildings within these two conservation areas, including the wider setting of the Grade II Listed St Giles Church and Grade I Listed Church of St Laurence.

Advises that both proposed developments conflict with Policies EN1, EN3, EN6 and CR14g of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

5.22 **RBC Waste Services**

The proposed commercial and residential bin stores for both the YHP1 and YHP2 applications are appropriate in size and location. A condition is recommended to be attached to planning permission for both developments to secure submission and approval of a waste management strategy to details how all bins will be moved between the stores and collection points.

5.23 **RBC Emergency Planning Officer**

No objection to either the YHP1 or YHP2 proposals.

5.24 **RBC Access Officer**

The proposed ground floor plan for YHP2 shows the cinema would have two screens downstairs which is an improvement in terms of accessibility compared to the existing cinema where all screens are to upper floors.

Car clubs are a good idea, but it should be borne in mind that disabled people can't always access them, as they often need adapted vehicles.

The "experiential leisure" offer, whichever form it takes, should be as accessible to all as possible.

The building operators will be responsible for staff training to assist with the evacuation of mobility impaired occupants – this should take into account what will happen to occupants' mobility aids.

The footpaths by the riverside should be accessible to all

If the proposed new entrance within YHP1 to the shopping centre requires the use of a platform lift this can cause problems if breakdowns are not dealt with promptly.

In addition to Part M of the Building Regulations, the developers should also look at the new standard, PAS 6463, Design for the Mind, Neurodiversity and the Built Environment.

5.25 **Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee (CAAC)**

Objects to these applications. Note the need to find new uses for the sites to sustain The Oracle but the height of the proposed buildings will dwarf all that surrounding it.

The YHP2 proposals will have a very negative impact on views looking north along London Street and this part of the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area. Whilst the YHP1 and YHP2 proposals will have a very negative impact on views looking south from Market Place and this part of the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area.

The warehouse style blocks within both YHP1 and YHP2 would be better replaced by smaller versions of the tower elements which have a more neutral appearance. Industrial uses for this part of Reading have disappeared and we do not wish to re-create them.

The existing IDR/London Street junction has a negative impact on the character and appearance of the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area. The proposals present some improvements to the area around this junction but do not go far enough.

Positive aspects of the proposals include the hard and soft landscaping works to the route along Yield Hall Place towards Minster Street.

The future of the existing Tram Depot Station sign on the part of The Oracle fronting the IDR (Queens Road) within YHP2 is not clear. *(Officer comment: the sign is proposed to be incorporated within the new YHP2 building in a similar position fronting the IDR (Queens Road) above the rear/secondary entrance to the cinema).*

Would like to understand the whole life carbon implications of the proposed development given The Oracle was only constructed around 25 years ago.

Concerned about impact from overshadowing from the proposals on the river Kennet.

The existing paving on the south side of the Kenet was designed to reflect the former use of the site as a tram depot. This should be re-used within the YHP2 proposals. Similarly, there are slabs in the paving on the north side of the Kennet reflecting former uses of this part of the site and this should be re-used as part of the YHP1 proposals. *(Officer comment: re-use of these paving materials can specified within the conditions requiring submission and approval of the hard and soft landscaping details for both YHP1 and YHP2).*

Public Consultation

5.26 Four site notices advertising both applications were erected around the site on 19/01/2023, and then again on 1/05/2024 following submission of amended plans. A press notice for both applications was also published on 23/01/2023.

5.27 10 x letters of objection have been received raising the following matters:

- There is already enough flats and houses being built in the town centre and there is not enough infrastructure to cope as it is
- Traffic is already bad in the town centre, and this will make it worse
- Closing of businesses, particularly a number of popular restaurants, does not make economic sense when these units bring in business to the town and are enjoyed by the public. Footfall and incentive for people to visit The Oracle will reduce.
- A shopping centre needs shops, leisure facilities, entertainment, arts and history places and it not a suitable place for flats either for future occupiers or the hospitality sector.
- Loss of existing facilities will negatively impact on people social lives and cause loneliness.
- Closure of existing facilities will result in loss of jobs
- Closure of the cinema will have a negative impact as this is one of the main places in the town for events and entertainment. Without access to a car and use of expensive public transport people cannot access similar facilities. For people with autism and anxiety the cinema is a valuable facility for enjoyment and to make friends
- The existing facilities are much loved by the local community and their scaling down and replacement with build to rent residential properties is inappropriate for the local community and contrary to the RBC Local Plan and tall building policies

- The Applicant's public consultation was insufficient for the proposed development and will have wider impacts than just the immediate area surrounding the shopping centre
- The proposal to not align with the Council's climate emergency pledge
- The materials shown on the proposed visuals and the proposed elevation plans do not match, those on the visuals should be used
- The Reading Corporation Tramways Power Station sign from 1903 is shown to be retained within the design and access statement but does not appear to be shown on the proposed elevation plans. A requirement of any planning permission should be for the sign to be retained, which was the case when planning permission was first granted for The Oracle.
- The scale and appearance of the proposed building is not in keeping with the town centre and will block out light
- The proposed build to rent flats will be expensive and push up existing rents making the town less affordable.
- Insufficient doctors' and dentists' surgeries already without additional flats
- The proposals will lead to overcrowding within the town centre

5.28 2 x letters of support have been received raising the following matters:

- Public realm improvements to riverside are welcomed, similar enhancements should be provided elsewhere, particularly for pedestrians crossing over the IDR to reduce noise and air pollution
- Both developments would provide much needed high quality housing, albeit lack of amenities need for residents such as supermarkets nearby needs to be considered
- Support the provision of additional cycle parking and car free nature of the developments, however, would like to see formal cycle paths along the riverside within the development
- Provision of private amenity balconies and communal amenity terrace areas is noted but green space, such as parks nearby, are limited
- Solar panels should be considered to reduce the environmental impacts of the developments
- Consideration should be given to whether the existing large Oracle car park adjacent to the application site is still needed and whether more housing could be provided there
- The land is currently neglected and does not contribute to lives of people in Reading

5.29 1 x letter of observation have been received raising the following matters:

- The proposed buildings will dominate Reading's skyline for a long time so the design should be improved to be less generic and incorporate more arches and curved glass

Statement of Community Involvement

5.30 The application is accompanied by a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) which sets out the Applicant's own public consultation undertaken in relation to both development proposals. This includes leaflet distribution to nearby businesses and dwellings (1, 323 addresses) with information about the proposals, display of posters, social media advertising, hosting of a project website, hosting of an in-person event and static exhibition at The Oracle and a live webinar.

5.31 The SCI summarises the feedback the Applicant received from the community consultation which includes:

Transport and Accessibility

- Concerns about safety of pedestrian access to The Oracle from the rear (IDR) side
- Cycle connections in and around The Oracle are poor and improved cycling infrastructure should be provided (routes and parking spaces)
- Pedestrian routes across the IDR should be improved

- Proposals would increase traffic in the town centre

Existing and Proposed Uses within The Oracle
- There should be more leisure facilities at The Oracle for both children and adults
- Reduced number of shops could reduce footfall
- Queried whether this is the right location for the proposed co-working facility
- Co-working spaces were needed within the town
- Priority for shop units should be given to small, independent local businesses
- Concern about loss of cinema, House of Fraser, Next Beauty and HMV
- Active ground floor use to riverside should be retained

Public Realm
- Riverside areas should be improved to support wildlife
- Area around Duke Street and Yield Hall Place should be improved
- More landscaping in public areas and less hardstanding
- Existing trees should be retained, not removed, and supplemented with new planting
- Better lighting to Yield Hall Place needed

Character and Appearance
- Appearance of existing building is dated, and proposals would result in a better appearance
- Queried the scale of the proposals
- Queried whether public art would be provided as part of redevelopment

Fire Safety
- Queried fire safety of proposed cladding and also evacuation routes

Housing
- Queried need for more housing in town centre and how Build to Rent tenure worked
- Larger flats needed for families
- High-density flats would detract from the character of Reading Borough Council

Sustainability
- Queried carbon footprint of the proposals and what sustainability measures would be included

Construction
- Concern about noise impact of proposals of existing and future residential occupiers
- Construction work could impact on public transport routes

Local Infrastructure
- Proposals would adversely impact on local infrastructure (schools, healthcare, police and fire services)

Other
- Benefits of the developments would not be for local people

6 Legal context

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) - 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).

6.4 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 and the following development plan policies and supplementary planning guidance are relevant:

NPPF (December 2024, incorporating changes February 2025)

Section 2 - Achieving sustainable development
Section 4 - Decision-making
Section 5 – Delivering a sufficient supply of homes
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

NPPG (2014 onwards)

Reading Borough Local Plan 2019, policies:

CC1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
CC2: Sustainable Design and Construction
CC3: Adaptation to Climate Change
CC4: Decentralised Energy
CC5: Waste Minimisation and Storage
CC6: Accessibility and the Intensity of Development
CC7: Design and the Public Realm
CC8: Safeguarding Amenity
CC9: Securing Infrastructure
CC10: Health Impact Assessments (emerging policy)
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
EN9: Provision of Open Space
EN10: Access to Open Space
EN11: Waterspaces
EN12: Biodiversity and the Green Network
EN14: Trees, Hedges and Woodland
EN15: Air Quality
EN16: Pollution and Water Resources
EN17: Noise Generating Equipment

EN18: Flooding and Drainage
EN19: Urban Greening Factor (emerging policy)
H2: Density and Mix
H3: Affordable Housing
H4: Build to Rent Schemes
H5: Standards for New Housing
H10: Private and Communal Outdoor Space
TR1: Achieving the Transport Strategy
TR3: Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters
TR4: Cycle Routes and Facilities
TR5: Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging
RL1: Network and Hierarchy of Centres
RL2: Scale and Location of Retail, Leisure and Culture Development
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
CR6: Living in Central Reading
CR7: Primary Frontages in Central Reading
CR10: Tall Buildings
CR14: Other Sites for Development in Central Reading

6.7 Relevant Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) are:

Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD (2011)
Sustainable Design and Construction SPD (2019)
Affordable Housing SPD (2021)
Employment, Skills and Training SPD (2013)
Planning Obligations Under s106 SPD (2015)
Sustainable Design and Construction SPD (2019)
Design Guide to Shopfronts (2022)

6.8 Other relevant guidance:

Reading City Centre Framework (2008)
Market Place/London Street Conservation Area Appraisal (2007)
St Mary's Butts / Castle Street Conservation Area Appraisal (March 2008)
Local Cycling and Walking Improvement Plan 2020-2030 (LCWIP) (November 2019)
Tall Buildings Strategy (2008)
Tall Buildings Strategy Update Note (2018)
Reading Open Space Strategy (2007)
(Draft) Reading Town Centre Public Realm Strategy (2025)
Reading Tree Strategy (2021)
Reading Biodiversity Action Plan (2021)
Historic England: Advice Note 4 "Tall Buildings" (2015).

Local Plan Partial Update

6.9 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 update of the Local Plan was published on 6th November 2024.

6.10. 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. Officer advice in respect of the Local Plan policies pertinent to these applications listed above is that, other than Policy H1 (Provision of Housing) they remain in accordance with national policy and that the objectives of those policies remain 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'. Policy H1 is out of date because the Council is not currently meeting its annual housing targets for general housing as calculated using the standard method in National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) (as required now policy H1 is out of date) or for the provision of Affordable Housing.

6.11. The Local Plan Partial Update was submitted to the Secretary of State on 9th May 2025. Submission marks the beginning of a process of public examination led by an independent Inspector. Due to the stage of examination, the draft Local Plan can be afforded limited weight. Any incidences where policies relevant to these application are changing or relevance of any new policies proposed to be introduced by the draft Local Plan Partial Update will be discussed within the Appraisal section below.

7 Appraisal

7.1 The main considerations are:

1. **Land use matters**
2. **Design & related matters: demolition, layout, scale, massing, appearance and impact on heritage assets**
3. **Public Realm**
4. **Mix and Affordable Housing**
5. **Transport and Highways**
6. **Flooding and Natural Environment**
7. **Amenity Matters**
8. **Sustainability and Energy**
9. **Other matters**
10. **S106 matters**

Land use matters

7.1.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (February 2025) sets out a presumption in favour of sustainable development (Para. 11) with three overarching objectives, economic, social and environmental. Sustainable development should therefore be approved where it accords with the development plan unless the adverse impacts of doing so would significantly outweigh the benefits of development.

7.1.2 The NPPF also states that planning policies and decisions should define a network and hierarchy of town centres and promote their long-term vitality and viability – by allowing them to grow and diversify in a way that can respond to rapid changes in the retail and leisure industries, allows a suitable mix of uses (including housing) and reflects their distinctive characters (Para. 90). The NPPF also encourages the effective use of land by reusing land that has been previously developed; (Para. 124), especially where that land is under-utilised, and within a settlement.

7.1.3 The NPPF has identified an increased need for housing across the country, including Reading. The emerging Local Plan Partial Update includes provisions for an increased housing target in Reading.

7.1.4 The RBC Local Plan (2019) within paragraphs 5.1.1 and 5.1.4 outlines that Reading town centre is also one of the UK's most important centres and that its importance for retail, boosted by the opening of the Oracle in 1999, is long established, but it is also significant for leisure and culture, and, increasingly, as somewhere to live.

7.1.5 Paragraph 5.2.1 of the Local Plan (2019) sets out key principles for development within Central Reading, which are:

a. The centre will contain a broad range of different but complementary uses within an area easily accessed by foot.
b. The centre will appeal to all sectors of Reading's population as a place to live in, work in, study in and visit.
c. New development will exhibit an excellent, safe and sustainable quality of design that contributes to the attraction of the centre.
d. The centre will make the most of its waterside areas as a destination for leisure and recreation, and protect and enhance wildlife habitats.
e. Areas of designated open space within the centre will be protected and new opportunities will be sought.
f. Access to the centre by foot, cycle and public transport will be improved.
g. Access within the centre by foot and cycle will be improved and barriers to this improved access will be overcome, particularly in a north-south direction through the core.
h. Development in the centre will benefit from and contribute towards forthcoming major transport improvements.
i. Areas and features that positively contribute to the unique and historic character of central Reading will be protected and, where appropriate, enhanced.

7.1.6 Policy RL1 (Network and Hierarchy of Centres) identifies that the town centre is a Regional Centre, with a catchment extending beyond the Thames Valley, which is one of the most economically dynamic regions in the country. The policy requires that the vitality and viability of the Central Reading is maintained and enhanced, and this is the one of the key overarching requirements upon which both applications will assessed. acknowledges that this area will see the.

7.1.7 Policy RL1 also sets out that Central Reading will see the greatest levels of development and change and that improvements to accessibility and transport movements, the range of facilities available, provision of residential uses to upper floors and environment enhancements will be acceptable in Central Reading. The supporting text to Policy RL1 at paragraph 4.6.2 states that as other competing centres (within the Thames Valley and country as a whole) continue to enhance their offer, it will continue to be necessary to develop and adapt the town centre to maintain its position.

7.1.8 The Oracle (including both application sites) is located within the Central Core of the town centre and within the Primary Shopping Area as defined under Policy CR1 (Definition of Central Reading). In general terms, both application proposals would align with Policy CR1 which requires that new retail development should take place within the Primary Shopping Area and that proposals for other main town centre uses (such as restaurants and leisure uses) should take place within the Central Core. Notwithstanding the above the supporting text to Policy CR1 at paragraph 5.3.4 is clear that these designations do not mean that other types of development will not be acceptable and that mixing uses within the centre is at the heart of the strategy for development within Central Reading set out within the Local Plan. Policy CR1 also sets out that major office development should take place within the Office Core of the Central Area. Policy EM2 (Location of New Employment Development) states that employment uses (such industry) other than office development should take place along the A33 corridor or within designated Core Employment Areas.

7.1.9 Policy CR4 (Leisure, Culture and Tourism in Central Reading) also sets out that the Central Core is the prime focus for major leisure, cultural and tourism development and that such uses which attract a wide range of people into the centre will be encouraged, as will innovative solutions to leisure provision. Policy CR5 (Drinking Establishments in Central Reading) supports provision of complementary evening and nighttime uses within the central area, subject to these uses not giving rise to adverse impacts on the amenity of nearby residents or other town centre users.

Existing and Proposed Uses

YHP1

7.1.10 The proposals for YHP1 include part demolition and part retention of the existing former Debenhams department store at riverside, lower mall and upper mall level (Use Class E). These parts of the existing building consist of around 12,965m2 of floor space. This includes two former restaurant units fronting the riverside (most recently Franco Manca and The Real Greek). It is proposed to demolish 6,633m2 of the floor space, which includes the part of the building closest to and fronting the riverside to the south and Yield Hall Place to the east, including the two restaurant units. The remaining 6,3236m2 of floor space at riverside, lower mall and upper mall level to rear (north) part of the site, is to be retained and re-provided as part of the development proposals. The two floors of the part of the existing car park and plant rooms above upper mall level are to be retained with some minor changes to layout and configuration.

7.1.11 Within the retained floor space, it is proposed to provide two new commercial units, a 1,510m2 unit at ground floor (riverside level) and a 2,916m2 double storey unit to the two floors above at lower and upper mall level. The submitted plans and supporting documents suggest that the ground floor unit would be within an experiential leisure use (E(d) Use Class) and may include a bar element (Sui Generis Use Class), whilst the larger unit to the upper floors is shown as in retail use (E(a) Use Class). However, as explained above, the application seeks a flexible use of the proposed commercial units for uses within Class E and/or Sui Generis bar use.

7.1.12 There are no in principle issues with the majority of the various separate Class E uses or Sui Generis bar use which Policies CR1, CR4 and CR5 support within the Central Area. However, it is considered necessary to exclude uses under Class E (g)(i) 'Offices to carry out any operational or administrative functions', E (g) (ii) 'Research and development of products or processes' and E (g) (iii) 'industrial processes') from both of the commercial units within the retained floorspace. This is because, for the ground floor (riverside level) unit, such uses would not be appropriate within the designated Primary Frontage in accordance with Policy CR7 (Primary Frontages in Central Reading) which seeks to protect the vitality and vibrancy of such frontages within the town centre through provision of appropriate ground floor uses. For the upper floor unit (2,900m2), whilst not within a 'frontage', such uses are also not considered appropriate within the Central Core and Primary Shopping Area of the town centre for similar reasons. Furthermore, Policies CR1 and EM2 direct employment uses such as offices, research and development and industrial processes of over 2, 500m2 to other locations within the Borough, and the application is not accompanied by a retail sequential test to demonstrate that such uses cannot be accommodated within these preferred locations elsewhere. The Local Plan directs major office uses (Class E (g)(i)) directs towards the Office Core of the Central Area and industrial such as Class E (g) (ii) and E (g) (iii) directed towards the Core Employment Areas and A33 corridor and the YHP1 application site is not within any of these preferred locations. A condition is recommended to restrict use of the units accordingly.

7.1.13 Policy CR7 also requires that any units that front onto any of the designated primary frontages will provide an active building frontage with a display window or glazed frontage at ground floor level in order to further contribute to the vibrancy of the town centre and provide visual interest. The units proposed with the retained floor space would not front directly on the riverside frontage being accessed internally from the mall and as such no conflict with Policy CR7 in this respect is identified. However, a new double height glazed entrance to the shopping centre is proposed direct from the riverside frontage which would provide access to the units within the retained floor space and ensure appropriate activation and interest to this part of the Primary Frontage.

7.1.14 In addition to the proposed retained and re-purposed floor space, significant extensions are proposed to replace the demolished elements of the building next to the riverside and Yield Hall Place. At ground floor (riverside level) this includes a unit shown in restaurant (E (d) Use Class) / bar (Sui Generis) use of 241.84m2 to the riverside frontage. However,

as discussed above, a flexible use for this unit is also proposed within any of Class E and/or Sui Generis bar use. It is considered reasonable to restrict the use of this unit on the same basis as the units within the retained floorspace by way of condition in accordance with Policy CR7 given its location within a Primary Frontage.

7.1.15 The ground floor (riverside level) of the extended part of the building is also proposed to provide a 'co-working space' (E g (i) Use Class - offices) of 251m2 on the eastern corner of the development to both the riverside and Yield Hall Place frontage of the building. The YHP1 application outlines that the co-working space is proposed to provide a space for people to work and hold business meetings, reflecting the increased demand arising from the shift to home, hybrid and flexible working. The co-working space would be open to the general public and not just occupiers of the residential units within the proposed development. The provision of such office type accommodation within the Primary Frontage would conflict with Policy CR7 given, as discussed above, such a use is not considered appropriate to provide the desired vibrancy and interest for such frontages within the town centre. However, the co-working space by its nature (with a café and break out areas) is likely to be different and more front facing than private offices serving a single firm or company and officers consider such a use would provide activation and vibrancy to the Primary Frontage. The proposed co-working unit would also be served by a glazed shopfront to the riverside (and to Yield Hall Place) which from a visual perspective would also provide appropriate visual vibrancy and interest to the Primary Frontage. Furthermore, given a flexible use within Class E is sought it is possible that the space could be used for a more traditional front facing use such as a shop. It should be noted that given the use class for co-working space is Class E g (i) (offices) the unit could also end up being used as private offices of a single firm or company, albeit officers consider this would be unlikely.

7.1.16 Policy CR7 also states that proposals that result in the loss of A1 or A2 uses such that the proportion along the whole frontage falls below 50% will not be permitted. In this respect the Primary Frontage is defined as being both the riverside north and riverside south frontages within The Oracle. This policy however is now out of step with the national context, following the September 2020 changes to the Use Classes Order, which revoked Class A1/A2 and introduced the 11 part Class E. The draft Reading Borough Local Plan Partial Update proposes that Policy CR7 is amended such that the minimum proportion of any specific use is proposed to be removed. Whilst this is not yet an adopted policy approach and very limited weight can be given to this proposed policy change, it indicates an anticipated direction of travel. Set within this context, there are no concerns raised with the Class E uses proposed, subject to the controls discussed above in respect of research and development industrial process uses.

7.1.17 Elsewhere within the ground floor (riverside level) of the proposed extended part of the YHP1 building, a large residential lobby and entrance (225.81m2) is proposed to the riverside frontage between the two commercial units discussed above, providing access and communal space to the 218 residential units at the upper floors of the building. Policy CR7 is clear that entrances to upper floors are appropriate within Primary Frontages, whilst the lobby would provide a significant glazed frontage providing suitable visual interest.

7.1.18 The rest of the ground floor space within the YHP1 extensions consists of around 884m2 of 'back of house space' serving the proposed retail, leisure, restaurant and residential uses to the upper floors (refuse and cycle stores, storage rooms, plant rooms and circulation space). These uses are set towards the rear of the building away from the riverside Primary Frontage and therefore are considered be suitably located and necessary to support the wider functions of the building. A proposed cycle store, plant room and bin store would front on to the Yield Hall Place frontage of the building. Yield Hall Place is not a Primary Frontage designated by Policy CR7 and therefore there is no land use conflict with such uses to this side of the building. Yield Hall Place is currently primarily used for servicing of The Oracle and other surrounding buildings and use for servicing is proposed to continue as part of the proposed development. Whether this is an appropriate function for this part of the building in terms of appearance and quality of

public realm within the town centre will be considered later in this report when matters relating to design and appearance are covered in more detail.

YHP2

7.1.19 The proposals for YHP2 include demolition of the entirety of the existing building within this site, which incorporates the existing four storey Vue cinema (6,228m2) and the riverside restaurant units (670m2) and redevelopment of the site with a larger building. The proposed new building would re-provide a cinema (Sui Generis Use) offer (2,486m2) at the western end of the building but on a smaller scale over two storeys offering 7 screens and 511 seats compared to the 10 screens and 1,800 seats provided by the existing cinema. The primary entrance/exit to the cinema would be from the riverside but within a secondary entrance to the other side of the building on to the pavement on the IDR.

7.1.20 Within the YHP2 development it is also proposed to provide a new ground floor retail until (Class E a) (345m2) at the eastern end of the building which would front on to the riverside and also Yield Hall Place to the east. As with the YHP1 proposals a flexible use of this unit is sought for any use within Class E and/or Sui Generis bar use. A 313m2 residential lobby would also be provided at riverside level (ground floor) which would provide communal space and access to the 218 residential units proposed to the upper floors of the building from the riverside as well as from the IDR to the south . The rest of the ground floor space within the proposed YHP2 building would consist of back of house space (refuse and cycle stores, storage rooms, plant rooms and circulation space) for the cinema, retail unit and residential units above.

7.1.21 The YHP2 proposals are located within a wider parcel of land which includes the rest of the Oracle to the west on the south side of the Kennet and the existing John Lewis Depot on the opposite side of the IDR that is allocated for development under Policy CR14g. This Policy seeks:

CR14g THE ORACLE EXTENSION, BRIDGE STREET AND LETCOMBE STREET

Development of the area between the River Kennet and Mill Lane for retail, with use of site at Letcombe Street for public car park

Development should:

- *Address flood risk issues;*
- *Enhance the setting of the Conservation Area;*
- *Take account of potential archaeological significance; and*
- *Address any contamination on site.*

Site size: 1.67 ha 1,600-2,000 sq m of retail or town centre uses

7.1.22 The YHP2 proposals do not entirely align with the type of development allocated for the wider site under Policy CR14g, which is for retail development, and in this respect are considered to be departure from the current, adopted Local Plan. As such, and as required by Paragraph 15 of the Development Management Procedure Order (2012) (as amended) the proposals were advertised as being not in accordance with the Development Plan. Whilst the proposals include provision of a retail element this is a single unit (345m2) with the majority of the floorspace proposed at ground floor level being a leisure use in the form of a Cinema (Sui Generis Use Class) and the 218 residential units to the upper floors being by far the predominant land use. It is pertinent to note that within the Local Plan Partial Update, significant changes are proposed to Policy CR14g:

CR14g THE ORACLE ~~EXTENSION, BRIDGE STREET AND LETCOMBE STREET~~RIVERSIDE EAST

Development of the ~~area between the River Kennet and Mill Lane for retail, with use of site at Letcombe Street for public car park~~eastern end of the Oracle Riverside for residential development with commercial development including retail and/or leisure at the ground floor.

Development should:

- ***Retain and increase tree planting along the Kennet and Avon Canal to enhance the treed corridor;***
- ***Address flood risk issues, including avoiding development in the part of the site within Flood Zone 3;***
- ***Avoid detrimental effects on the significance of listed buildings and the Conservation Area and their settings;~~Enhance the setting of the Conservation Area~~;***
- ***Take account of potential archaeological significance; and***
- ***Address noise impacts on residential use;***
- ***Address air quality impacts on residential use;***
- ***Address any contamination on site.***

Site size: 1.~~67~~26 ha

~~1,600 2,000 sq m of retail or town centre uses~~250-370 dwellings, retention of retail and/or leisure on key frontages on ground floor

7.1.23 Notably the parcel of land covered by the policy allocation is proposed to be significantly amended to just include the eastern end of The Oracle on the south side of the river but now also the eastern end of the shopping centre on the north side of the river as well. Furthermore, the proposed allocated uses for the site have been amended to refer to both retail and/or leisure uses to ground floor and now with the addition of residential uses to the upper floors. The proposed amended draft of Policy CR14g under the Local Plan Partial Update therefore would broadly align with the type of development proposed for YHP2. The Local Plan update would also see the proposals within YHP1 fall under the CR14g allocation on the north side of the Kennet where the proposals would similarly align with the draft updated policy wording.

7.1.24 However, as discussed earlier in this report, given ongoing Local Plan update is at such an early stage, limited weight can attributed to the updated Policy, albeit it indicates an anticipated direction of travel for the Policy in the future. As such the proposals for YHP2 must be assessed as a departure from the current 2019 adopted version of the Local Plan in respect of Policy CR14g and it needs to be considered whether there are material considerations that would justify this departure from the Development Plan, and this will be considered later in this report.

7.1.25 Notwithstanding the above, and more generally in broad land use principle terms, re-provision of the Sui Generis cinema use as a leisure facility, the proposed flexible Class E and/or Sui Generis bar use unit and the residential lobby would align with Policies CR1, CR4 and CR7 in terms of being an appropriate uses within the Central Core and Primary Shopping Area of the Reading Central Area and are appropriate ground floor uses within a designated Primary Frontage. As discussed above for the YHP1 proposals, it is considered reasonable to prevent use of the proposed flexible Class E and/or Sui Generis bar unit as uses falling under Class E (g)(i) 'Offices', E (g)(ii) 'Research and development' and E (g)(iii) 'industrial processes by way of condition given these are not considered appropriate for this location or to make the necessary contribution to the vibrancy and vitality of the town centre.

7.1.26 Furthermore, re-provision of the cinema use would also align with Policy RL6 (Protection of Leisure Facilities and Public Houses) which requires that existing leisure facilities or public houses will generally be retained. All the proposed ground floor uses within YHP2 would also present glazed active frontages within the Primary Frontage providing the necessary visual interest and activation at riverside level in accordance with Policy CR7.

Residential Uses to Upper Floors

7.1.27 C3 residential dwellings in the form of 218 Built to Rent (BTR) flats are proposed to the upper floors of both the proposed YHP1 and YP2 developments, a total of 436 flats across the two planning applications. Generally, the provision of new housing within both applications would comply with Paragraph 61 of the NPPF (February 2025) which outlines the Government's objective to significantly boost the supply of housing and would contribute to the Borough's housing needs. It is noted that the Council is not currently meeting its annual housing targets for general housing as calculated using the standard method in National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) (as required now Policy H1 is out of date) or for the provision of Affordable Housing.

7.1.28 Policy CR6 (Living in Central Reading) also supports proposals for residential development within Central Reading subject to meeting specific criteria in terms of mix of proposed dwellings, affordable housing provision and demonstrating that future occupiers of new residential dwellings would not be adversely affected by noise and other disturbance from town centre uses or poor air quality, which are considered later in this report.

7.1.29 As discussed above, the proposal to provide residential uses within the YHP2 development would depart from the type of development envisaged for this site under Policy CR14g and therefore it needs to be considered whether there are material considerations that would justify this departure from the Development Plan, and this will be considered later in this report.

7.1.30 In this instance, all the residential units proposed within YHP1 and YHP2 are Build to Rent residential accommodation, which is an established and accepted form of housing provision at the national and local level. Policy H4 (Build to Rent Schemes) clearly sets out the circumstances in which such developments will be supported. This includes, but is not limited to, single ownership for a minimum 20 year term from occupation, there being minimum three year tenancies for private renters, a high standard professional on-site management and meeting RBC's voluntary Rent with Confidence Standards. All the requirements are proposed to be secured within the proposed s106 legal agreement, thereby demonstrating the full commitment of the applicant to these Borough requirements.

<u>Vitality and Viability of the Central Area</u>

7.1.31 Overall, apart from the proposed co-working space with YHP1, the proposed non-residential uses proposed within both YHP1 and YHP2 are considered to be appropriate uses within this location within the Central Area. However, the overarching assessment that needs to be made is whether the development and uses proposed within both applications would, as required by Policy RL1, ensure that the vitality and viability of the Central Area is maintained and enhanced. Therefore, this assessment also needs to consider the existing situation at The Oracle as well as the wider Central Area.

7.1.32 The YHP1 proposals seek to re-provide over half the commercial floor space be lost via demolition in a variety of flexible Class E and/or Sui Generis bar uses by either conversion of retained existing floor space or through new build elements. However overall, there would be quantitative loss of commercial floorspace (both retail and restaurant floorspace) within the YHP1 part of The Oracle equating to 6,633m2. This relates to demolition of the floor space within the former Debenhams department store which closed in 2020. Next Home then stepped in to occupy some floor space but then also vacated the premises in

2023 along with the riverside restaurant units (Franco Manca and The Real Greek) and the former department store floor space has been vacant since then.

7.1.33 Similarly, the YHP2 proposals would re-provide around half of the commercial floor space to be lost through demolition through the proposed replacement cinema and single riverside flexible Class E and/or Sui Generis bar us unit which would all be new build elements. However, in overall terms there would again be a quantitative loss of commercial floorspace within the YHP2 part of The Oracle equating to 3,084m2. This primarily results from the smaller size of the replacement cinema and replacement of the riverside restaurant units within a single flexible Class E and/or Suit Generis bar use unit.

7.1.34 There are no Local Plan policies which prevent quantitative loss of commercial floor space or town centre uses within the Central Area moreover as discussed above the pertinent assessment is whether proposals would maintain or enhance the vitality and viability of the Central Are and the contributory function of The Oracle shopping centre to Reading as a regional centre.

7.1.35 The applicant has provided a range of information to contextualise and justify the proposed development in terms of The Oracle's role and contribution to the Central Area. This highlights how there is a need for town centres to evolve to respond to market challenges and ensure they are resistant to future economic change and consumer trends. Current challenges identified include changes to the retail sector caused by a variety of factors including growth of on-line retailing, accelerated by the Covid-19 pandemic, competition from out-of-town retailing; reduced office populations in town centres, and pressures from increased costs of living. It is identified that these challenges are already affecting town centres with increased vacancy rates with BHS, Debenhams and House of Fraser cited as examples of national retailers which operated anchor department store units within town centres which have either ceased trading on the high street or significantly rationalised their property portfolios. Reports by town centre analysts submitted by the Applicant state that between 20%-40% of UK retail space may need to be redeveloped or repurposed meaning that town centres will need to adapt to fulfil a different role in the towns and communities they serve.

7.1.36 Given the changes in the retail sector outlined above the Applicant asserts that relying solely on retail footfall can be problematic for centres with the majority of city and town centres across the UK experiencing an oversupply of retail and that the need for change is clear. Reference is also made to the changes the Government made to the Use Classes Order in 2020 which amalgamated the majority of 'town centre' uses, including retail within a single Class E, recognising the economic need for flexibility on high streets.

7.1.37 The Applicant also identifies that the role of residential uses in our town centres is becoming increasingly important given the benefits it can deliver in bringing vacant buildings into occupation, generating a critical mass of population to support shops and services, and creating 24-hour vibrancy within centres. This is recognised in Policy CR6 of the Local Plan which supports proposals for residential development in Central Reading. The supporting information also identifies examples of development taking place, approved or proposed in town centres across the UK which would result in changes to the town centres, to secure the reoccupation or redevelopment of anchor retail units / department stores. More recent schemes identified which have either been completed/commenced or have planning permission include those in Southampton, Leicester and Glasgow all of which include a significant residential element mixed in with flexible commercial uses.

7.1.38 The applicant has also provided supporting information which considers the specific situation within Reading town centre which is ranked as the 14th largest retail venue in the UK, albeit this is sited as being declining position since 2019 identified to be as a result of loss of a number of core retailers (eg. Debenhams and House of Fraser). Reading is still the dominant town centre in the Thames Valley, but retail analysis provided with the application identifies that Reading town centre has a retail floor space vacancy rate

of 21% which is higher than the national average of 13.8%. The applicant suggests that whilst Broad Street Mall is subject to redevelopment proposals which also include a significant residential element, no planning permission to date has been implemented, neither are there any major schemes comprising the repurposing or intensification of shopping centres that are currently being implemented or have been granted planning permission in Reading town centre despite the changing dynamics impacting the Central Area.

7.1.39 In terms of The Oracle itself, it is the largest retail zone within Reading Central Area. The Local Plan recognises its importance and highlights that its opening helped to establish Reading as, *"one of the leading shopping locations in the UK"* (para 5.1.4). The Applicant also highlights their commitment to providing a high quality mix of tenants within their shopping centres, mainly national retailers and mid/upper market fashion retailers and jewellers which attracts retailers over other Thames Valley shopping locations. Information provided also highlights the importance of The Oracle as an anchor to maintaining Reading's position as the primary town centre within the Thames Valley, advising that The Oracle shopping centre draws from a more extensive catchment area than Reading town centre as a whole.

7.1.40 When the original planning permission for The Oracle was granted, its layout also comprised department stores bookending the scheme at the east and west ends (Debenhams and House of Fraser) of the shopping centre to the north of the river, given at the time department stores were seen as a necessary anchor attraction to the scheme, due to their role as a footfall generators. However, and as acknowledged during the grant of S73 planning permission ref. PL/23/0682 at The Oracle which approved the removal of the original conditions which prevented subdivision of the former department store floorspace, retailing trends and demands have now evolved and the appeal of department stores is diminished. This is identified as being due to the range of alternative shopping experiences now available, including online, and as a result of diversification of supermarkets and retail parks. A significant new leisure operator in Hollywood Bowl has since occupied part of the former House of Fraser floor space which the applicant advises is key to securing the long term re-occupation and investment in the western end of The Oracle.

7.1.41 In terms of the YHP2 proposals on the south side of the river, whilst not involving a former department store or specific retail floor space, the applicant identifies that the key commercial use on that side of the river is the Vue Cinema which has been in place since 1999 when The Oracle opened. The age of the cinema is such that it now requires significant investment to upgrade the facilities in terms of the customer environment and technological infrastructure. The smaller cinema offer is to align with customer expectations and the growing popularity of more bespoke intimate venues and higher quality viewing experiences with more luxurious seating and a better food and beverage offer. The applicant advises that at present it is also Vue, an experienced cinema operator, who are anticipated to occupy the replacement cinema and it is in coordination with them that the revised and reduced cinema offer has been created to align with their understanding of the likely future market trend for multiplex town centre cinemas.

7.1.42 The above summarises what is a detailed set of supporting information and reports submitted by the Applicant in support of both planning applications. Officer view is that the position presented by the reports is based upon appropriate evidence and analysis and is prepared by suitability qualified individuals. The findings presented in the reports are considered to reflect the trends officers see within Reading town centre and more indirectly within town centres outside of Reading and that it is clear that the role of town centres is changing. It is therefore pertinent to assess the nature of replacement commercial uses and floorspace proposed by both applications which, whilst presenting an overall quantitative reduction in floorspace, does not necessarily mean that the result would be a reduction in the vitality and viability of The Oracle and Central Area as a whole.

7.1.43 The applicant advises that their proposals have been designed to address the demand and supply imbalance that has arisen for commercial floor space, whilst ensuring a core focus of the shopping centre remains on retail. They identify that the Central Area as a whole is becoming increasingly oversupplied by mainstream retail and food & beverage uses, with limited alternative uses. Hence the proposal within YHP2 to remove the three existing riverside restaurant units. The applicant confirms that they are committed to The Oracle and Reading Town Centre and whilst the shopping centre is performing well when compared with other assets in the UK, they have identified a strong need to future-proof the centre and make it, and the town centre as whole, more resilient to market trends and changes. Key to doing this is considered to be introducing a more mixed range of uses to serve the local community and to mitigate the impact of retail market changes and provide people with more reasons to come to them and to stay for longer, including outside of normal retail hours.

7.1.45 Given both the YHP1 and YHP2 sites are located at the eastern end of the shopping centre there is also an opportunity for coordinated redevelopment either side of the river without interrupting the current customer journey or flow of shoppers with The Oracle.

7.1.46 The residential accommodation proposed by both applications is also considered to assist in supporting diversification of The Oracle by introducing permanent residents in the one of the Central Areas most important retail and commercial areas helping activate and bring footfall to The Oracle and wider town centre throughout the day on all days of the week. The Applicant states that the capital expenditure required to provide the diversification of The Oracle to both application sites, including provision of new leisure and commercial units and improvements to public realm, could not be met without the delivery of the proposed residential elements of both developments and that otherwise it would not be commercially viable for them to commit the capital expenditure required. Therefore, and whilst not specifically stated within the application the residential towers of both the YHP1 and YHP2 proposals appear to present enabling development to facilitate the applicant providing the proposed interventions to the existing shopping centre that they present as necessary to secure is long term success as well as delivering the public realm works. As such, conditions are recommended to be attached to both planning permissions to require the new commercial units, and public realm works to be provided prior to occupation of the residential dwellings.

YHP1

7.1.47 In terms of the YHP1 proposals officers acknowledge the overall loss of floor space within ‘town centre’ uses but consider that the applicant has provided suitable justification for why the contraction of retail floorspace within the shopping centre is required. Notably the floorspace to be lost is all currently vacant and has been to a large extent since 2020 and the market trends indicate little prospect of re-occupation in its current form. The proposed replacement uses which, whilst proposed as flexible uses, would facilitate a wider range of potential occupants assisting in reducing levels of vacancy and are, uses in the context of the Local Plan, considered to be acceptable in their own right within the Central Area. Reducing incidences of vacant units is likely to improve the overall perception of The Oracle and Central Area and encourage retention of existing core retail occupiers and encourage new retail occupiers to be present. The flexible nature of the uses proposed means that the units could continue to be occupied in a retail/commercial use without the delay of awaiting a specific planning permission. Information provided in support of the application explains that retail is still key element for town centre sites, just to a lesser extent than before and this provides confidence that retail would still retain an important role at The Oracle and within the wider Central Area.

7.1.48 Nonetheless, the flexible nature of and range of uses proposed, including a possible leisure use, are considered to also present opportunities for the vibrancy of The Oracle and Central Area to be enhanced through greater variety of opportunities and reasons to visit throughout the week and day. Whilst the proposed co-working space would technically be a non-conforming use at ground floor level within and the designated active

frontage, contrary to Policy CR7, but in the context of the YHP1 proposals as a whole it is not considered that introduction of such a use within the wider development would result in any significant detrimental impact to the vitality and viability of The Oracle or Central Area. Indeed, co-working space could be a footfall generator to the site during the weekdays and could complement the proposed introduction of a significant number of BtR residential dwellings at the site. The residential units would assist the Council in meeting its housing targets whilst also providing a critical mass and captive catchment of population within The Oracle to assist in supporting its continued operation as well as providing the applicant with the necessary investment to be able to deliver the proposed diversification of the shopping centre and wider public realm works that are proposed. The proximity of the residential units to both the existing and proposed retail, eating, drinking and leisure facilities within The Oracle and elsewhere within the town centre will help support those facilities to remain as well as attracting new occupiers.

7.1.49 The applicant proposes that YHP1 would be implemented in two phases. Phase 1A would consist of demolition works and conversion of the retained department store floor space and then and then Phase 1B which is construction of the new riverside units, residential dwellings above and public realm works. Following completion of Phase 1A and before implementation of Phase 1B the submitted plans (see figures 13A and 13B below) show that this would present significant plain brick elevations to both the riverside and Yield Hall Place enclosing the converted former department store floor space behind. The plans indicate that the large blank walls could potentially be taken up by artwork or murals. It is considered reasonable to secure via a s106 obligation that once Phase 1A commences, then Phase 1B must be completed within 5 years. This is because the temporary nature of the proposed arrangements and presentation of non-active elevations would not be an acceptable long term arrangement in terms of visual impact to what is a primary frontage within a prominent riverside location in the Central Area accordance with Policies CR3, CR7, CC7 and EN11. From a vitality and viability of the Central Area point of view, the Phase 1A proposals would seek to re-purpose existing vacant floor space to a wide range of occupiers/tenants and therefore it is considered that this phase of the proposals, from a land use perspective, would be acceptable for a temporary period and would not harm the overall vitality and viability of the Central Area.

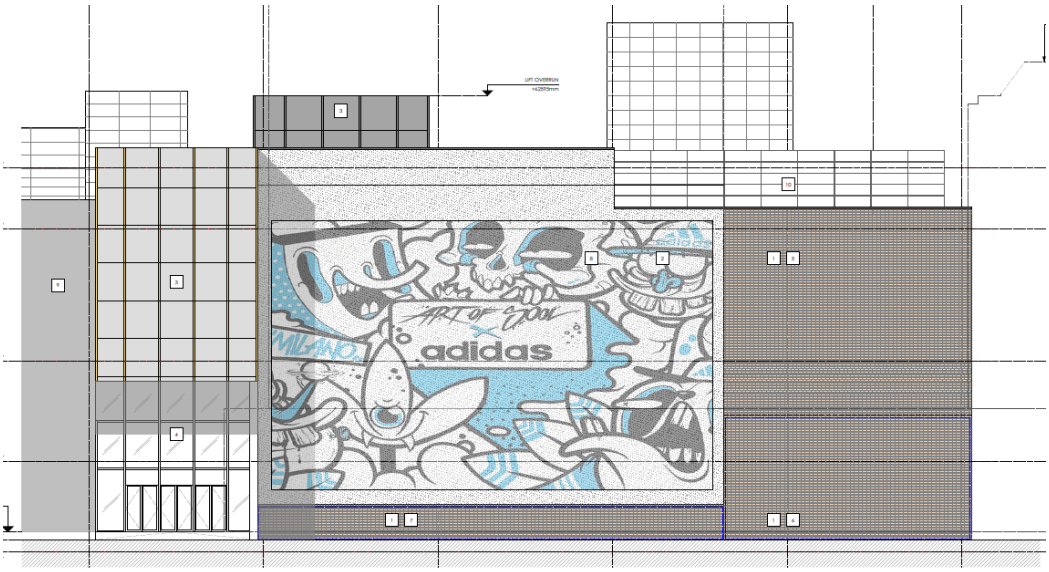


Figure 13A – Phase 1A – Proposed riverside elevation



Figure 13B – Phase 1B – Proposed Yield Hall Place Elevation

YHP2

7.1.49 With regard to the YHP2 proposals officers also acknowledge the overall loss of floorspace within 'town centre' uses and in particular the significant reduction in the leisure offer as a result of the proposed smaller cinema. However, the rationale for the smaller cinema proposal is considered sound and whilst there would be a reduction in floorspace, screens and seats the proposed offering would provide a more bespoke and modern premises in line with market demands and a likely higher quality viewing experience. The provision of a more modern, bespoke offering cinema is considered to be of more benefit to the vitality and viability of The Oracle and Central Area than a larger outdated cinema that is too big and does not align with customer expectations.

7.1.50 The applicant advises that the replacement of existing riverside restaurant units within a single flexible use unit would heighten potential for occupation of this unit and potential for a range of occupiers adding vibrancy to The Oracle's offer and help to address the existing oversupply of food and beverage premises within the Central Area as a whole. As with the YHP1 proposals the proposed YHP2 residential units would assist the Council in meeting its housing targets whilst also providing a captive catchment of population within The Oracle to assist in supporting its continued operation as well as providing the applicant with the necessary investment to be able to deliver the proposed diversification of the shopping centre and wider public realm works that are proposed. The proximity of the residential units to both the existing and proposed retail, eating, drinking and leisure facilities within The Oracle and elsewhere within the town centre will help support those facilities to remain as well as attracting new occupiers.

7.1.51 Overall, officers conclude that in terms of land use matters both the YHP1 and YHP2 proposals would likely at least maintain the vitality and viability of The Oracle and in turn that of the Central Area meeting the minimum requirement by Policy RL1. To fully understand the impact of both proposals on the Central Area and whether or not the proposals would go beyond this and enhance its vitality and viability, all other aspects of the proposals need to be considered, and this is discussed within the following sections of this report below.

7.1.52 Notwithstanding the above, the applicant has considered and modelled various scenarios at The Oracle in an economic assessment to obtain an understanding of what the impact would be on vitality and viability of the Central Area as a whole if i) The Oracle remained as existing with the current level of vacancy, ii) if The Oracle remained as existing but at full occupancy and iii) if the proposed developments were implemented. The results indicate that all options ultimately would have minimal overall impact upon the Reading Central Area as a whole. Option i) shows a very minor (-0.8%) negative impact on turnover of the Central Area and option iii) a very minor (+0.8%) positive impact on turnover of the Central Area. Option ii) shows the biggest (+1.7%) positive impact but as discussed above is unrealistic given the prevalent trends within the retail market and town centres. Ultimately the small difference between the modelled impact of option i) and option iii) is

because the loss of commercial floorspace that would result from the proposed developments would account for just 3% of the total commercial floor space within the Central Area. The main conclusion officers draw from this study is that whether or not both or either proposed development is implemented this would likely have minimal overall impact upon the economic performance of the Central Area as a whole. However, the assessment of vitality and viability is not a purely economic one as discussed above and the need to diversify town centre evidenced by the Applicant are considered valid.

2. Design & related matters: demolition, layout, scale, massing, appearance and impact on heritage assets

Demolition

7.2.1 The parts of shopping centre proposed to be demolished under both applications, as described in the introduction section of this report above, are not considered to be of any special architectural or historic merit to warrant retention. The proposed elements of demolition of both applications could therefore be supported, subject to the proposed replacement buildings being considered appropriate. The appropriateness of the proposed buildings for both applications will be discussed below.

Policy CR10 (Tall Buildings)

7.2.2 Both the YHP1 and YHP2 proposals incorporate buildings which, in accordance with Policy CR10 are classified as being 'tall buildings'. The Local Plan defines tall buildings as being those of 10 storeys of commercial floorspace or 12 storeys of residential floorspace (equating to 36 metres tall) or above. A single taller building of 21 storeys is proposed as part of the YHP1 development whilst the YHP2 proposals include two tall buildings of 16 and 13 storeys. Policy CR10 is clear that within the Borough tall buildings will only be appropriate within defined 'areas of potential for tall buildings' which are three areas within the town centre referred to as the Station Area Cluster, Western Grouping and Eastern Grouping. Neither the YHP1 nor YHP2 application sites are located within the areas identified under Policy CR10 as having potential for tall buildings. As such, from a policy perspective both application sites are considered to be inappropriate locations for tall buildings within the Borough and in this respect are a further departure from the Local Plan. Therefore, it needs to be considered whether there are material considerations that would justify this departure from the Development Plan.

7.2.3 The supporting text to Policy CR10 sets out at paragraph 5.3.38 that the three areas identified as having potential for tall buildings are as a result of thorough analysis of the suitability of the areas for tall buildings in terms of a number of factors, including townscape character, historic context, local and strategic views, market demand, topography, accessibility and other issues. This analysis was undertaken as part of the production of the Reading Tall Building Strategy (RTBS) in 2008 and a related Update Note produced in 2018. Policy CR10 sets out a clear hierarchy between the three areas (or clusters) identified, with the Station Area Cluster being the primary location and having the most potential for high density tall buildings, and then two secondary clusters, referred to as the Western and Eastern Groupings, where the policy is clear that tall buildings should be subservient to and lower in height than the tallest buildings within the Station Area Cluster.

7.2.4 The RTBS sets out the process and assessment upon which the three areas identified as having potential for tall buildings under Policy CR10 were chosen (i.e. those of all the areas identified that were found to have the most potential to accommodate tall buildings). In doing so the RTBS does set out other areas identified as having some townscape capacity for tall buildings, albeit these are those areas which had certain constraints or potential for adverse impacts, which meant that they were not included as part of the three areas/groupings identified within Policy CR10 as ultimately having potential for tall buildings. One of the areas identified as having some capacity for tall buildings within the RTBS, but which is not included within Policy CR10 as an area ultimately being suitable

for tall buildings, is at The Oracle. The RTBS outlines that The Oracle site is considered to have low sensitivity to the inclusion of tall buildings given the existing large block size of the buildings on the site and presence of existing landmark structures (such as the spire feature on the Riverside car park roof). Accordingly, the RTBS concludes that the site has an overall moderate suitability as a location for tall buildings, noting the sensitivity of the adjacent St Mary's Butts/Castle Street Conservation Area and potential impact on the skyline above St Mary's Church, which is a Grade I Listed Building, hence it was not ultimately included within the areas with potential for tall buildings set out under Policy CR10. In assessing The Oracle site, the RTBS (at that time) also identified limiting issues of low market demand for tall buildings on the site and limited sustainable transport options for access to and from the site.

7.2.5 It is also worth noting that the ongoing Local Plan Update proposes to make some changes to Policy CR10 and its approach to tall buildings within the central area. The key change proposed is the introduction of additional areas outside of the three areas that are currently identified under the policy as having potential for tall buildings, referred to as 'areas of less suitability for tall buildings'. The draft updated policy sets out that within the newly identified 'areas of less suitability for tall buildings' tall buildings will not be suitable unless a clear case can be made that the current 'cluster/grouping' approach would not be undermined when all significant views are taken into account and that all of the other aspects of Policy CR10 are compiled with. The Oracle forms part of a wider area which includes land either side of the River Kennet as far west as Willow Street which is proposed as a new 'area of less suitability for tall buildings'. Nonetheless, and as discussed earlier in this report in relation to other aspect of the ongoing Local Plan Update, the early stage of the Update is such that at the time of writing this report only very limited weight can be given to the proposed changes to this Policy and the updated Local Plan in general. Therefore, the starting point for the assessment of the proposals is as outlined above and that both application sites are an inappropriate location for tall buildings within the borough and are a departure from the Local Plan.

7.2.6 Given the above position, the principle of both applications proposing tall buildings in this location has been subject to extensive discussions between officers and the applicant during consideration of the planning applications. This includes a series of design workshops held over summer 2023 which were led and managed by an independent design and masterplanning consultant. The applications are accompanied by a Reading Town Centre Skyline Study (RTCSS), Heritage and Townscape Visual Impact Assessment (HTVIA) and detailed Design and Access Statement (DAS) which sets out the applicant's rationale for proposing tall buildings in this location and which are, in part, informed by the independent review. Combined, these documents revisit and refresh much of the assessment within the RTBS based upon the current up to date context of the town centre and seek to both evidence and justify the suitability of the application sites to support tall buildings, given the policy conflict identified, and also seek to justify the proposals in their own right in terms of their overall design and appearance.

7.2.7 As per Policy CR10 and the RTBS the submitted RTCSS, HTVIA and DAS seek to justify the suitability of both application sites to support tall buildings considering townscape, skyline and visual impacts. Figure 14 below shows a map of the location of The Oracle in relation to the three areas of potential for tall buildings which are designated within Policy CR10. This shows that The Oracle (and in particular its easterly extent) has the closest and most direct relationship with the existing Eastern Grouping.

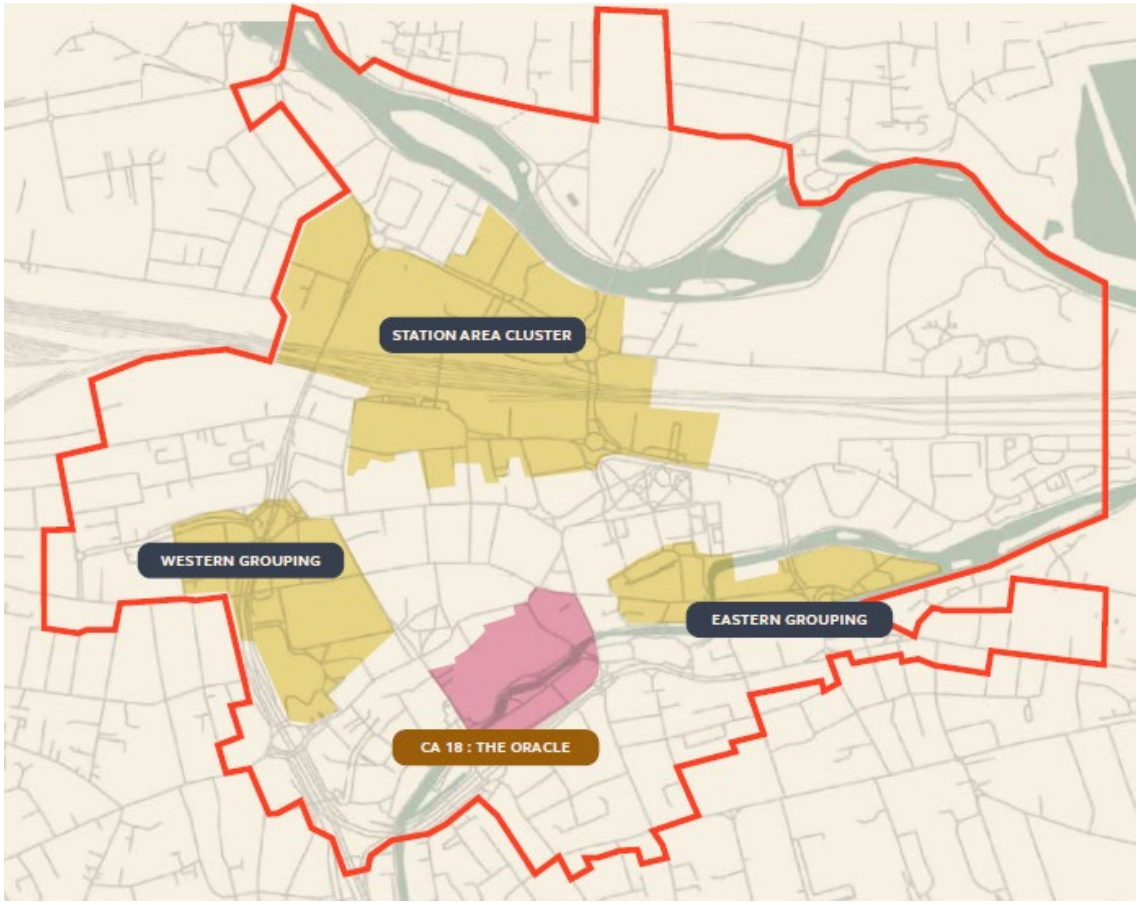


Figure 14 – Location of existing tall building clusters identified by Policy CR10 in relation to The Oracle

7.2.8 The Applicant has undertaken an up to date skyline analysis of the existing town centre and Figure 15 below shows this in a West to East direction and how The Oracle site sits between the existing Station Area Cluster and Eastern Grouping areas considered to have potential for tall buildings as defined under Policy CR10.

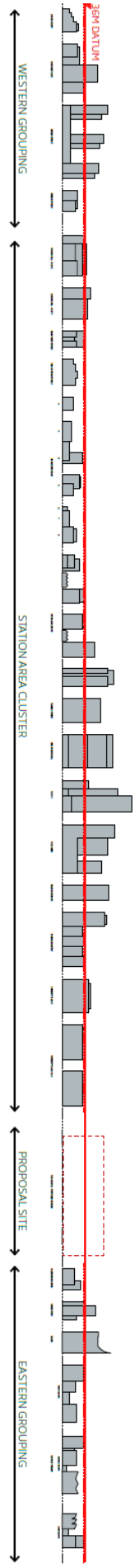


Figure 15 – Existing West to East Reading skyline analysis with tall buildings shown as those projecting above the red line and The Oracle site shown outlined in a red dotted box

7.2.9 Figure 16 below shows modelled existing views of the existing Reading skyline looking north and east across the town centre with the application sites position shown between the two vertical dotted lines. This and Figure 15 above incorporates all planned, approved and built tall buildings within Reading as of February 2024, the majority of those built did not exist when the RTBS was published in 2008, including The Blade and the replacement for Kings Point (now the Verto Building) within the Eastern Grouping and Thames Quarter and the currently under construction Station Hill development within the Station Cluster.



Figure 16 shows existing views of the Reading skyline looking both north and east across the town centre

7.2.10 The Applicant's up to date analysis of the town centre skyline concludes that, as per 2008 RTBS, the site still has a low sensitivity to and retains potential to accommodate tall buildings and that in skyline terms potential tall buildings at The Oracle, could- subject to appropriate heights and siting of buildings being proposed - be harmoniously seated between the existing Station Area Cluster and Eastern Grouping in terms of heights. This could effectively form a 4th or Southern Grouping area with potential for tall buildings at The Oracle. However, the applicant's assessment correctly identifies that the western portion of The Oracle towards Bridge Street lies within a Significant View with Heritage Interest as designated by Policy EN5 (Protection of Significant Views with Heritage Interest). The relevant View is that listed as view number 2 under Policy EN5 and relates to views northwards down Southampton Street from Whitley Street towards St. Giles Church (Grade II Listed), St Mary's Church (Grade I Listed) and Greyfriars Church (Grade I Listed). Figure 17 below shows the extent of the view in relation to The Oracle and the existing tall building groupings/cluster.

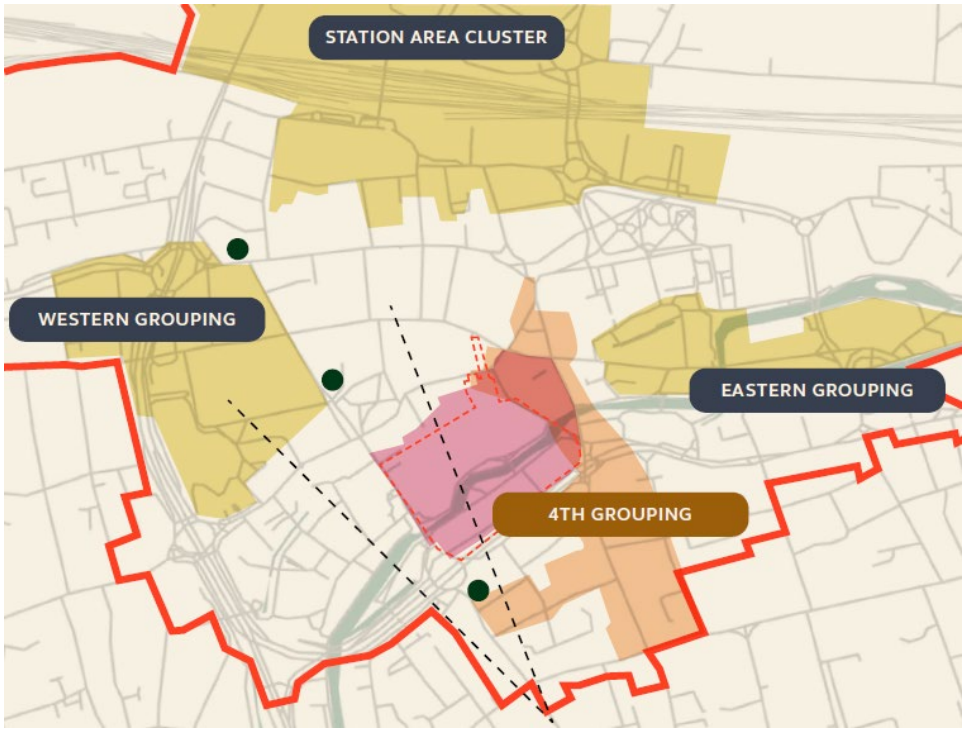


Figure17 - Showing extent of Significant View with Heritage Interest no.2 (black dotted lines) as defined by Policy EN5 which looks north along Southampton Street towards 3 listed churches in relation to The Oracle and the existing tall building groupings/cluster.

7.2.11 Policy EN5 requires that the identified significant views with heritage interest merit special protection and that new development should not harm and where possible should make a positive contribution to the views of acknowledged historical significance. As such it is considered the potential presence of tall buildings within the western part of The Oracle would be very likely to adversely impact and fail to protect the identified significant view with heritage interest and would not be appropriate. Within the submitted DAS the Applicant states that the extent of this significant view has been key in their consideration of where to propose additional massing within The Oracle, noting that both the proposed YHP1 and YHP2 developments are located on the eastern side of the shopping centre outside of the extent of the view. Whilst the appropriateness of the scale and massing of both proposed developments within their own context will be considered later in this report it is considered that in terms of the assessment of the potential of The Oracle to accommodate tall buildings then the western part of the shopping centre is less likely to be suitable given its potential to impact upon views of 2 of the 3 listed churches identified within the view under Policy H5. This reflects the themes of the 2008 RTBS which identify the sensitivity of the skyline above St Mary's Church to tall buildings.

7.2.12 In re-visiting the assessment of the suitability of The Oracle to accommodate tall buildings, the applicant also considers that the lack of market demand for tall buildings on

the site referenced in the RTBS (2008) and RTBS Update Note (2018) is no longer the case, as evidenced by the two planning applications under consideration as part in this report. The market reasoning behind applicant's proposals and need to diversify the site in order to anchor the existing core retail function of the site is also discussed in paragraphs 7.1.31 to 7.1.52 above. Furthermore, The Oracle, having opened in 1999 was still trading well when the RTBS was produced in 2008 so demonstration of market demand for tall buildings in such a recent new development was unsurprisingly not considered to be an opportunity at that time.

7.2.13 The other key shortfall of the site in being able to accommodate tall buildings identified within the RTBS was lack of sustainable transport options, particularly in terms of distance from Reading Station. The RTBS sets out that one of the principles considered when assessing whether a location was appropriate for tall buildings in terms of sustainable transport was whether it is within a 10 minute walk the railway station. Depending upon where you are within The Oracle complex, a walk to the station is likely to take just under or just over 10 minutes, with longer walking time from the YHP2 site on the south side of the Kennet. The sustainability of the site from a transport perspective is considered in more detail later in this report, but overall all officers' view is that the length of walk to the station is not likely to deter people from using trains, whilst the site is also well served in terms of proximity to bus routes and cycle routes. Overall, the location for these developments is considered suitable in terms of the Local Plan accessibility policy, CC6.

7.2.14 Your officers' view, which aligns with advice provided by the independent design and masterplanning consultant who led and managed the design workshops with the LPA and applicant in Summer 2023, is that the analysis and assessment work undertaken by the Applicant is an appropriate site-focused update and refresh of the assessment work within the RTBS in respect of the elements of that document that are relevant to The Oracle. Moreover, the independent consultant's advice is that the application and associated supporting documents present suitable evidence and justification to support the validity that both the YHP1 and YHP2 application sites have potential to be able to accommodate tall buildings.

7.2.15 Notwithstanding the above, it is considered pertinent to reiterate that the tall building proposals would still represent a departure from the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 due to the fundamental conflict with Policy CR10. Therefore, as discussed above, the proposals would still need to demonstrate significant justification and other benefits for such a departure from the adopted Local Plan. To contribute towards providing the necessary justification for such a departure, from t it is considered that the developments would need to demonstrate a high quality approach to the design and appearance of the development.

7.2.16 The next part of this report will assess whether the type of development proposed under both applications is appropriate, in respect of matters such as scale, siting and detailed architecture, whether or not the tall building elements of the proposals would integrate with the existing hierarchy of tall buildings within the Reading Central Area, impact of the proposals upon the significance and setting of nearby heritage assets and, more generally, whether the proposals are of suitable high quality design.

Scale, Layout and Appearance

7.2.17 The NPPF (February 2025) states that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development and is inextricably linked to good planning. In determining planning applications, local authorities should ensure developments are sympathetic to local character, including the surrounding built environment and landscape, whilst not preventing or discouraging appropriate change.

7.2.18 Local Plan Policy CC7 states that, *"all development must be of high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area".* Policy CR2's purpose is to secure appropriate relationships between buildings, spaces and frontages

within the centre of Reading. Policy CR3 requires proposals to make a positive contribution towards the quality of public realm in the central area of Reading.

7.2.19 Policy CR10 (Tall Buildings) also specifically details criteria against which the tall building elements of the proposals should be assessed against and states that tall building proposals will be of excellent design and architectural quality, and should:

- Enhance Reading's skyline, through a distinctive profile and careful design of the upper and middle sections of the building;
- Contribute to a human scale street environment, through paying careful attention to the lower section or base of the building, providing rich architectural detailing and reflecting their surroundings through the definition of any upper storey setback and reinforcing the articulation of the streetscape;
- Contribute to high-quality views from distance, views from middle-distance and local views;
- Take account of the context within which they sit, including the existing urban grain, streetscape and built form and local architectural style;
- Avoid bulky, over-dominant massing;
- Conserve and, where possible, enhance the setting of conservation areas and listed buildings;
- Use high quality materials and finishes;
- Create safe, pleasant and attractive spaces around them, and avoid detrimental impacts on the existing public realm;
- Consider innovative ways of providing green infrastructure, such as green walls, green roofs and roof gardens;
- Locate any car parking or vehicular servicing within or below the development;
- Maximise the levels of energy efficiency in order to offset the generally energy intensive nature of such buildings;
- Mitigate any wind speed or turbulence or overshadowing effects through design and siting;
- Ensure adequate levels of daylight and sunlight are able to reach buildings and spaces within the development;
- Avoid significant negative impacts on existing residential properties and the public realm in terms of outlook, privacy, daylight, sunlight, noise, light glare and night-time lighting;
- Provide managed public access to an upper floor observatory and to ground floors where appropriate, and ensure that arrangements for access within the building are incorporated in the design stage;
- Incorporate appropriate maintenance arrangements at the design stage.

7.2.21 The above Policy CR10 criteria, as well as the other policies set out above, are considered a sound structure against which to assess both the tall building and non-tall building elements of the proposals, given the onus on the development to demonstrate a such a high standard of design.

Tall Buildings Hierarchy

7.2.22 The maximum height of the proposed YHP1 development (the taller westernmost tower) would be 21 storeys/106.1m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD). The maximum height of the YHP2 Development is proposed to be 14 storeys/96.5m AOD.

7.2.23 The submitted RTCSS incorporates various sectional drawings of the Central Area which show how both proposals would integrate with the existing townscape, and in particular how the tall building elements of the proposals would relate to the existing defined groupings and cluster of tall buildings within the Central Area. The sectional drawings show the townscape in relation to the 36m datum (which is the height at which Policy CR10 defines a tall building). The townscape sections also include buildings which have planning permission (or a recommendation to grant from Planning Applications

Committee but where the decision has not yet been issued) and which have not been implemented. For, example as can be seen below, the sections show the development at Broad Street Mall (ref. PL/24/0173) which PAC Resolved to grant planning permission in April 2025 but for which the decision notice has yet to be issued at the time of writing. The RTCSS considers both the YHP1 and YHP2 proposals together and does not present these scheme individually.

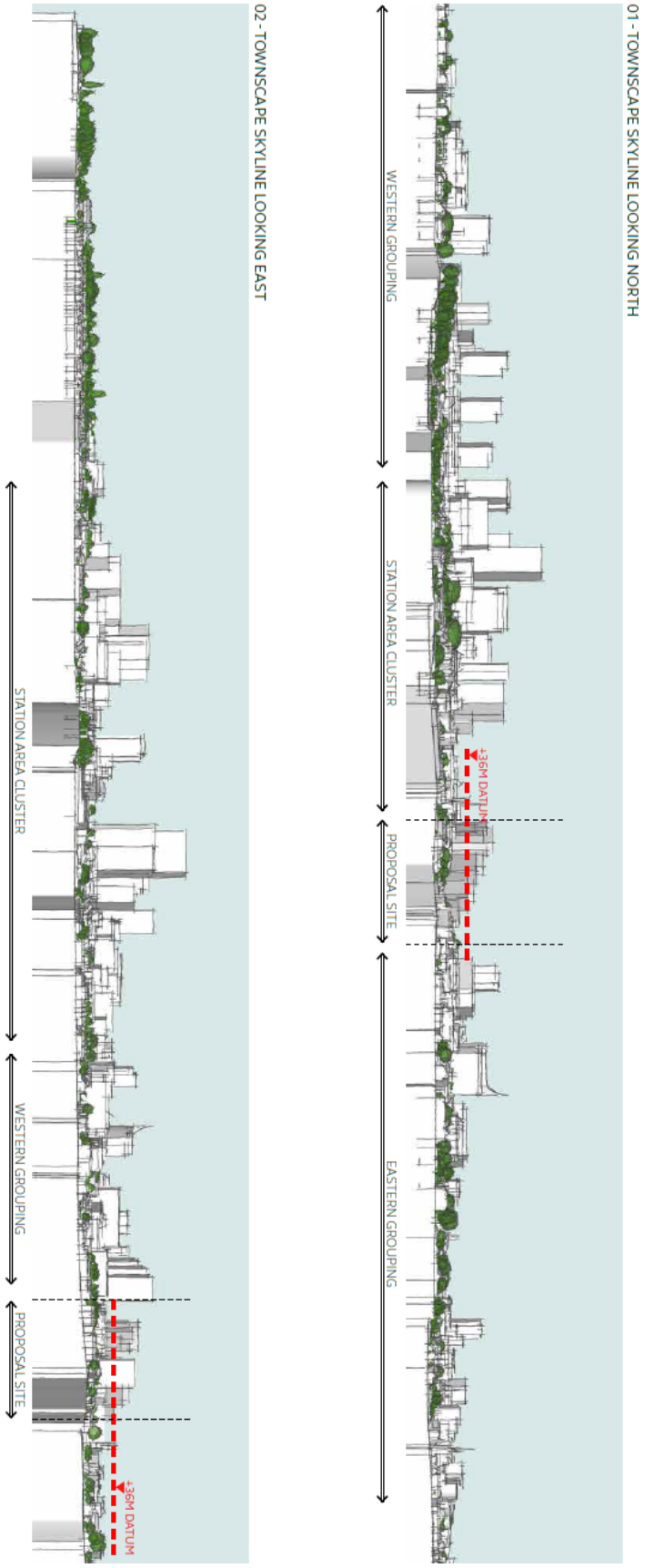


Figure 18 shows modelled proposed views of the Reading skyline looking both north and east across the town centre

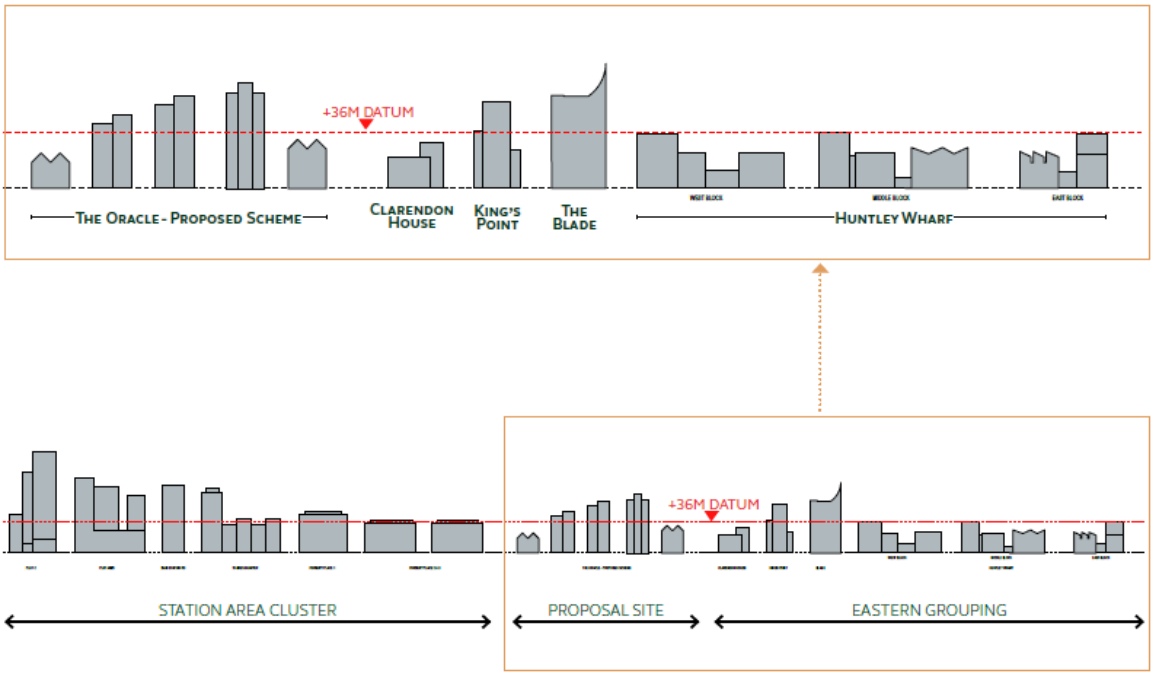


Figure 19 shows a more focused comparison of the other tall buildings groupings and cluster

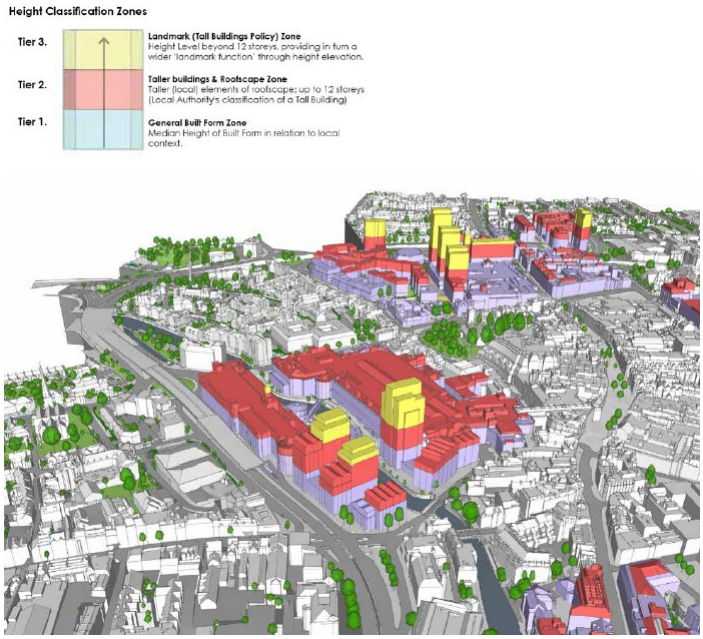


Figure 20 – shows the proposals in the foreground within the context of the Western Tall Building Grouping, which can be seen in the background, including the 3 proposed tall building towers at Broad Street Mall. Buildings which are part highlighted yellow are those which are more than 12 storeys or 36m in height and therefore defined as tall buildings

7.2.24 The townscape modelling and assessments within the submitted RTCSS have been independently reviewed by the design and masterplanning consultant who led the design workshops between the Applicant and the LPA in Summer 2023. His advice is that the modelling work undertaken and how it has been presented is accurate and of an appropriate standard to help inform the LPA's assessment of the principle of the development providing tall buildings in this location and the wider townscape impacts.

7.2.25 Following a review of the RTCSS, officers conclude that the approach to tall buildings at both application sites appears sound in terms of impact on the urban skyline. Notably the scale of tall buildings proposed is not considered to prejudice the Council's adopted approach to tall buildings within the Central Area as outlined within Policy CR10 and with the RTBS. This is because the proposals would not disrupt the defined hierarchy between the existing tall building grouping and cluster. Specifically, the tallest tower of the

proposals (Block A within the YHP1 application at 21 storeys and 106.1m AOD) would sit a lower height overall than the tallest buildings within each of the existing groupings and cluster. As can be seen in the skyline sections above (Figures 18, 19 and 20) the tall building heights proposed within both YHP1 and YHP2 would ensure, as required by Policy CR10 and the RTBS, that the tallest buildings remain within the Station Cluster and this cluster retains its primacy within the Central Area tall building hierarchy. The tallest building within the Station Cluster at Station Hill is significantly higher at 163m AOD. For further reference, Thames Quarter within the Station Cluster sits at 111.7m AOD and higher than the proposed tower element of YHP1. Thames Tower, also within the Station Cluster, sits at a similar AOD height to these application proposals at 103.5m AOD, however, Thames Tower is a contributory tall building to the cluster only and there remains the opportunity for a taller building at Station Hill which is eventually likely to be taller than One Station Hill (it has outline planning permission at the time of writing). The two tall buildings proposed within the YHP2 application site would sit at lower heights of 89.8m AOD (Block E) and 87.1m AOD (Block D).

7.2.26 The proposals are also not considered to compete, in townscape terms, with the defined Western Grouping. For reference the proposals would be subservient compared to the proposed tall buildings at Broad Street Mall where the Committee has Resolved to grant permission has been determined for approval by PAC, but the decision notice not yet issued. The tallest building within the Broad Street Mall development is proposed at 142m AOD, with the smaller towers being at 130.4m AOD and 106.3m AOD, meaning the tallest building within The Oracle proposals within YHP1 would be at a lower AOD than all four of the proposed towers proposed at Broad Street Mall. For further reference Chatham Place, also within the Western Grouping, sits just below the height of the proposed YHP1 tall building at 103.5m AOD.

7.2.27 The proposed tall buildings at The Oracle would share the closest relationship with the defined Eastern Grouping of tall buildings which consists of The Blade at 127m AOD (at its highest point) and the Verto Building at 94.1m AOD. This means that the tallest element of the proposals at YHP1 would sit between the heights of these two existing buildings but significantly below the height of The Blade. The two proposed tall buildings within YHP2 would both sit below the AOD height of the Verto Building.

7.2.28 As such the proposed tall building elements of both the YHP1 and YHP2 proposals are not considered to compete with or confuse the tall building hierarchy with the town. The tall building heights proposed, which would effectively form a new confined ‘South Grouping of tall buildings’ at the eastern end of The Oracle, would sit harmoniously alongside the existing Eastern and Western Groupings. If both developments were implemented then the proposed composition of heights of the tall building elements with the tallest tower (Block A) within YHP1 and then heights gradually stepping down to the two lower tall buildings (Blocks D and E) within YHP2 is considered to be sound and to present suitable variation in height between the individual tall building elements to add visual interest to the skyline and prevent visual coalescence with other buildings and the existing defined tall buildings groups and cluster.

Layout

7.2.29 The layout of The Oracle shopping centre already has a clearly defined structure with the two parts of the shopping centre either side of the river having active primary frontages facing onto the riverside. The riverside areas incorporate existing landscaping, including trees and a variety of street furniture which provide active public realm areas to both sides of the river. The riverside areas also provide pedestrian and cycle routes which connect the site to between Bridge Street to the west and Yield Hall Place to the east. At the eastern end of the shopping centre where both application sites are located, both sites present ‘back of house’ and service areas to the rear, non-riverside elevations i.e. to Yield Hall Place and the IDR.

7.2.30 Both the YHP1 and YHP2 applications would build on and respect this existing defined layout of the shopping centre . Both proposals would maintain the provision of glazed active frontage to the ground floor riverside elevations. The incorporation of new residential entrances in between commercial frontages to both the riverside elevations would create an appropriate balance between the different uses within the frontage and the introduction of the residential entrances would create additional activity and footfall to the frontages at differing times of the day. The existing buildings to this part of The Oracle present straight elevations to the riverside whereas both proposals would present a more varied riverside building line with projecting and recessed elements to the building frontages providing a layout with greater visual interest. This results in elements of each the YHP1 and YHP2 proposals which project closer to the river than existing but also elements which provide a greater set back from the river. Notwithstanding this, both proposals would continue to provide sufficient overall set back from the river to allow for retention of the existing riverside pedestrian and cycle routes. The proposed layout of both application proposals in relation to the river also allows for retention of all existing riverside trees as well as enhancements to riverside public realm areas by way of new tree planting and new soft and hard landscaping.

7.2.31 The proposed co-working unit to riverside frontage of YHP1 turns the corner onto Yield Hall Place to the north presenting a glazed frontage to this street as well, before this elevation turns to less ‘active’ further north along Yield Hall Place where servicing and back of house areas would be located, which reflects the existing layout of the site. The glazed active frontage to the commercial unit to YHP2 would also continue and turn the corner on to Yield Hall Place to the south maintaining street level activity not just along the riverside. Furthermore, unlike the existing layout, the YHP2 proposals would also provide public entrances/exits and glazed frontages to the IDR frontage of the building to the south in the form of secondary entrances to the cinema and YHP2 residential lobby, interspersed between less ‘active’ service and back of house parts of the south IDR elevation of the building. This is considered to be an enhancement over the existing layout to this part of the site which effectively turns its back on the IDR and presents an entirely non-active frontage with no public entrances or glazed frontages. This aspect of the layout of the development and activation it would bring to the IDR frontage of the site is considered to be a benefit of the YHP2 development.

7.2.32 As well as maintaining and enhancing the existing pedestrian and cycle movement corridors and public realm areas along the riverside, the proposed layout to both applications incorporates additional tree planting and soft and hard landscaping works to the existing north/south movement corridor along Yield Hall Place to the east seeking to provide greater activation and visual interest to this route which connects Broad Street and the Central Core of the Central Area to the north and London Street to the south over the IDR. The new double height entrance to the shopping centre from the riverside within the YHP1 proposals would provide an alternative entrance to the main shopping mall on the north side of the river and more direct link through the shopping centre to the entrance/exit of The Oracle on Broad Street.

7.2.33 Matters relating to public realm, transport, connectivity and landscaping will be discussed in more detail elsewhere in this report but in terms of layout, both the YHP1 and YHP2 applications are considered to adopt a suitable approach and to align with the broad requirements of Policy CR2 which seeks that proposals within the Central Area *‘build on and respect the existing grid layout structure of the central area, providing continuity and enclosure through appropriate relationships between buildings and spaces, and frontages that engage with the street at lower levels, and contributing towards enhanced ease of movement through and around the central area’.*

Scale, Massing and Appearance

7.2.34 As has already been discussed above it is considered a ‘tall building’ of the height proposed as part of the YHP1 development and two ‘tall buildings’ of the height proposed within the YHP2 development could be accommodated in this location without confusing

or unbalancing the defined tall building hierarchy and strategy for the Reading Central Area. Notwithstanding this, the proposed tall buildings, as well as the other buildings within both developments that are below the threshold height and are not considered 'tall buildings', need to be considered in terms of their individual and group massing and appearance how they present themselves in relation to each other and the surrounding area.

7.2.35 There is a clear approach to the hierarchy for the three 'tall buildings' within both YHP1 and YHP2 with the towers proposed to be sited to the western part of both application sites and sitting centrally within the wider shopping centre site. The towers step down in scale from the tallest building within YHP1 (21 storeys) to the lowest within YHP2 (13 storeys) from north to south forming a cluster of buildings at the centre of the site. The proposed central siting of the tower elements would result in an abrupt step in scale compared to the parts of the shopping centre outside of the application sites to the west that would be retained, which sit at 6 to 7 storeys adjoining YHP1 and the 8 to 9 storey equivalent car park adjacent to YHP2. However, this approach can be accepted given the lack of architectural individuality of The Oracle as a whole and as it would allow the tall building elements of both applications to be positioned away from the edges of both sites to the east, away from the lower rise buildings of greater architectural merit along Yield Hall Place and London Street, including a number of listed buildings. The proposed tall building within YHP1 is also sited fronting the river and positioned in front of (to the south of) the existing Holy Brook car park, 40m from the north boundary of the YHP1 application site, set away from the lower rise buildings of greater architectural merit along Minster Street. This can be seen on the proposed visual below with the tallest tower on the right visible with the roof of the Holy Brook car park in the background.



Figure 21 – Proposed visual looking west at The Oracle with Yield Hall Place in the foreground

7.2.36 The two tower elements within YHP2 (left) abut the southern edge of the application site with the IDR. Given the wide and busy nature of the IDR which provides a barrier and degree of physical separation with the lower scale built form on the opposite site of the IDR to the south and to the rear of London Street rationale for a building of the scale here can be understood to some extent. As can be seen in the visual in figure 21 above, the height of the two towers within YHP2 (to the left) would also step down gradually from the centre the southern edge of the site with the IDR meaning the upper 3 floors of each of the towers would be set in around 15m from the floors below at the southern edge of the buildings assisting with centralising the bulk of the massing and providing a slimer profile and verticality to the building 'crowns'.

7.2.37 The massing of each of the tower elements within both YHP1 and YHP2 utilises a ‘steps and shoulders’ approach to the upper floors with the towers narrowing towards the top to emphasise verticality and reduce the perception of bulk. Each of the towers also has a similar double height crown with the intention that they are read as a trio and cluster of tall buildings, but which are configured in a slightly different way to provide variation between them and visual interest from more distant views.

7.2.38 The proposed materiality of the each of the towers would relate closely to the existing materiality of The Oracle itself, given the towers’ central location within the site and direct relationship with the retained parts of the shopping centre to the west. As can be seen in the proposed visual below in figure 22, a mix of light brown buff brick and graphite-colour metal cladding, windows and balconies is proposed which reflects the core materials of the existing shopping centre buildings. Different configurations of the buff brick and grey metal cladding is used for the elevations of the towers to differentiate between and emphasise the stepped and shoulder elements and together with double height windows to the building crowns is considered to be successful at defining the towers verticality. Where the two tower elements of the YHP2 proposals step down to the IDR, the proposed materials change to introduce red brick elements to reflect the predominance of red brick to the buildings along this part of the IDR such as the Grosvenor Casino and Central Point. The proposed tower elements are considered to demonstrate a suitably high level of design.



Figure 22 - Proposed visual looking east along the section of the Kennet that passes through The Oracle

7.2.39 The non-tall building elements of the both the proposals are located at the eastern end of both the application sites. These parts of both developments form a more direct relationship with the lower scale and more traditional character of Yield Hall Place and also London Street to the south on the opposite side of the IDR, outside of the shopping centre site and most notably are themselves included within and form the western edge of the London Street/Market Place Conservation Area. Within YHP2 a building of 6 storeys is proposed at the far eastern end of the riverside frontage with this building also fronting Yield Hall Place and the IDR to the rear (south) and presents a significant step down in scale compared to the taller elements of the proposals fronting the IDR as can be seen in figure 23 below. The same general approach is adopted within YHP1 on the north side of the river but with a building of 9 storeys located at the far eastern end of the riverside frontage which wraps around onto Yield Hall Place to the north where it would step down to 8 storeys as can also be seen in the background in the visual in figure 23 below. The application explains that the slightly lower heights to non-tall building element

within YHP2 is proposed having regard to the more notable architectural merit of buildings along London Street to the south, including a number of listed buildings.



Figure 23 – IDR (south) elevation of the YHP2 proposals with the YHP1 proposals in the background

7.2.40 Given the different context of the eastern end of the site as well has heritage sensitivities a different approach to architecture and materials is proposed to these parts of the developments which rather than focusing on the appearance of The Oracle buildings, takes more of its cues from the historic industrial use of the land upon which The Oracle was built (see figure 24 below).



Figure 24 – showing design link with historic industrial use of the site

7.2.41 The proposals present these parts of the developments as wider and 'blockier' forms with a warehouse-style character and more uniform appearance. Variation and interest are provided at roof level via warehouse style undulating pitched roofs which assist in softening the massing. Red brick is the predominant material, taking cues from both the

historic industrial use of the site but also linking in with the red brick buildings found along Yield Hall Place, around the IDR junction and along London Street. The two upper storeys of these blocks and the pitched roofs would utilise graphite-coloured metal cladding whilst graphite-coloured metal windows are also proposed which reflect elements of the materiality of the three tall building towers and provide a visual link and degree of integration between these different parts of the developments. A suitably high level of design quality is considered to be demonstrated.

7.2.42 The proposals present a logical rationale behind the heights and architectural approach to the non-tall building elements of both the YHP1 and YHP2 proposals. In terms of design quality these aspects of both proposals would be a significant enhancement over the appearance of the existing parts of The Oracle to be demolished which are more utilitarian in appearance. The heights proposed with blocks of 6, 8 and 9 storeys can also be understood given the existing 6 to 7 storey height of The Oracle along Yield Hall Place and given that the proposals would present a transition between the much taller tower elements of both proposals located more centrally within the shopping centre site and lower scale of buildings along Yield Hall Place to the east and London Street to the south where heights predominantly sit between 2 and 4 storeys. Figure 25 below shows a visual perspective of both the YHP1 and YHP2 proposals with Yield Hall Place in the foreground. The implications of the proposals in terms of heritage sensitivities will be considered in the next section of this report.



Figure 25 – Proposed visual of both YHP1 and YHP2 proposals showing the Yield Hall Place elevations

7.2.43 Both the YHP1 and YHP2 proposals also demonstrate attention to detail and high quality design in relation to how they present themselves to street level at a human scale. In this respect, the tall buildings are grounded to the riverside elevations with the base defined by a double height pronounced façade framing the shopfronts and providing a consistent appearance. Buff/red brick and graphite-coloured metal cladding and window/shop front frames are proposed, integrating with the upper floors. This together with the crown and middle section of the buildings provides a well-defined bottom, middle and top to the tower elements. Shopfronts to the non-riverside elevations and non-tall building elements of both applications appear similarly grounded but given their lower scale, do not incorporate the double height façade which provided variations to the street level shopfront finishes. All shopfronts incorporate well portioned and consistent layout of pilasters, stall risers and window bar detailing in keeping with the principles outlined with the adopted Shopfronts Design SPD. All shopfronts ‘turn the corner’ as can be seen on the visuals in figure 26 below such that they do not present blank facades to corner projections.



Figure 26 – Proposed YHP2 shopfronts

7.2.44 The visual below in figure 27 also shows the proposed YHP2 shopfront and entrances to the south elevation fronting the IDR providing welcome visual interest and activation to this elevation at street level.

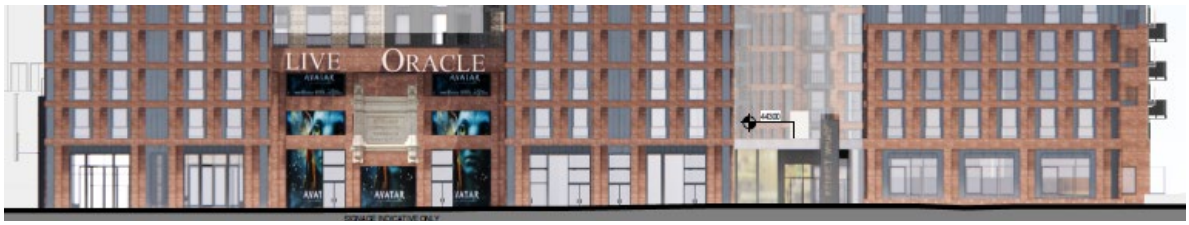


Figure 27 – Proposed YHP2 south (IDR) elevation shopfronts

7.2.45 Particular visual interest is provided within the YHP1 proposals via the new proposed double height entrance to the shopping centre forms parts of a larger glazed linking element connecting the existing parts of the shopping centre with the new proposed extensions. This can be seen in the visual in figure 28 below.


Figure 28 – Proposed YHP1 riverside shopfronts showing new shopping centre entrance and glazed linking extension

7.2.46 First or second floor level recessed podium areas (see figure 29 below) are proposed above the glazed linking elements between and connecting the tall building and non-tall elements for both applications providing elevated landscaped amenity spaces overlooking the river. These spaces assist in breaking up the masing of the different elements of the buildings from street level and their recessed nature also allows for

outdoor seating areas to be provided to the riverside ground floor commercial units further added to street level visual interest.

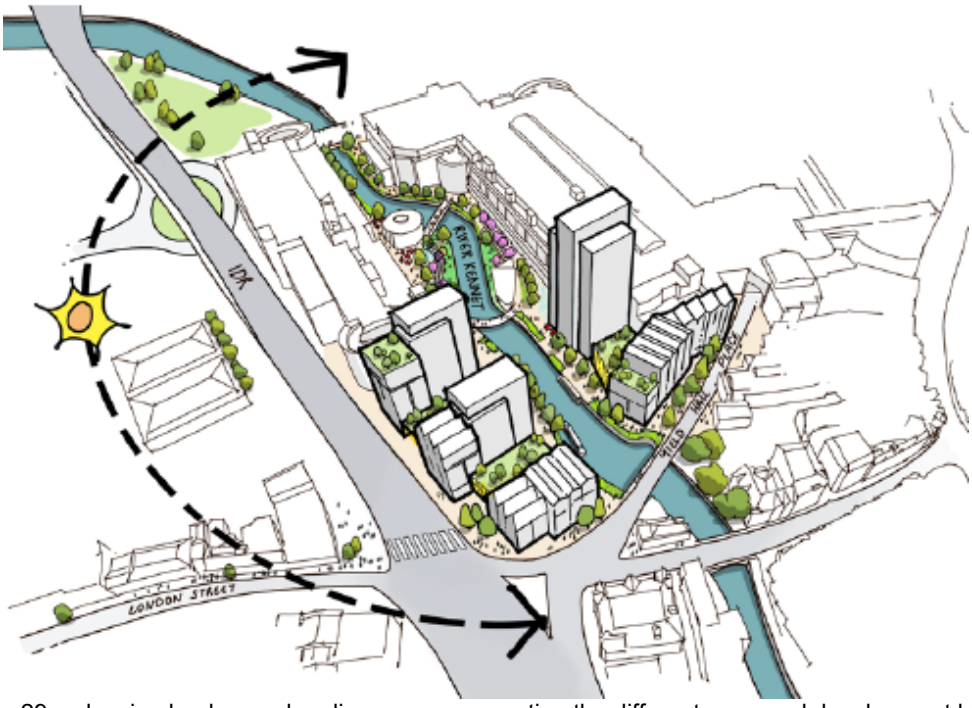


Figure 29 – showing landscaped podium areas connecting the different proposed development blocks

Views, Townscape Character and Heritage Impacts

7.2.47 To fully understand the impact of the proposals upon the surrounding area as well as medium and longer range views and heritage impacts the applications are accompanied by a Built Heritage, Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment (HTVIA) which forms part of the Environmental Statement. As discussed above the HTVIA considers both applications together as one, as if they were a single proposed development and does not clearly distinguish between the visual or heritage impacts of the YHP1 or YHP2 proposals in isolation. This is considered to be a shortfall of both application submissions which should fully consider each proposal as a standalone development to account for the eventuality that just one of the developments is implemented.

7.2.48 In terms of medium and longer-range views, the submitted HTIVA considers those key views identified into and out of the Reading Central Area that are identified with the RTBS Update Note (2025) as having potential to be impacted by the development of tall buildings. The HTVIA concludes that the proposed developments would have a neutral impact upon longer range views identified with the RTBS Update Note (2025) as having high sensitivity to tall buildings a such as those towards the Central Area from Mapledurham to the north west, Dunsden Green to the north east and Balmore Park to the north. Officers agree with this conclusion and consider that neither development would significantly nor negatively impact upon these distant views.

7.2.49 Given the scale of the proposed buildings, there is greater visibility of the proposals within a number of more medium range views identified within the RTBS Update Note (2025). The HTVIA shows that the tall building elements of both proposals would be visible looking east from the footbridge of the A329 near Coley Place. The RTBS Update Note (2025) identifies this view as having medium sensitivity to the addition of tall buildings noting a varied roofline and presence of a number of existing tall buildings, including The Blade and the Verto building within the view as well as the prominence of the St Giles Church spire within the view, with the RTBS Updated Note (2025) concluding that introduction of further variety to the roof line within the view would not likely have an adverse effect. The HTVIA identifies that the proposals would have a beneficial impact to this view, as a result of the high quality architecture and wayfinding. As can be seen in

figure 30 below the tall building elements of both proposals would be readily visible to the roofline from this viewpoint but would not interfere with the views of the existing tall buildings or of the St Giles Church spire. Officers do not identify any significant negative impacts upon this view.



Figure 1.10: Representative Viewpoint 4 - Existing



Figure 1.11: Representative Viewpoint 4 – Proposed and Cumulative

Figure 30 – Existing and proposed view looking east from the footbridge over the A329 near Coley Place

7.2.50 The proposals would also be visible from other medium range views such as from the raised vantage points at the junction of Castle Hill, Tilehurst Road and Coley Avenue looking eastwards and from the junction of Southampton Street (A327) and Waldeck Street looking northwards. Both views are identified has have low sensitivity to the tall buildings with the RTBS Updated Note (2025) and considering the verified views provided to accompany the HTVIA Officers views is that the proposals would sit appropriately within the existing skyline from these view points and would not result in a detrimental impact. The proposed view from the junction of Castle Hill, Tilehurst Road and Coley Avenue is shown in figure 31 below where the YHP1 tower would site centrally with the viewpoint.



Figure 31 – Proposed view looking east from the junction of Castle Hill, Tilehurst Road and Coley Avenue

7.2.51 In terms of more localised views, the principal areas where both the YHP1 and YHP2 proposals would be visible include the main roads running past the application sites boundaries, notably the IDR (Queens Road) and London Street to the south, Yield Hall Place to the east, vantage points from a number of streets and public realm / open spaces within the local area of the Site (including the riverside area of The Oracle development), river crossings and also the riverside / canal side walkways (including High Bridge, Bridge Street Bridge and others over the River Kennet). Albeit the established street pattern / orientation, density of built development in the close vicinity of the site, all serve to limit or otherwise control the number and extent of direct local views.

7.2.52 The RTBS identifies different townscape character areas and key local views with the Central Area. The submitted HTVIA considers the impact of the proposals upon any impacted key local views and also identifies other views within the Central Area where the proposals would be visible from and harmful in the context of the different defined townscape character areas. The townscape areas provide a useful tool for consideration of the visual impact of the proposals within the Central Area, which given the scale of the proposals means impacts are experienced from a variety of locations.

7.2.53 The Oracle itself forms a defined character area (Character Area 18 with the RTBS) and includes the shopping centre and other buildings between Broad Street, Mill Lane, Bridge Street and Duke Street. The shopping centre buildings dominate this character area which as described above are unexceptional in terms of appearance and present heights of between 3 and 9 storeys. Both the YHP1 and YHP2 proposals would fundamentally alter the appearance of The Oracle townscape character area, mainly through the sale of buildings proposed which would present an abrupt juxtaposition with the scale of existing and surrounding buildings (See figures 32 and 33 below). Given the significant scale of the proposals direct visual impacts from within the character area in terms of the height of the buildings are limited given views are largely experienced from street and river level where the height of the buildings would not be directly perceived. However, the architectural quality and design of the buildings to the lower floors is likely to be experienced and together with the wider public realm works proposed is considered that both the YHP1 and YHP2 proposals would result in an improvement to the street and particularly riverside level experience within the immediate surrounding areas.



Figure 32 – The Oracle townscape character area as existing



Figure 33 – The Oracle townscape character area visual showing YHP1 and YHP2 proposals

7.2.54 However, direct views of both proposals where scale would be experienced are identified from the west looking east from Bridge Street bridge directly in-front of the western part of The Oracle as shown in figure 34 below. This scale of both proposals here adds more defined framing to the river but presents an abrupt juxtaposition between the lower scale of the retained parts of the shopping centre. Officers consider this existing view to be of limited character given the low-quality architecture to the existing shopping centre in the foreground and limited visual interest to the background of the view. Whilst an abrupt change in scale, officers attribute value to the greater visual interest of the design to the tall building elements as well as to the set back of the proposals behind the retained elements of the shopping centre such that no negative impacts to this direct local view are identified.



Figure 1.12: Representative Viewpoint 6 – Existing

Figure 1.13: Representative Viewpoint 6 – Proposed and Cumulative

Figure 34 – Existing and proposed view looking east from Bridge Street

7.2.55 Local views of the YHP2 proposals would also be possible from the immediate south west of The Oracle at the Southampton Street IDR roundabout at the south west edge of The Oracle character area (see figure 35 below). Views from here towards The Oracle are seen within the context of the IDR ramp which dominates the foreground and Premier Inn hotel building on the south east side of the roundabout such that no negative impact upon this view is identified.



Figure 1.14: Representative Viewpoint 7 - Existing



Figure 1.15: Representative Viewpoint 7 – Proposed and Cumulative

Figure 35 – Existing and proposed view looking north east from the Southampton Street/IDR junction

7.2.56 The visual impact of the proposals in terms of scale and height, particularly the YHP2 proposals, would most prominently be experienced from the wide carriage and footway areas of the IDR and Mill Lane which form the southern boundary of the character area. This view is not considered with the applicant's HTVIA, but it is clear to officers that from here looking east and west past the application site would present direct views of the 16, 13 and 6 storey blocks E, D and C proposed within YHP2. This existing view is shown in Figure 36 below. Notwithstanding the welcome activation of the IDR at street level and greater quality of architecture of the YHP2 proposals compared to the existing shopping centre buildings it is considered that the 16 and 13 storey elements would present imposing and dominant forms which would be significantly out of keeping with the scale of other buildings along this part of the IDR.



Figure 36 – View looking east along Mill Lane part The Oracle

7.2.57 The applicant's HTVIA concludes a minor to moderate beneficial impact in terms of townscape impact within The Oracle character area and immediate areas surrounding the site. Officers do not disagree within this in respect of the YHP1 proposals given the street and riverside level enhancements proposed but do not concur with this conclusion in respect of the YHP2 proposals. Whilst the limited existing townscape merit of this part of the Central Area outlined with the RTBS is acknowledged, officers cannot identify strong justification for buildings of the scale proposed in this location. It is considered that the scale of the YHP2 proposals here would be out of keeping with the local context and would fail to reinforce the character and distinctiveness of this part of the Central Area when viewed from the street level areas directly to the south of the YHP2 site. In this respect officers identify a harmful townscape impact.

7.2.58 To the east the YHP1 and YHP2 proposals would affect one key view identified within the RTBS, which is View I) looking west along the River Kennet from High Bridge between Duke Street and London Street located within the Forbury South townscape character area (character area 21 within the RTBS). The RTBS sets out that the view along the Kennet is characterised by its framing by tall buildings with a large block size and has a low to medium sensitivity to the introduction of tall buildings. An existing view and proposed visual looking towards High Bridge is shown in figure 37 below, whilst figure 38 shows more distant proposed visuals looking westwards along the Kennet towards The Oracle.



Figure 1.2: Representative Viewpoint 1 – Existing



Figure 1.3: Representative Viewpoint 1 – Proposed and Cumulative

Figure 37 – Existing view and proposed visual looking west along the Kennet from Crane Warf towards High Bridge





Figure 38 – More distant proposed visuals looking westwards along the Kennet

7.2.59 As can be seen on the proposed visuals above, both the YHP1 and YHP2 proposals would add further framing either side of the Kennet to both closer and more distant local views in this location. It is not considered that the proposals would have a negative impact upon this key view and would add interest to the townscape alongside The Blade and Verto buildings which would be visible to longer views along the Kennet as shown in figure 38 above.

7.2.60 Direct views of both the YHP1 and YHP2 proposals from the south of the application site are considered to be more severe. Figure 39 below shows a view looking north towards the application site along London Street located within the London Street townscape character area (character area 20 of the RTBS). London Street is located within the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area and slopes down towards the IDR junction and the consistent 2-3 storey building heights present a gradual lowering in the roofscape and framing of this view. Buildings along London Street are nearly all either Grade II Listed Buildings or Buildings of Townscape Merit (located within the Conservation Area). The existing YHP2 site and cinema part of the shopping centre is visible at the north end of London Street, where the view terminates but its scale does not have a significant visual impact upon the key characteristics of this view and does not compete with the Listed Buildings.



Figure 1.18: Representative Viewpoint 9 - Existing



Figure 1.19: Representative Viewpoint – Proposed and Cumulative



Figure 1.20: Representative Viewpoint 10 - Existing



Figure 1.21: Representative Viewpoint 10 – Proposed and Cumulative

Figure 39 – Existing and proposed views looking north along London Street (top from the junction with South Street and bottom shows more distance view from the junction with Crown Street)

7.2.61 The proposed 16, 13 and 6 storey blocks (C, D and E) of the YHP2 proposals would be prominent at the at the terminus of the view, where their scale, in particular the two taller blocks, appear dominant looming over the 2 and 3 storey Grade II Listed Buildings and Buildings of Townscape Merit along London Street and interrupting the gradual lowering of the roofscape towards the junction with the IDR as the topography of London Street slopes downwards. Whilst the 21 storey YHP1 tower is not visible within either of the representative views shown in figure 39 above and the applicant has not provided any proposed visuals showing just the YHP1 proposals in isolation (nor any showing just the YHP2 proposals in isolation) officers conclude that the YHP1 tower would be visible from the same views but are obscured by the tower elements of YHP2 for the cumulative visual of both schemes shown in figure 39. The Applicant's HTVIA does not identify any different impacts between YHP1 and YHP2 and balances the adverse impacts upon London Street resulting from the scale of the proposals with the positive benefits of the tower elements which they state includes high quality architecture and wayfinding whilst they lessen the severity of the adverse impacts of scale given the indirect nature of the impact upon views. Officers' view is that the tower elements of both YHP1 and YHP2 would not integrate sympathetically with this view looking northwards along London Steet would appear dominant within and interrupt the consistent, small residential scale and architecture found within and around London Street as is identified with the RTBS. Officers find that the abrupt juxtaposition of the scale of the YHP1 and YHP2 tower elements within the views from London Street would be harmful in visual and townscape character terms.

7.2.62 There would also be views of the YHP1 tower element looking north from the south west of The Oracle from St Giles Close and Church Street also within this part of the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area (as shown in figure 39A below). From here the YHP1 tower would interrupt and loom in the background of the consistent scale of the buildings (predominantly 2 storey) experienced in northward views from this location. As a result, officers identify harm to townscape character and views from this part of the Central Area.



Figure 1.16: Representative Viewpoint 8 - Existing



Figure 1.17: Representative Viewpoint 8 – Proposed and Cumulative

Figure 39A – Existing and proposed view looking north from St Giles Close

7.2.63 The Market Place/London Street Conservation Area identifies features currently present within this part of the Conservation Area that have a negative impact on its historic character and appearance. This includes modern development at the north and south extremities of London Street, adjacent to road junctions which it states spoils the overall historic appearance of the area. It is considered that the introduction of both the YHP1 and YHP2 proposals would exacerbate this negative characteristic of the Conservation Area and further detract from its historic character and significance. Harm to the setting of the Grade II Listed Buildings and Buildings of Townscape Merit along both sides of London Street is also identified. The applicants HTVIA identifies less than substantial harm to a low level to the setting of no.s 33, 35, 37-39, 41, 49-53, 44-46, 48-52, 54-58, 62-66, 68, 70, 72, 74-76, 80, 86 & 88 which are all Grade II Listed Buildings as a result of the visual contrast in scale between the proposals and their visibility within views of the Listed Buildings looking north along London Street, impacting upon both the setting of both the individual and group significance of these Listed Buildings. However, for the reasons identified above, officers consider the harm to be at a moderate rather than low level in respect of the YHP2 proposals the more direct relationship of these proposals to London Street. Officers concur with the Applicant's HTVIA in respect of the impact of the YHP1 proposals and that this is at a low level. As shown in figure 39 above the visibility of the proposals extends to longer range views along London Street from the junction with Crown Street and officers also identify similar harm as a result of both proposals to the settings of no.s 69, 81, 89-93, 95-97, 99, 101, 103, 90, 92, 94, 104, 108, 110 & 114 London Street (all Grade II Listed Buildings), no.s 73 & 75, 77 & 79 London Street (all Grade II* Listed Buildings) and to no.s 43-75, 55-57, 60, 78, 82-84, 83-85, 87, 106 and 107 London Street which are identified as Buildings of Townscape Merit within the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area Appraisal.

7.2.64 The Market Place/London Street Conservation Area extends north across the IDR and to Duke Street. Prominent views of the both the tower and lower elements of both the YHP1 and YHP2 proposals would also be obtained here from High Bridge to the east looking As shown in figure 40 below the lower non-tall building elements of the proposals would not significantly exceed the scale and massing of the existing shopping centre buildings to be demolished but the tower elements would present a very significant step up in scale.



Figure 40 – Proposed visual looking west from High Bridge

7.2.65 The proposed tower elements are considered to be significantly out of scale with the prevailing scale of buildings either side of High Bridge. The view looking the other way (east) from High Bridge is shown below in Figure 41 which shows buildings which form the immediate character of this area are between 4 and 6 storeys.


Figure 41 – Existing view looking east from High Bridge

7.2.66 The scale of the proposed tower elements within both the YHP1 and YHP2 proposals would appear visually dominant from High Bridge and out of keeping with and harmful to the lower scale character of the area . Harm to the character of the Market Place / London Street Conservation Area is also identified from this location with the most affected views being from the two bridges over the Kennet identified as positive features of the Conservation Area within the Market Place / London Street Conservation Area Appraisal. The scale of the tower elements of both YHP1 and YHP2 would also appear dominant from here within the setting of High Bridge itself which is a Grade II Listed Building and a Scheduled Ancient Monument, as well as the setting of no. 2-4 London Street (the London Street Brasserie) as can be seen in Figure 41 above and also no. 1 London Street (the former Coroners Court building) as also can be seen in Figure 41 (the white building) all of which are also Grade II Listed Buildings. The Applicant's HTVIA identifies less than substantial harm at a low level to the setting of no. 2-4 London Street and a neutral impact upon High Bridge and no. 1 London Street. However, officers identify less than substantial harm to the setting of these Listed Buildings to a high level given the direct relationship with and scale of the YHP1 and YHP2 proposals.

7.2.67 Further views of the proposals and in particular the upper floors of the YHP1 tower element would also be experienced from further north within the Market Place / London

Street Conservation Area along Duke Street around the junction with King Street and Minster Street where this would rise above the scale of the surrounding buildings. This includes views within the setting of the George Hotel and Restaurant Grade II Listed Building at no. 10-12 King Street as indicated in figure 42 below. The Applicant's HTVIA refers to a Zone of Theoretical Visibility Study (ZTV) and concludes that the narrow street pattern to this part of the Central Area is such that there be very limited visibility from vantage point albeit no representative view has been provided. Officers' view is that the height and proximity of the YHP1 tower element is such that there would be visibility from this location and without evidence to demonstrate otherwise conclude that the YHP1 proposals would result in less than substantial harm to the setting of this Listed Building to a moderate level.



Figure 42 – Photograph looking south from the George Hotel and Restaurant at the junction of King Street and Minster Street.

7.2.68 The Market Place / London Street Conservation Area extends further north across King Street and into Market Place itself. From here views of the upper parts of the tower elements of both YHP1 and YHP2 would be visible from the wide triangular public open space area of Market Place.



Figure 43 - Existing view looking south from Market Place



Figure 44 – Proposed visual looking south from Market Place

7.2.69 This area forms part of the St Lawrence and Market Place townscape character area (character area 6 of the RTBS). The townscape character of this part of the Central Area reflects many of the characteristics of London Street with small scale buildings including clusters of Listed Buildings although but in many cases set around a number of small areas of open space such as Market Place and Town Hall Square rather than along a street pattern layout. As shown in figures 43 and 44 above, the upper floors of the proposed tower elements of the YHP1 and YHP2 would be present within views from Market Place looking south from near St Laurence Church, visible above the 3-6 storey building heights which surrounding Market Place. The tower elements present an abrupt juxtaposition with the consistent and lower scale of buildings present within Market Place and would appear prominent to views within and through the square looking south. The Applicant's HTVIA again identifies this abrupt juxtaposition of heights but off-sets any harm against their perceived benefits of architectural quality and wayfinding to a 'neutral' townscape character impact. Your officers' view is that the visual impact of the tower elements is significant such that a harmful townscape character impact is identified from within Market Place.

7.2.70 Officers also identify harm to this part of the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area. The RBC Conservation Area Appraisal highlights the positive contribution Market Place, as large public open space surrounded by a number of listed buildings, makes to the historic character and appearance of the Conservation Area. The proposals, namely by way of the scale of the three tower elements, would appear dominant within and impinge upon the setting of Market Place and loom in the background of a number of the Grade I and II Listed Buildings which surround the square which are: Church of St Laurence (Grade I Listed), no.s 23-26, 27-28, 29-31, 32, 33-14, 48-49, 50-51 & 52 Market Place and no. 10 High Street (Grade II Listed). Officers identify less than substantial harm to these Listed Buildings at a moderate level acknowledging the distant nature of the views within the context of the Central Area but also the significant scale of the proposals when compared to the Listed Buildings individually but also as groups and their group value as different groups of Listed Buildings of similar scale and appearance set around Market Place.

7.2.71 As discussed above both the YHP1 and YHP2 proposals would be highly visible from a number of locations within the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area. The Applicant's HTIVA concludes less than substantial harm to a low level upon the character and appearance of the conservation area primarily as a result of the scale of both proposals. However, for this reason and given the high level of visibility of the proposals from various parts of the conservation area and the abrupt juxtaposition in heights between the proposal and scale of buildings that make up the Conservation Area and its character, officers conclude that the proposals would result in less than substantial harm to the character and appearance of the conservation area but at a moderate level.

7.2.72 Both the YHP1 and YHP2 proposals would also have a visual impact to views from Queens Road within the Central Area to the south east of the application site. This part of the site is located within the Kings Road townscape character area (Character area 26 within the RTBS). This part of the Central Area is characterised by building of a medium to large size of buildings, including a number of more modern blocks of flats and offices. Scale of building range from 3 to 5 storey at the western end of Queens Road towards the junction with London Street and the YHP1 and YHP2 application sites increasing to 10 plus storeys further east towards the junction with Watlington Street. Figure 45 below shows the existing and visual of the proposed view looking west along Queens Road from outside no. 52 London Street.



Figure 1.22: Representative Viewpoint 11 - Existing



Figure 1.23: Representative Viewpoint – Proposed and Cumulative

Figure 45 – Existing and proposed view from looking west along Queens Road

7.2.73 As can be seen in figure 45 above the proposed tower elements of both YHP1 and YHP2 would be prominent in the background of views west along Queens Road. The Applicants HTVIA concludes a negligible impact upon townscape character of this part of the Central Area. Officers conclude that there would be an adverse impact to townscape character from this location given the significant scale of the YHP1 and YHP2 tower elements which would interrupt the relatively consistent heights looking towards the Central Core of the Central Area. The Applicant's HTVIA also concludes a neutral impact upon the setting of no.s 24-52 Queens Road, a crescent of Grade II Listed Buildings whose significance is derived from their group value and special architectural interest as continuous crescent of Bath stone town houses given the more distant nature of the relationship, as can be seen on the left in figure 45. However, your officers' view is that whilst there are larger and blockier buildings already within the setting of the crescent the scale of the proposed YHP1 and YHP2 tower elements is so significant that these appear prominent within and impinges upon views of the listed crescent when experienced looking west along Queens Road such that officers identify less than substantial harm to a low level to the setting of nos. 25-52 Queens Road.

7.2.74 Both the YHP1 and YHP2 proposals would also be visible from to views from the west and north west of the application site within the Central Area. Primarily views would be obtained from St Marys Butts and Minster Street looking eastwards where the upper floors of the tower elements of both YHP1 and YHP2 would be visible above the terrace of Grade II Listed Buildings at no.s of 7 to 15 Gun Street as shown from the Hosier Street junction with St. Mary's Butts in figure 46 below. The part of the Central Area from where the views would be obtained is located within the St. Mary's and Castle Street townscape character area (character area 17 of the RTBS). The character of this area is of low rise buildings retail and office buildings many of which are historic, the character area focus is around St. Mary's Butts and the Churchyard and tombs of St. Mary's Church which are Grade II Listed whilst the church itself is a Grade I Listed Building. The Church and the area around St Marys Butts and Gun Street also form the eastern end of the St Marys Butts/Castle Street Conservation Area. The presence and views of the Church and Churchyard as well as the traditional shop frontages to Gun Street are identified within the St Marys Butts/Castle Street Conservation Area Appraisal (2008) as features that contribute positively to the historic character and appearance of the conservation area. Features identified as contributing negatively to the historic character and appearance of

the conservation area include the visual dominance of Broad Street Mall to the north and the existing The Oracle shopping centre to the east behind Gun Street.



Figure 1.8: Representative Viewpoint 4 - Existing



Figure 1.9: Representative Viewpoint 4 – Proposed and Cumulative

Figure 46 – View looking east from the junction of Hosier Street and St Marys Butts showing St Marys Church

7.2.75 The applicant's HTVIA identifies that the proposals would result in less than substantial harm to the setting of the Grade I Listed St Marys Church and Grade II Listed Church Yard at a low level as a result of the visibility and presence of the proposed modern tower elements which would detract from the positive visual presence of the Church within this part of the conservation area but considers that the architectural quality of the tower elements and screening from the Gun Street buildings and mature trees to the Churchyard to all but the very top of the tower element assist in mitigating the level harm. For similar reasons the applicant's HTVIA also concludes that the proposals would not have neutral impact upon and sustain the historic character and appearance of the St Marys Butts/Castel Street Conservation Area. Officers conclude that harm to the setting of the Church, Church Yard and also no.s 7-15 Gun Street would more significant than stated by the applicant, given the scale of the tower elements which would dominate views eastwards and the setting of these buildings and as such conclude a moderate level of less than substantial harm. For similar reasons, officers also identify a moderate level of less than substantial harm to the setting of the St Marys Butts/Castle Street Conservation Area.

7.2.76 Sited just outside of the northern boundary of the St Marys Butts/Castle Street Conservation Area, Officers also identify harm to the setting of the Grade II Listed Telephone Exchange building at 41-45 Minster Street which sits directly south of The Oracle. The significance of this building is derived from its own architectural interest and as an example of historic civil infrastructure within visibility largely limited to direct views along Minster Street. The applicant's HTVIA identifies a neutral impact on this Listed Building identifying that their TZV study considers both the YHP1 and YHP2 proposals would not have visibility from within the buildings setting. However, proposed visuals or a view from this location to demonstrate that this would be the case have not been provided within the HTVIA. Given the YHP1 site sits directly adjacent to the southern edge of the existing shopping centre and the scale of the tower element proposed, officers have concern that the proposals would impact upon views of and the setting of the Listed Telephone Exchange, in particular looking south past the building along Earley Place (see figure 47 below). Officers identify this to be less than substantial harm at a low level.



Figure 47 – Photograph of Telephone Exchange building looking south along Earley Place

7.2.77 As discussed earlier in this report under paragraph 7.2.11 the proposed tower elements of both YHP1 and YHP2 would be visible to some longer range views of the Grade II Listed St Giles Church, in particular looking north downhill along Southampton Street. However, the proposals, located at the eastern end of the shopping centre site, would not interfere with or appear dominant in respect of the Church and its spire and would assimilate with the already varied roofscape and skyline of the Central Area. As such officers concur with the applicant's HTVIA in this respect and identify a neutral impact upon the setting of St Giles Church.

7.2.78 Overall, it is considered that the proposed architecture and appearance of both the YHP1 and YHP2 proposals, would at street level by way of the treatment of the lower floors of the buildings, in particular the shopfronts to the tower elements and warehouse-style architecture to the non-tower parts of the proposals present a significant enhancement over the existing street level visual experience around the shopping centre Yield Hall Place, the riverside frontage and the IDR.

7.2.79 The scale of the proposals, and particularly the tower elements to both YHP1 and YHP2 is such that they would be visible to a variety of locations within the Borough. Officers identify the longer and medium range views the proposals would not present any significant visual harm and that the architecture of the tower elements assists in assimilating the proposals within the Reading townscape and skyline.

7.2.80 Both of the application proposals are, as a result of their scale, considered to have significant impacts upon the appearance of the Central Area and views within it. However, officers can identify areas where both the YHP1 and YHP2 proposals, including tower elements and despite their scale, are considered to integrate adequately with the existing character and townscape. This primarily relates to views and character to the west and south west of both applications site such as from Bridge Street and from the IDR junction with Southampton Street junction, as well as views from the east looking along the Kennet from Crane Wharf and more distantly from the Verto building on Kings Road.

7.2.81 Officers also identify harmful townscape impacts of both the YHP1 and YHP2 proposals where the scale of the tower elements would fail to integrate with character and views within the Central Area. This includes to views and the character of areas to the south of the site from the IDR and Mill Lane and more significantly from London Street for the YHP2 proposals, as well as from more direct views from the Kennet to the east around High Bridge in relation to both the YHP1 and YHP2 proposals. Harmful impacts are also identified to the north of the site around Duke Street, Minster Street in relation to YHP1 and to the north east from Market Place as well as from the north west and views from the junction of St Marys Butts with Hosier Street and the area around the St Marys Church in relation to both the YHP1 and YHP2 proposals.

7.2.82 Considering advice from Historic England and the RBC Conservation Officer, which is summarised in paragraphs 5.4 and 5.21 of this report and who both object to the applications, officers also identify a range of harmful impact upon surrounding heritage assets. Notably Historic England conclude that the proposed tower elements of the applications would harm the historic setting of both the Market Place/London Street and St Marys Butts/Castle Street Conservation Areas through 'dominatingly tall and bulky buildings' whilst in addition to this, the RBC Conservation Officer also identifies resultant harm to the setting of a variety of listed buildings.

7.2.83 Officers conclude that the YHP1 and YHP2 proposals would both individually and cumulatively result in less than substantial harm at a high level to the setting of no. 2-4 London Street (London Street Brasserie), no.1 London Street (Grade II Listed Buildings and High Bridge (a Grade II Listed Building and Scheduled Ancient Monument) and less than substantial harm at a moderate level to the setting of St Laurence Church (Grade I Listed), no.s 23-26, 27-28, 29-31, 32, 33-14, 48-49, 50-51 & 52 Market Place, no. 10 High Street, no.s 7-15 Gun Street and to the character, appearance and setting of the St Marys Butts/Castle Street Conservation Area and the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area.

7.2.84 The YHP1 proposal is considered to result in less than substantial harm to a low level to the setting of no.s 33, 35, 37-39, 41, 49-53, 44-46, 48-52, 54-58, 62-66, 68, 69, 70, 72, 74-76, 80, 81, 86, 88, 89-93, 95-97, 99, 101, 103, 90, 92, 94, 104, 108 and 110 & 114 London Street (all Grade II Listed Buildings), no.s 73 & 75, 77 & 79 London Street (all Grade 2* Listed Buildings), no.s 43-75, 55-57, 60, 78, 82-84, 83-85, 87, 106 and 107 London Street all Buildings of Townscape Merit). The same buildings are considered to be impacted by the YHP2 proposals but to higher level and as such a moderate level of less than substantial harm is identified as a result of the YHP2 development. The cumulative impact of both the YHP1 and YHP2 proposals is considered to be less than substantial harm to a moderate level to the buildings identified.

7.2.85 Both the YHP1 and YHP2 proposals are considered to both individually and cumulatively result in less than substantial harm to a low level to the setting of St Marys Church (Grade I Listed Building) and Grade II Listed St Marys Churchyard and no.s 24-52 Queens Road. The YHP1 proposals are also considered to result in less than substantial harm at a low level to the setting of the Telephone Exchange building at 41-45 Minster Street and the George Hotel and Restaurant at 10-12 King Street (all Grade II Listed Buildings).

7.2.86 As per paragraphs 215 and 216 of the NPPF (December 2024) and Policy EN1 of the RBC Local Plan 2019 less than substantial harm to the significance of heritage assets and non-designated heritage assets (such as Buildings of Townscape Merit), including their setting, must be weighed against the public benefits of the proposals. This together with the harmful impacts upon the character and appearance of the parts of the Central Area identified and other harmful impacts of both proposals identified elsewhere within this report will be weighed against the public benefits of the proposals in the conclusion of this report.

3. Public Realm/Open Space/Leisure

7.3.1 Policy CR3 requires proposals to make a positive contribution towards the quality of the public realm in the central area of Reading. The Policy sets out that the contribution proposals make to the public realm will be assessed against criteria including provision of new public open space and improvements to existing public realm and imaginative use of open space and public realm, including provision of hard and soft landscaping. Where adjacent to watercourses, the policy requires that continuous public access along the watercourse is provided as well as provision of active functions and uses to areas adjacent to watercourses and that areas of public realm should conserve and enhance heritage assets in the Central Area, including their setting.

7.3.2 The existing shopping centre site is focused on the Kennet where pleasant and functional public realm areas are provided along the public routes either side of the river including hard and soft landscaping, tree planting, seating and public art and from where access to the existing ground floor shop units associated outdoor seating areas are provided. This produces a suitably attractive setting to the riverside areas within the shopping centre. Other public realm areas within the vicinity of both application sites are currently less well finished and appear more utilitarian, service orientated, dominated by hardstanding and feel very separate to and poorly integrated with the more pleasant riverside public realm areas. This includes Yield Hall Place which runs to the east of both YHP1 and YHP1 and the area around the IDR/Queens Road/London Street junction to the south of YHP2.

YHP1 Public Realm Proposals



Figure 48 – YHP1 Public Realm Strategy

7.3.3 A landscape and public realm strategy accompanies both applications. An overview of the public realm strategy for the YHP1 proposals is shown in figure 48 above. To the riverside frontage, the YHP1 public proposals retain focus on this area as a public pedestrian route connecting to Bridge Street and the rest to the shopping centre to the west and to Yield Hall Place to the east and continuous public access is provided. The greater set back of the proposed YHP1 buildings compared to the existing buildings here (see figures 49 and 50 below) allows for provision of more riverside public open space and creates variation in width of the riverside area compared to the linear nature of the existing YHP1 riverside space. This additional space facilitates provision of two small squares or arrival areas around the proposed new retail entrance and at the entrance to the proposed co-working space where an outdoor spill out seating area is also proposed. Creation of this addition space is considered to have benefits in terms of creating more usable space for both residents and visitors as a destination rather than a purely transitional riverside space. Traffic bollards to the east end of the riverside area where it adjoins Yield Hall Place would be re-provided as part of the proposed development.



Figure 49 – showing existing YHP1 riverside frontage layout

7.3.4 Along the YHP1 riverside the proposals facilitate retention of 6 existing trees (1 x young White Willow tree and 5 x Lime trees) which sit directly on the edge of the river channel whilst 4 new trees and a series of soft landscaped raised herbaceous planters are proposed around the arrival square and spill out outdoor seating area in-front of the co-working space unit. The riverside proposals also include variations in block paving pattern and bond which will change subtly to accentuate between areas to walk through and areas to dwell. The proposals allow for retention of existing riverside bollard lighting along the entirety of the YHP1 riverside frontage whilst overhead lighting is proposed to the co-working space outdoor seating spill out space. The riverside public realm proposal also includes provision of timber benches and tables along the frontage whilst a sculptural lighting feature is proposed in front of the new mall entrance which would also act as a wayfinding feature. Together with the high quality shop front designs discussed in paragraphs 7.2.43 to 7.2.46 of this report it is considered that the YHP1 proposals would provide an enhanced high quality riverside public realm area and pleasant environment for both future residential occupiers and visitors to the site and would a align with Policy EN11 (Waterspaces) in creating a high quality public realm area adjacent to the river Kennet.



Figure 50 – YHP1 Public Realm Masterplan

7.3.5 The YHP1 proposals include welcome changes to the public realm areas along Yield Hall Place, extending up to the junction with Minster Street. Here, as per the proposals to the riverside, variations in paving are proposed to help differentiate between more active areas, such as those to the eastern elevation of the co-working space and more functional service areas given servicing will remain a key function of Yield Hall Place. Existing lighting bollards would be retained along this route and new ones added. There is currently very limited soft landscaping to this part of Yield Hall Place with just 4 trees present. Whilst the proposed siting of the eastern elevation of the YHP1 building would necessitate removal of 2 of these existing trees (1 x young Himalayan Birch categorised as a C quality tree of poor quality and 1 x early mature London Plane tree categorised as a B quality tree of moderate quality) it is proposed to plant 21 trees along the northern part of Yield Hall Place as can be seen in figure 50 above. This includes a proposed 'Woodland Walk' which is an 18m long part of the pedestrian route along the west side of Yield Hall Place which is set between low raised planters, with multi-stem birch trees and understory planting (see figure 51 below). The Applicant explains that this area is intended to provide a feeling of landscape intimacy within what is otherwise an urban streetscape environment. Together with enhancing the visual experience of the public realm area the proposed tree planting would also assist in the development meeting its requirements in terms of combating the effects of climate change (Policy CC3 Adaptation to Climate Change) and meeting the aims of the RBC Tree Strategy (2021) and the paucity of canopy cover in Abbey Ward that the strategy identifies.

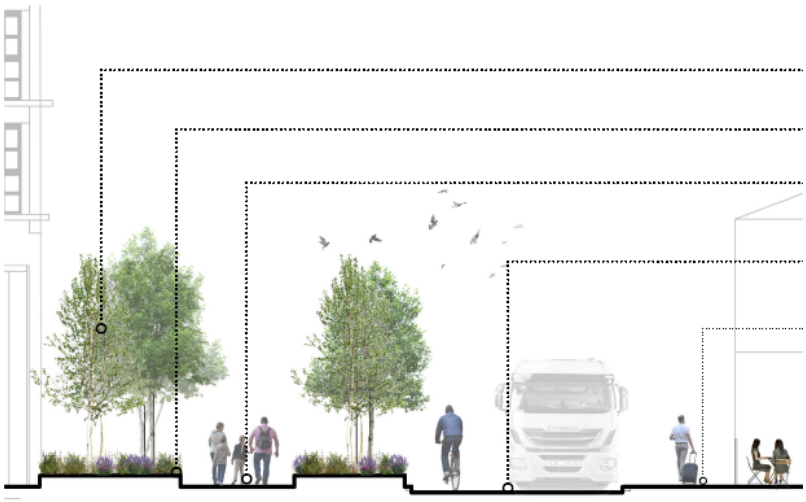


Figure 51 – Proposed YHP1 'Woodland Walk'

7.3.6 The YHP1 proposals also include an interactive light art installation to the roof of the underpass which connects Yield Hall Place to Minster Street which is to be retained as part of the proposed development. This public art, together with the lighting sculpture to the riverside area, is considered to provide additional visual interest to the public realm in accordance with Policy CR2 (Design in Central Reading) which supports provision of public art within developments. In addition, it is also proposed to replace the existing low gates at the entrance to Yield Hall Place from Minster Street with a line of bollards to provide greater permeability for cyclists and pedestrians compared to the existing situation. Figure 52 below shows the existing gate to be replaced and the underpass.

7.3.7 The proposed public realm works to Yield Hall Place are considered beneficial in terms of linking and integrating this area with the riverside public realm whereas currently Yield Hall Place feels separate and less well addressed in terms of hard and soft landscaping and street-furniture providing visual interest. This also assists in linking The Oracle with the Central Core of the Central Area to the north and improving and encouraging pedestrian and cycle permeability and connectivity to Minster Street and Kings Walk.





Figure 52 - Existing underpass at gate at the junction of Yield Hall Place and Minster Street

7.3.8 The proposals also include creation of a 180m2 riverside 'Pocket Park' area of public open space (see Figure 53 below) on the north bank of the river accessed from the eastern side of Yield Hall Place. The 'Pocket Park' includes terraced concrete seating overlooking the river, set around gravel surfacing two herbaceous planters. This land is under the ownership of the applicant and currently consists of a small area of amenity grass and two trees but aside from providing a welcome area of soft landscaping within the hardstanding dominated environs of Yield Hall Place does not have a clear purpose or use. The creation of the 'Pocket Park' would necessitate loss of 2 of 4 existing trees on this parcel of land (2 x mature White Willows – categorised as B quality trees of moderate quality) to facilitate provision of the terraced seating however the proposals include planting of a replacement tree within the park. The 'Pocket Park' is considered to be an inventive use of this space and positive addition to the public realm area around The Oracle and Yield Hall Place.

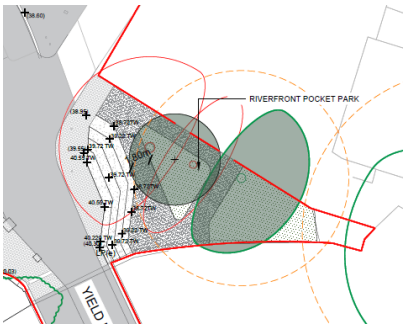





Figure 53 – Photograph of land to be used as 'Pocket Park', proposed layout of the 'Pocket Park' and proposed visual

7.3.9 As is the case with many high density developments within the Central Area there is often limited open space on site for residents, including space for provision of play facilities. The supporting text to Policy CC3 explains that increasingly new and improved town squares or similar public realm spaces such as this or creation of wider streets that can have multiple functions present the main opportunities for additional and improved open space in the Central Area, unlike traditional parks and open green spaces that are more common outside of the Central Area. Commonly open space provision within

developments within the Central Area is in the form of courtyards or roof terraces which are generally for residents only and not accessible to the public. This is the case for the YHP1 proposals where a series of roof level communal amenity terraces are proposed for residents only. These spaces, particularly that to 1st floor (podium level) are good sized and are proposed as high quality spaces that would be well served in terms of hard and soft landscaping, including seating and tables and ornamental tree planting as shown in figure 54 below.

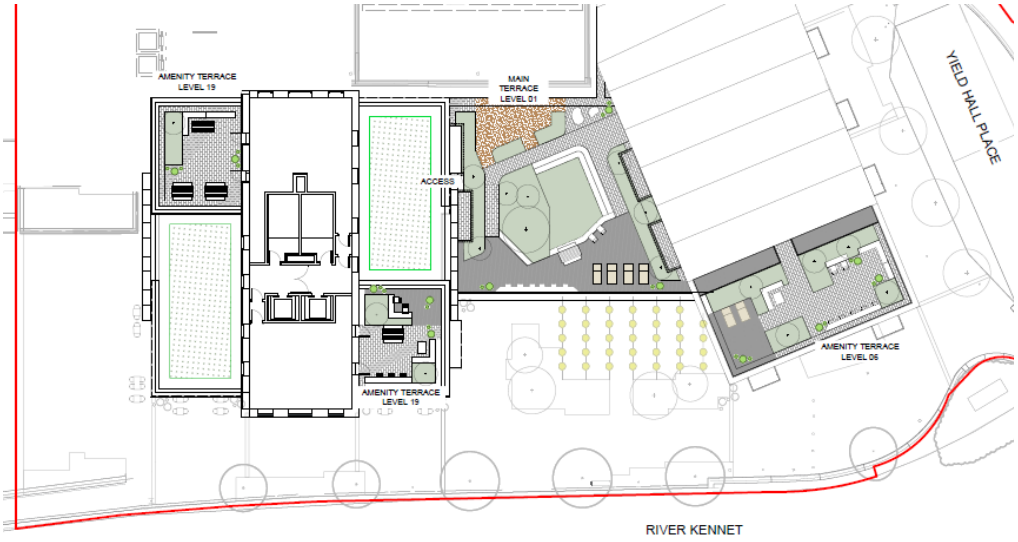


Figure 54 – Proposed YHP1 communal amenity roof terrace areas for residents located at 1st (podium level), 6th and 19th floors.

7.3.10 Policy EN9 (Provision of Open Space) is clear that public open space should be publicly accessible so whilst communal roof terrace spaces provide a good facility for residents their function is limited in terms of recreation, and the development is also expected to provide and contribute to publicly accessible open space. More specifically Policy EN9 requires that new development makes provision for appropriate open space based on the needs of the development, either through on or off-site provision, contributions or improvements to existing leisure and recreation facilities, and that for developments of the scale proposed (50+ dwellings) this should include new provision of open space and satisfactory provision of children's play areas and neighbourhood parks.

7.3.11 Whilst the works proposed to the riverside, Yield Hall Place and provision of the pocket park are considered to be enhancements to the public realm areas around the site and to contribute to the open space provision of the proposals, this work relates primarily to enhancements to existing public realm which serves the current commercial use of the site. With the proposed introduction of a significant residential use, additional public realm and open space provision beyond the small pocket park and slightly wider riverside public realm area is considered to be necessary to serve the needs of the development and proposed residential occupiers. Such wider open space provision or improvements is also required to mitigate for the failure of the YHP1 proposals to provide any children's play facilities, whilst the balcony strategy for the proposals also explains that due to prevailing westerly winds private balconies are primarily only provided for flats to the eastern elevation elevations of the development (see figure 55 below) which as per Policy H10 (Private and Communal Outdoor Space) heightens the importance of alternatives to the proposed private roof terraces for future occupiers in terms of access to open space. The significant visual impacts of the development, which as explained in the previous section of this report extend to other parts of the town centre rather than just those areas surrounding the application site, also exacerbates the need for more extensive and high quality public realm and open space provision to provide visual mitigation for these impacts and provide appropriate setting for the scale of the proposed development. Officers have negotiated with the developer to secure proposals for off-site public realm and open space mitigation which is discussed later in this report.



Figure 55 – Proposed YHP1 balcony strategy (highlighted yellow and orange)

YHP2 Public Realm Proposals



Figure 56 – YHP2 Public Realm Strategy

7.3.12 An overview of the YHP2 public realm proposals is shown on in figure 56 above. In relation to the on-site riverside public realm proposals a very similar approach to that for the YHP1 riverside is proposed with the development also presenting a more staggered frontage and building line to the riverside creating variation in the width of the riverside public realm and facilitating provision of additional public open space compared to the existing situation. As with the YHP1 proposals, this includes creation of arrival areas or mini squares of public open space, including outdoor seating areas with feature lighting, in front of the proposed entrances to the cinema and residential lobby. Similar variations in paving materials and pattern are proposed to signify the different functionality of the riverside public realm spaces. Creation of these additional spaces is again considered to have benefits in terms of creating more usable space for both residents and visitors as a destination rather than a purely transitional riverside spaces. Traffic bollards at the east end of the riverside space when it adjoins Yield Hall Place would be re-provided as part of the proposed development. The proposals facilitate continuous pedestrian and cycle access along the riverside frontage in accordance with Policies EN11, CR3 and TR4.



Figure 57 – Proposed YHP2 Public Realm Masterplan

7.3.13 Along the YHP2 riverside the proposals facilitate retention of all existing trees of which there are 5 (all early mature Lime trees) which sit directly on the edge of the river channel, whilst 4 new trees and a soft landscaped raised herbaceous planter is proposed around the arrival square in front of the entrance to the residential entrance lobby. The on-site public realm proposals also extend along Yield Hall Place to the south around the junction with London Street and Queens Road and then westwards along the south elevation of the building which fronts the IDR. Continuous pedestrian access would be retained along Yield Hall Place and the IDR frontages of the buildings. To Yield Hall Place, 2 existing trees (2 x early mature London Plane trees categorised as being B quality trees of moderate quality) are proposed to be removed due to their close proximity to the east elevation of the existing building, such that they would not survive its demolition nor construction of the proposed large building in this location (see figure 57 above). There are two further existing trees within the YHP2 site located on the corner of the Yield Hall Place and IDR junction (2 x early mature London Plan trees) both of which would be retained whilst 19 trees are proposed to be planted spread along the IDR frontage, Yield Hall Place and also to the highway crossing island at the junction of London Street and the IDR (Queens Road) (see figure 58 below).



Figure 58 – Photograph of highway crossing island at junction of London Street and the IDR (Queens Road) where soft and hard landscaping is proposed.

7.3.14 The footway areas along Yield Hall Place, the IDR (Queens Road) and the above mentioned traffic island also include provision of timber benches and tables, bollard lighting, a series of soft landscaped herbaceous planters and new tactile paving at highway crossing points. The proposed staggered footprint of the YHP2 building also facilities provision of a wider area of public realm than existing to the public footway at the corner of the IDR (Queens Road) and Yield Hall Place where a further small square/arrival space is proposed in front of the rear secondary entrance to residential lobby with timber benches and set around soft landscaped planters and new and existing trees (see

proposed visual in figure 59 below). Within this square/arrival space a 'play on the way' route within a larger planter set into the ground containing balancing logs/ boulders with bark play surface is proposed.



Figure 59 – Proposed visual of arrival space/small square public open space around the secondary entrance to the YHP2 residential lobby adjacent to the IDR (Queens Road)

7.3.15 The proposed YHP2 on-site public realm proposals are considered to be a benefit of the proposed development and would result in an improved street-level experience within the public areas around this part of The Oracle for both visitors and future occupiers. The significant increase in tree planting and soft landscaping would contribute to the proposals combating the effects of climate change in accordance with Policy CC3 (Adaptation to Climate Change) and meeting the aims of the RBC Tree Strategy (2021) and the paucity of canopy cover in Abbey Ward. Furthermore, the improvements to the public areas around the south elevation of the building fronting the IDR at around the junction with Yield Hall Place are particularly welcomed in terms of activation of this area and available open space which currently lacks visual interest and purpose in terms of wayfinding and in encouraging and enhancing the pedestrian and cycle permeability across the IDR from London Street to the south and Yield Hall Place to the north.

7.3.16 Whilst the on-site public realm proposals for the YHP2 site are welcomed and considered to be a benefit of the proposals, for the same reasons as discussed above in relation to YHP1, in accordance with Policy EN9 (Provision of Open Space) further open space provision/enhancement is considered to be required to serve the needs of the proposed development, particularly given the proposals to introduce a significance level of residential use to the site. As with the YHP1 proposals, residential occupiers of YHP2 would be served by a series of landscaped communal roof terraces (see figure 60 below) which would not be accessible to non-residents so are not considered to contribute to public open space provision of the development. Private balconies are also again limited to those flats to the eastern elevations only due to the prevailing wind conditions at the site heightening the importance of alternative forms of open space provision for future occupiers (see figure 55 above). Similar to the YHP1 proposals, the level and extent of visual impacts identified as a result of proposals also exacerbates the need for more extensive and high quality public realm and open space provision to provide visual mitigation for these impacts and provide appropriate setting for the scale of the proposed development. Officers have negotiated with the developer to secure proposals for off-site public realm and open space mitigation which is discussed below.

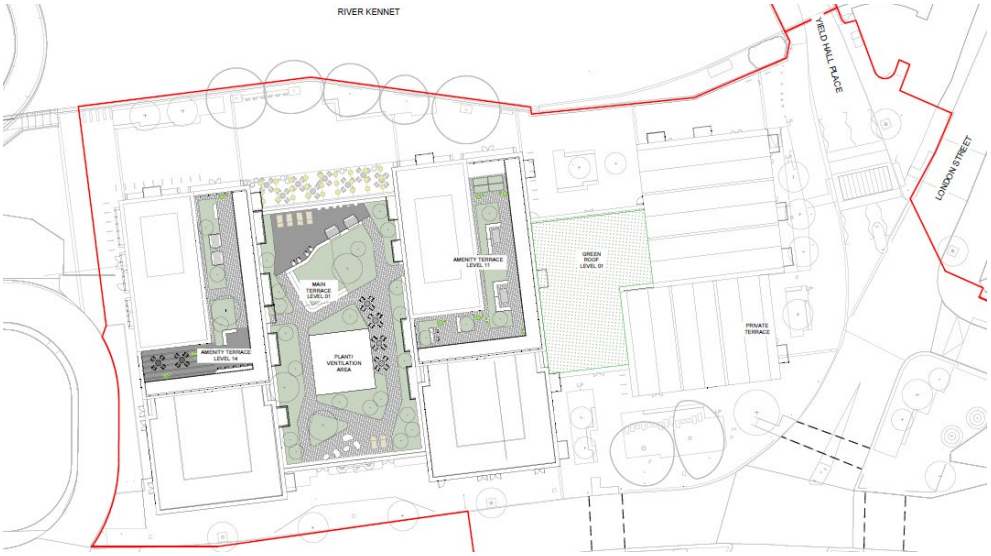
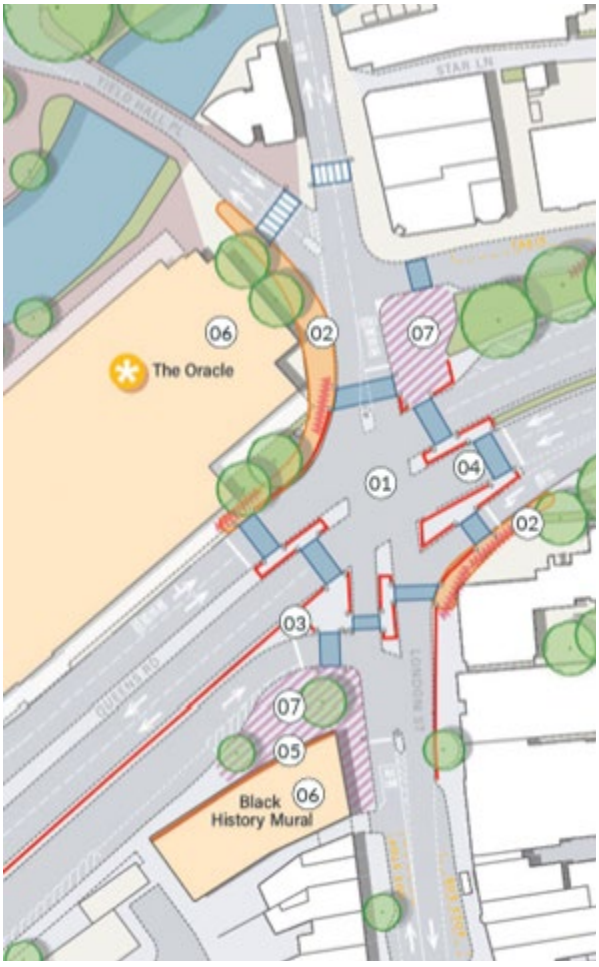


Figure 60 - Proposed YHP2 communal amenity roof terrace areas for residents located at 1st (podium level), 11h and 14th floors

Off-Site Public Realm/Open Space/Leisure Provision/Enhancements

7.3.17 As part of consideration of both planning applications officers have held discussions with the Applicant in terms of off-site public realm/open space/leisure provision or enhancements to serve the needs of the proposals and to provide necessary visual mitigation. Advice provided to the Applicant at pre-application stage was clear that very significant enhancement to public realm surrounding the site and beyond would be required to mitigate the impact of the scale of developments proposed. The existing public realm areas around the junctions of London Street and Yield Hall Place with the IDR (Queens Road) and at the crossing points over the IDR at these junctions were identified as significant poor quality areas of public realm where there is scope for significant improvement to be provided in a location that would directly relate in both visual and functional terms to The Oracle and both the YHP1 and YHP2 application sites. Notably this area is identified as part of the Central Area which would benefit from changes and improvements to its public realm within the draft Reading Town Centre Public Realm Strategy (RTCPRS) (2025), which identifies, amongst other issues, a cluttered and unpleasant pedestrian experience, particularly in crossing the IDR, a dominance of hardstanding and lack of celebration of the Black History Mural amongst others as key existing issues. Figure 61 below shows an extract from the draft RTCBS, and details existing issues identified around this junction. Whilst the RTCPRS is still in draft form it is still provides useful reference guide for future vision of the Central Area of which The Oracle forms a key part.



01 Generally hostile, unpleasant environment due to the junction scale, difficulty to navigate as a pedestrian or cyclist, clutter, vehicular speed and dominance

02 Narrow footpaths that result unpleasant for pedestrians, North-South link severed by the roadway

03 Aesthetically unpleasant handrails, clutter that impeeds natural pedestrian movement, innapropriate for a town centre

04 Multiple stage staggered crossings, low pedestrian comfort, long crossing distances forcing vulnerable pedestrians to cross in two goes

05 Lack of celebration of the Black History Mural and wider historic environment on London Street, very poor context

06 Unwelcoming environment for future developments both sides of Queens Road

07 Underused hard surfaced space, no purpose or structure

Figure 61 – Extract from draft Reading Town Centre Public Realm Strategy (2025)

7.3.18 The northern side of this junction falls within the red line application area of the YHP2 proposals and as discussed above, the on-site public scheme proposed incorporates works which seek to combat issues no. 02, 06 and 07 referred to in figure 61 above, through improvements to the footway and public realm along the Yield Hall Place and IDR (Queens Road) elevations of the building and proposed hard and soft landscaping improvements to the traffic crossing island at the junction of London Street and the IDR (issue 07 above). Officers held detailed discussions with the developer to try to ensure that the proposals could deliver works to address more of the issues referred to within the draft RTCPRS as shown in figure 61 above and in particular works of a more substantive nature to provide more fundamental changes to the junction and to the pedestrian address

and cyclist experience. Figure 62 below shows a further extract from the draft RTCPRS which outlines a potential future vision for the junction and proposals to address the issues outlined in figure 61 above. The vision for the junction within the draft RTCPRS shows proposed significant greening, wider footways, reductions to the number of carriageway lanes and simplified (more linear and less staggered) pedestrian crossings routes over the IDR (Queens Road).



01 Increase footpath width along the Oracle future redevelopment site to give more space to pedestrians

02 Carriageway reduced to one lane westbound on Queens road

03 Realign all pedestrian crossing to achieve 1 or 2 stages crossing points. Consider implementing sufficient green light time for vulnerable users to cross safely and comfortably.

04 Remove left turn lanes both sides of the junction, to reduce carriageway, increase footpaths width, give more space to pedestrians and public realm enhancement schemes, as well as shorten crossing distance.

05 Tighten existing lane to gain valuable public realm space in front of the Black History Mural, including interpretation, whilst retaining the parking spaces

06 Introduce green verges along pedestrian footpaths and in central medians

07 Introduce tree planting in central median and verges where distance to carriageway allows to do so

08 Create a positive 'apron' across the carriageway using a different surfacing to celebrate the gateway into the town centre, slow vehicles down and increase pedestrian comfort, Enhance National Cycle Route 4 as it crosses from Star Lane to the Oracle Riverside

09 Reduce carriageway width to one lane on the bridge to give more space to pedestrians at this key gateway to the town centre

Figure 62 - Extract from draft Reading Town Centre Public Realm Strategy (2025)

7.3.19 Disappointingly, having reviewed and costed a scheme for implementation the proposed vision for the junction within the draft RTCPRS the Applicant advised that the costs associated with this work were significant and would not have been deliverable within the financial viability of the scheme, a position verified by RBC Valuations Officers. The applicant's review of the proposed works to deliver the vision for the junction also concluded that delivering some parts of the work and not others also made little sense from a practical and implementation perspective given the significant disruption that would result to this busy junction and would also result in provision of significant works that would have to be re-done if, in future, other parts of the vision for the junction were to be brought forward. From Officers' perspective these conclusions are disappointing given the proximity of the junction to both application sites is considered to provide a clear justification for public realm enhancements in this location and that this position was made clear to the Applicant at pre-application stage.

7.3.20 Notwithstanding the above, a less extensive scheme of off-site public realm works to the junction is proposed as part of the YHP2 proposals to be secured as part of the s106 obligations for this application, as set out in the YHP2 application recommendation box at the top of this report. This includes provision of a new small, landscaped area of open space and public realm on Mill Lane in-front of the black history mural. The proposed scheme of works here includes retention of two existing trees and creation of additional space by realigning the kerb line of the Mill Lane footway to provide some low level herbaceous planters and timber benches looking towards the mural. The landscaping proposed would be low level to avoid obstructing views of the mural. In addition to this it is proposed that 5 fastigiate trees would be planted within the central reservation of the IDR (Queens Road) to the west of the London Street junction to provide some additional

greening to the junction and carriageway and that some of the crash barriers to the crossing islands over the IDR would be replaced with low level planters and new surfacing applied to the crossing islands. Removal of the crash barriers would be subject to full agreement with the Local Highway Authority.

7.3.21 Whilst the above off-site public realm works would provide some, albeit limited, improvements to the pedestrian experience around the IDR (Queens Road) and London Street junction in terms of softening from additional landscaping, this is considered to be insufficient in context of the scale of both proposed developments, introduction of significant residential use at the site and extent of harmful visual impacts identified.

7.3.22 In addition to the off-site works referred above and following discussion with the Applicant and the RBC Parks and Street Works Officer, a contribution of £1.2 million is proposed to be secured as part of the s106 obligations for both application towards wider public realm/open space/leisure works and enhancements. This includes a contribution of £500,000 towards works to existing underutilised green space on the riverside to the rear of the multi storey car park on Queens Road, directly to the east of The Oracle. This is also an area of the Central Area identified with the draft RTCPRS where the public realm is currently deficient and where there are opportunities to make improvements. The RTCPRS refers to poorly maintained green areas with no purpose or amenity value, overgrown vegetation and lack of rationale and coordination to pedestrian and cycle routes as some of the key issues around this existing area of open space. Similar to the area around the IDR (Queens Road) and London Street junction discussed above the draft RTCPRS includes a proposed vision and schematic proposal for enhancements to this area of the Central Area. This is shown in figure 63 below.



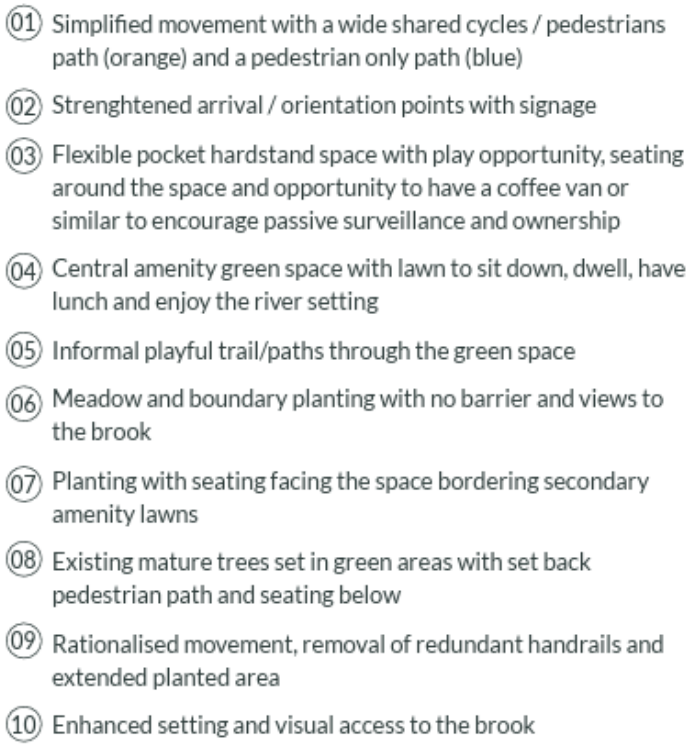


Figure 63 – Extract from the draft Reading Town Centre Public Realm Strategy (2025)

7.3.23 The proposed £500,000 contribution would be to secure a scheme of hard and soft landscaping to be carried out by RBC Parks and Street Works Officers to provide an amenity lawn area, including benches and tables, new directional signage and meadow and boundary planting, which refers to points 02, 04 and 06 from the draft RTCPRS as shown in figure 63 above. The proposed works to this area would provide an enhanced greening of public open space in a location that directly relates to The Oracle and both application sites, located a 3 minute walk away along the riverside in an accessible location for future occupiers of the development as well as for the general public. The extract of the draft RTSPRS shown in figure 63 under point 03 refers to opportunity for play provision within this area of open space. A proposal to contribute towards a new play facility in this location was also put forward by the Applicant however, following discussions with RBC Parks Officers their advice was that this location would not be suitable for a play area given its close proximity to the river and also given the limited available space which would mean very limited play equipment could be provided such that usability of the area would likely be very limited. As such, Officers have worked with RBC Parks Officer to identify an alternative nearby location to both application sites where the proposals could contribute towards enhanced play facilities. In this respect a contribution of £200,000 is proposed to be secured towards improvements to an existing RBC play area at St Giles Close, including replacement play equipment. St Giles play area is located under a 10 minute walk from both application sites and is the closest public play area to The Oracle for future residential occupiers.

7.3.24 In addition to the above and as a result of discussions with RBC Parks Officers, a further contribution of £500,000 is also proposed to be secured via s106 obligation towards improvements to the surfacing and layout of the cycle and pedestrian routes along the river between The Oracle and Waterloo Meadows which is the closest major recreationally equipped park and area of open space within the Borough to The Oracle and contains a children's play area, hard surfaced pitch, basketball court, playing field, seating and BMX track. There is a direct pedestrian (20 minute walk) and cycle route to Waterloo Meadows along the Kennet riverside, and the proposals would enhance access to this park for future occupiers of the YHP1 and YHP2 proposals and for the general public. Both the works to the area of open space to the rear of the Queens Road car park and to the riverside cycle and pedestrian pathways would also provide enhancement to the riverside in terms of function and appearance in accordance with Policy EN11 (Waterspaces).

7.3.25 The contributions discussed above are considered to present public realm/open space/leisure mitigation for the YHP1 and YHP2 proposals. The provision of the proposed enhanced public realm/open space/leisure facilities are considered necessary to mitigate for the impact of each application individually if one or the other came forward but would also be sufficient as to provide such appropriate mitigation for the eventuality that both developments were to be implemented. In this respect, as set out in the recommendation boxes for both applications at the top of this report, Officers are recommending that the s106 agreements for both applications would be worded such that these contributions are provided by whichever application is implemented first. The off-site scheme of works proposed to be carried out by the Applicant around the IDR (Queens Road) and London Street junction naturally relate more to the YHP2 proposals and in terms of delivery it is accepted that these works would be required to be delivered with the YHP2 proposals only. This would also prevent repeated major disruption to this busy junction and the eventuality that if the works came forward with the YHP1 proposals instead, then the public realm works could have to be undone to facilitate the construction of the YHP2 scheme or would at least be detrimentally impacted by construction of the YHP2 scheme. Given the YHP1 proposals - unlike those for YHP2 - include creation of the pocket park, Officers are satisfied that the balance and split of public realm/open space/leisure provision would be appropriate to mitigate the impacts of both developments individually but also cumulatively.

7.3.26 Officers conclude that the proposed on and off site public realm/open space/leisure provision and enhancements proposed as part of the YHP1 and YHP2 applications are extensive and would provide appropriate and high quality provision of such spaces that would directly relate to the scale of developments proposed in terms of their extent, nature and location. The public realm proposals would also align cumulatively and complement each other in terms of the relationship between the YHP1 and YHP2 proposals ensuring that the identified enhancements would not become redundant or diminished if both schemes were implemented. The public realm/open space/leisure proposals are considered to comply with Policies CR3 (Public Realm in Central Reading), EN9 (Provision of Open Space), EN11 (Waterspaces) and CC9 (Securing Infrastructure). Whether or not the extent of public realm and open space provision and enhancements proposed are sufficient to provide appropriate mitigation for the extent of the harmful visual impacts of both identified to result of both proposals, including to that to conservation areas and listed buildings within the Central Area, will be considered within the planning balance in the conclusion section of this report.

Design, Appearance and Public Realm Conclusions in respect of Policy CR10 (Tall Buildings)

7.3.27 In terms of compliance with the specific detailed requirements of Policy CR10 (Tall Buildings) referred to in paragraph 7.2.19 of this report officers find that both proposals fall short of satisfying a number of the criteria of this policy. Based upon the assessment above officers conclude that the proposals fail to satisfy the following criteria:

- *Contribute to high-quality views from distance, views from middle-distance and local views;*

  Whilst the YHP1 and YHP2 proposals, both individually and cumulatively, are considered to demonstrate that distant and middle distance views of the proposals would be high quality, the same cannot be said for local views from within the Central Area where a number of harmful impacts are identified, primarily as a result of the scale of the proposed tower elements.

- *Take account of the context within which they sit, including the existing urban grain, streetscape and built form and local architectural style;*

The YHP1 and YHP2 proposals, both individually and cumulatively, primarily as a result of their scale are not considered to sufficiently take account of the context within which they site.

- *Avoid bulky, over-dominant massing;*

  The YHP1 and YHP2 proposals, both individually and cumulatively, are considered to appear bulky, and to present over-dominant massing to views from a number of locations within the Central Area.

- *Conserve and, where possible, enhance the setting of conservation areas and listed buildings;*

  The YHP1 and YHP2 proposals, both individually and cumulatively, are considered to harm the setting of conservation areas and listed buildings within the Central Area.

7.3.28 Failure of both the proposals to comply with the above-mentioned parts of Policy CR10 will also be considered as part of the planning balance assessment for both applications in the Conclusion section of this report.

4. Unit Mix and Affordable Housing

7.4.1 Policy CR6 (Living in Central Reading) seeks as a guide that residential developments within the town centre area should incorporate a maximum of 40% of 1 bedroom units and a minimum of 5% of 3 bedroom units.

7.4.2 Of the 218 dwellings proposed within YHP1 there would be a mix of 111 x 1 bed units (51%), 96 x 2 bed units (44%) and 11 x 3 bed units (5%) and of the 218 dwellings proposed within YHP2 there would be 96 x 1 bed units (44%), 111 x 2 bed units (51%) and 11 x 3 bed units (5%).

7.4.3 The proposed residential unit mix for both application does not meet the guideline in Policy CR6 with both proposals presenting an over-provision of 1 bedroom units. Both proposals do satisfy the Policy CR6 guidance in terms of 3 bedroom units and provide the minimum 5% provision. The applicant's justification for overprovision of 1 bedroom units is that the type of accommodation proposed, being rental units located within the Central Area in close proximity to retail and leisure uses and the night time economy is such that they consider here would be greater demand for smaller units in this location rather than family units. However, the supporting text to Policy CR6 is clear under paragraph 5.3.23 *that developments within the Central Area should not be dominated by one-bedroom units....* Whilst the suggested unit mix under Policy CR6 is only a guideline for developments, the proposed unit mix and overdominance of 1 bedroom units is considered to be a disbenefit of both proposals given the greater need for 2 and 3 bedroom units within the Borough as set out under Policy H2 (Density and Mix) and overdominance of existing 1 bedroom dwellings within the Central Area . This disbenefit will fall to be considered as part of the planning balance assessment for both proposals within the conclusion section of this report.

7.4.4 Notwithstanding the above it is proposed that 5% of the dwellings within each application would be wheelchair accessible dwellings in accordance with Part M4(3) of Building Regulations satisfying the requirement of criterion f. of Policy H5 (Standards for New Housing).

7.4.5 Policy (H3 Affordable Housing) requires developments to make an appropriate contribution towards affordable housing to meet the needs of Reading Borough. For both the YHP1 and YHP2 as Major category developments, 30% of the total dwellings are expected to be provided as affordable housing, in the form of on-site provision, and this requirement has been continued and augmented in the emerging Local Plan Partial

Review. If proposals present an offer which falls short of the 30% policy requirement, then the developer must clearly demonstrate the circumstances justifying a lower contribution through an open-book viability assessment. Additionally, the supporting text to Policy H4 (Build to Rent Schemes) (at para. 4.4.31) clarifies that "*The Council will expect rental levels for the affordable housing or Affordable Private Rent housing to be related to Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rate levels (including service charges) and be affordable for those identified as in need of affordable housing in the Borough. The Council will expect such housing to remain affordable in perpetuity".*

7.4.6 Both applications were accompanied by a viability assessment which concluded that it was unviable for either application to incorporate any affordable housing. The viability assessments have been independently reviewed and reviewed by RBC Valuations Officers whose advice is that it is unviable for either proposal to incorporate any affordable housing.

7.4.7 Notwithstanding the above it is proposed that both applications would incorporate some on-site affordable housing. Figure 64 below shows the amount and mix of affordable dwellings to be provided:

Units	***YHP 1***	***YHP 2***
	Affordable	
1 bed (40%)	*9*	*9*
2 bed (55%)	*12*	*12*
3 bed (5%)	*1*	*1*
Total	***22***	***22***

Figure 64 – Proposed YHP1 and YHP2 on-site affordable housing provision

7.4.8 The level of provision proposed equates to 10% of the total dwellings to be provided within each development. All of the affordable dwellings would be rented at no more than the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) cap and would be spread throughout both schemes. The mix of the affordable dwellings proposed would also accord with the guideline mix for dwellings within the Central Area set out under Policy CR6 as referred to above. RBC Housing Officers consider the proposed dwelling size mix and spread of units to be acceptable and support capping of rents at LHA levels. The spread of units across the various blocks and floors within both the YHP1 and YHP2 proposals is shown in figure 65 below and plans showing the proposed location of all the affordable units are included with the plans attached at the end of this report.

YHP 1	**Block**	**Floor**	**Number of Affordable Dwellings**
	A	2	2
		4	2
		5	2
		6	2
		13	1
	B	1	4
		2	2
		4	2
		5	2
		6	2
		7	1
Total			**22**
YHP2	**C**	Mezz	2
		1	1
		2	2

		3	2
	D	2	2
		3	2
		4	2
		5	1
	E	2	2
		3	2
		4	2
		5	2
Total			**22**

Figure 65 – Spread and Layout of Affordable Dwellings

7.4.9 Planning Viability guidance (Policy H3, including as proposed to be updated in the Partial Review and as set out in the adopted Affordable Housing SPD) does not require the LPA to dispense with affordable housing provision but allows greater flexibility to agree a position which would maximise delivery of affordable housing and support delivery of a development which would give wider economic benefits. Despite highlighting concerns with the Applicant over the level of affordable housing proposed to be provided as part of both applications, the Applicant's position is that given the agreed lack of viability for the scheme to provide affordable housing, then it is this offer which they wish to be considered as part of the wider determination of both planning applications.

7.4.10 Given the amount of affordable housing proposed falls short of the policy requirement a deferred payment mechanism (DPM) is also proposed to be secured as part of the s106 agreement for both applications which would ensure that in the future, if any positive gains were made in viability due to for instance, lower construction costs and/or an expected uplift in values, the developer would be required to make a further financial contribution towards the provision of affordable housing within the Borough. The 'cap; for these contributions would be the equivalent financial contribution of providing 30% of the dwellings as affordable housing which is the policy complaint level of provision set out under Policy H3 within the current and emerging Local Plan.

7.4.11 The level of affordable housing proposed for both applications follows from a full and detailed review of the viability position for the proposed developments. Given the confirmed position of both developments as non-viable within the context of Planning Viability policy and guidance, the LPA is justified in accepting lower than policy compliant affordable housing for important development schemes. Whilst the level of affordable housing proposed to be provided as part of both developments is disappointing, particularly given the critical need for affordable dwellings within the Borough that is identified in the support text (paragraph 4.4.19) to Policy H3, Officers consider the offer to be adequate given the verified unviable nature of both proposals in respect of providing affordable housing and also taking into account the deferred payment mechanism that means the Council would share in any positive change in the viability position of both developments. At the time of writing, the precise nature of the DPM is still being discussed and agreed with the applicant and this matter will be covered in the Update Report.

5 Transport and Highways

7.5.1 Policies TR1 (Achieving the Transport Strategy), TR3 (Access, Traffic and Highway related matters), TR4 (Cycle Routes and Facilities) and TR5 (Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging) seek to address access, traffic, highway and parking related matters for new development.

7.5.2 A Transport Statement has been submitted with both planning applications.

7.5.3 Both the YHP1 and YHP2 application sites are located to the south of Reading Town Centre. Reading Station is an less than a 10 minute walk to the north of the site and Yield Hall Place to the east provides access to London Street and the IDR/A329 (Queens

Road). The existing The Oracle shopping centre has access to two public car parks, the Riverside Car Park (1611 Spaces) and the Holy Brook Car Park (595 Spaces), which are directly adjacent to the application sites.

Sustainable Travel

Walking Accessibility

7.5.4 Both application sits are situated in the Reading Central Area and are ideally located to encourage walking from a large population catchment for retail and leisure activities as well as providing access to town centre jobs for residents. The extent of the Reading Central Area is largely accessible within a 10-minute walk from both sites, while areas of Caversham, Coley, and East Reading are within a 20-minute walk, along with access to multiple transport hubs including bus stops and Reading Railway Station.

7.5.5 The site is surrounded by footways on all surrounding streets, along the river and users of the site will also be able to walk through The Oracle shopping centre when open.

Cycling Accessibility

7.5.6 There are several signed cycle routes located on the roads surrounding the YHP1 and YHP2 application sites. The NCN 422 and town centre route consists of a shared footway/cycleway and intersects the site running along the southern side of the River Kennet and riverside area to the north of the YHP2 site. To the south of Yield Hall Place 2 adjacent to the site along Mill Lane and the IDR the northern footway is also a shared footway/cycleway. These routes connect to the extended cycle network of Reading which consists of a mixture of traffic-free cycle routes and on-road cycles routes. This network connects the site to Reading Town centre and key destinations including Reading Railway Station.

7.5.7 Beyond the immediate centre of Reading, some dedicated cycle routes are present on the main routes into Reading, including along Oxford Road and Portman Road to the west; A33 to the south; and routes through Caversham and across Caversham Bridge and Christchurch Bridge to the north. The Transport Statement submitted with the applications illustrates that the majority of the Borough is within a 20-minute cycle of the site, assuming a cycle speed of 16 kph. This therefore confirms that the site can be reasonably accessed from Caversham, Southcote, Whitley Wood, and Woodley by bicycle.

7.5.8 The Oracle shopping centre as a whole as existing has cycle parking provision able to accommodate 230 bicycles as is confirmed via a cycle audit undertaken by the Applicant as part of their Transport Statement. These are located around The Oracle site and would be available for visitors of the proposed development to utilise, with photos within the Transport Statement confirming that there is ample spare capacity. It should however be noted that 8 of the cycle parking spaces are associated with the former residential flats within The Oracle and as per the original planning permission for the shopping centre are required to be retained and therefore cannot be counted towards the commercial parking provision. Some of the cycle parking areas are not ideal and this is reviewed further within the cycle parking section of this report below. It is also noted that as part of planning application 230682 that the planning conditions for the original development of the site were reviewed and condition 68 that deals with cycle parking specifies that 230 cycles parking spaces are to be provided for visitors and 30 for staff.

7.5.9 As part of the YHP1 and YHP2 proposals the Applicant has provided details of how the proposals will deal with this current shortfall of 38 cycle parking spaces which includes the provision of a further 10 cycle spaces within the public realm areas around YHP2, details of which are considered to be acceptable by RBC Transport Officers. In addition to this a further 28 cycle spaces are proposed along the Bridge Street elevation of the Oracle which would be in addition to those required as part of the wider Oracle provision.

After an on-site assessment by RBC Transport Officers there is considered to be scope in front of the Bridge Street elevation of The Oracle to provide these spaces and therefore Officers are satisfied that details of this can be secured by way of planning conditions for both the YHP1 and YHP2 proposals, with the additional cycle parking spaces provided as part of whichever development is implemented first. The land to the Bridge Street elevation where the cycle parking spaces would be located are within the 'blue line' application area and land under the control of the Applicant and therefore securing these details by way of condition is considered to be an appropriate method.

Bus Accessibility

7.5.10 The Oracle is located within a short walking distance of numerous strategic bus routes which connect the town centre with destinations across Reading Borough and beyond. There are multiple bus stops within walking distance of the site on Minster Street, Bridge Street and Kings Road etc. These services provide access to the wider region, including Newbury and Wokingham, along with other transport nodes such as Reading Railway Station.

Rail Accessibility

7.5.11 The site is located close to the Reading Railway Station which is a national transport hub. Reading Railway Station is used by approximately 17 million passengers per year (2019 figures) and is the ninth busiest station outside London and second busiest 'interchange station' outside of London. Reading Railway Station underwent a phase of expansion and modernization between 2009 and 2014, adding five new platforms and improving the station facilities and interchanges.

7.5.12 It is concluded that both application sites are located in a location which would facilitate sustainable travel.

<u>YHP1 - Pedestrian and Cycle Access</u>

7.5.13 The Transport Statement sets out that the proposals have been designed to take advantage of its existing location adjacent to the River Kennet, with principal entrances located on the riverside connecting to the existing footpaths within The Oracle. Additional points of access for YHP1 are also provided directly onto Yield Hall Place which facilitates access to the cycle parking. A new entrance into The Oracle from the riverside is also proposed which will enhance the connectivity though the shopping centre to other parts of the town centre.

7.5.14 RBC Transport Officers consider that the existing location of the service entrance to The Oracle on Yield Hall Place does not aid those pedestrians that are partially sighted or completely blind. As part of the proposals, servicing to YHP1 is proposed to take place from this section of Yield Hall Place with turning also being undertaken more frequently creating more potential conflict with pedestrians and cyclists. As a result, the proposals include provision of a widened footway along Yield Hall Place. Although street trees are proposed within the scheme to this part of the public realm, an acceptable footway width between the trees and cycle parking would still be provided which is in excess of the minimum 2m. The scheme therefore facilitates a safe alternative for pedestrians away from vehicle movements which satisfies the Highway Authority.

7.5.15 At the junction of Yield Hall Place and Minster Street, the proposed YHP1 on-site public realm scheme includes an alteration to remove the existing gate barrier and instead provide bollards at the entrance to this junction. The Highway Authority considers this to be an acceptable change given that the existing infrastructure makes movement for pedestrians and cyclists problematic. The alignment of the proposed bollards has been reviewed to ensure a continuous 1.8m wide footway in line with the footways to the east and west is provided with the bollards set back 450mm from the kerb edge which is deemed acceptable. It should be added that Yield Hall Place does permit cycling and as

such the proposed bollards have been provided with a minimum spacing of 1.5m, this would also aid those in wheelchairs or have other mobility aids and as such is compliant with adopted highway design standards.

YHP2 – Pedestrian and Cycle Access

7.5.16 As with YHP1,' the proposals have been designed to take advantage of the sites existing location adjacent to the River Kennet, with principal entrances located on the riverside connecting to the existing footpaths within The Oracle. Additional points of access for YHP2 are also provided directly onto Mill Lane/the IDR which facilitates secondary access to the residential as well as cycle parking, plant and refuse storage for the most easterly proposed commercial unit. The proposed YHP2 on-site public realm works include the planting of new trees along the footway to the south of the site fronting onto the IDR. The location of these proposed trees is considered to be acceptable from a technical Highways perspective and all trees to the carriageway edge would be fastigiate (upright) to avoid conflict with vehicles. The pedestrian access arrangements for the proposed residential and commercial units is considered to be acceptable.

7.5.17 Access to the residents' cycle parking within YHP2 has been redesigned by the Applicant to provide two cycle stores, one accessed from the Riverside and another from the IDR. This has resulted in provision of 126 cycle parking spaces (112 stacked + 14 Sheffield spaces) which exceeds the minimum required provision of 115 cycle parking spaces for the proposed development. These cycle spaces are distributed approximately 50/50 between the stores and advice from RBC Transport Officers is that this is acceptable .

7.5.18 An existing shared footway/cycleway is located through The Oracle along the northern riverside boundary of YHP2. The Transport Statement and technical assessments submitted with the application demonstrate that the proposed public realm works to the riverside area of YHP2 would ensure that compliant widths to the shared footway/cycleway are retained. The existing cycle route along the southern IDR boundary of YHP2 is currently in the region of 2.4m wide and does not comply with adopted standards which require a width of 3m. The Transport Statement submitted with the application states that the proposals would facilitate a wider minimum width of 3.5m for this cycle route. RBC Transport Officers do not agree with this statement given the presence of existing and proposed trees and street furniture either side of the route reduce the usable width of the route. However, the majority of the route within the application site exceeds 4m in width, sufficient to accommodate a shared footway/cycleway, with narrowing below 3.5m for short distances only resulting in an overall improvement compared to the existing situation and as such is considered to be acceptable to facilitate a shared cycle/pedestrian route. All doors for buildings adjacent to the cycle routes within the site, apart from fire doors, would open inwards so as to not interfere with movement.

YHP1 and YHP2 - Vehicular Access / Car Parking

7.5.19 Vehicular access to The Oracle is not proposed to change from its existing arrangement. Visitors to the site (mainly shoppers) will continue to use the Riverside or Holy Brook public car parks. The Transport Statement identifies that the YHP1 proposals would result in a reduction of 38 car parking spaces to the Holy Brook Car Park. This reduction is considered to be acceptable given the remaining level of on-site visitor parking at The Oracle within both the Holy Brook and Riverside Car Parks. Plans have been submitted which demonstrate that there would be no detrimental impacts in terms of vehicle circulation, tracking and pedestrian routes around the car park as a result of the proposed reduction in spaces.

7.5.20 All the residential units within both the YHP1 and YHP2 proposals would be car-free and not allocated with car parking. However, to ensure that residents still have access to a car should they wish, four spaces within the existing car parks will be converted to car-

club spaces in accordance with adopted RBC Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD (2011) to serve both sites. This will allow residents to use a car when needed for trips that are not possible by other modes of transport. As per the recommendation boxes for both applications at the top of this report it is proposed that the location and details of the future car-club bays and details of car club provider can be secured via the s106 agreements for both applications. Whilst the provision of car clubs will likely result in the reduction of further parking bays this is deemed to be acceptable by RBC Transport Officers given the overall level of parking available.

YHP1 and YHP2 Trip Generation

7.5.21 The applicant has modelled the trip generation of both proposals for all the proposed residential and commercial uses and the Highway Authority is satisfied that the proposals either individually or cumulatively will not result in any increase in trips or detrimental impact across the transport network.

YHP1 and YHP2 - Cycle Parking

7.5.22 The cycle parking provision for the development has been informed by the Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD (2011). Residential cycle parking is provided within both the YHP1 and YHP2 proposals in the form of double-tier josta bike racks and Sheffield stands with 120 spaces within YHP1 and 126 spaces within YHP2 which is in excess of the Council's required standards. No additional parking cycle parking is proposed for the commercial uses within both proposed developments which is considered to be acceptable given the significant existing provision at The Oracle (158 spaces).

7.5.23 The existing public realm areas around YHP1 currently accommodate 29 external Sheffield cycle parking stands for visitors and 22 similar spaces exist within the public realm areas of the YHP2 site in various locations. The same level of provision is proposed to be re-provided for both proposed developments in the form of new Sheffield stands. Based upon the RBC Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD (2011) 94 staff cycle parking spaces are required across both developments. Given the existing provision of cycle parking far exceeds this and that the proposals result in an overall reduction in commercial floor space at both sites no additional cycle parking is considered to be required as a result of the proposed developments.

YHP1 - Delivery, Servicing & Refuse Strategy

7.5.24 The commercial elements of the YHP1 proposals are proposed to be serviced from a combination of existing service locations as set out below:

- Refuse collection and deliveries for the proposed uses within the retained floor space is to take place from the main servicing area on site as per the previous Debenhams store.
- Refuse for the proposed flexible commercial unit is to be collected by the onsite management team and transported to the main servicing area as per the current arrangement for the adjacent Comptoir Libanais restaurant. Deliveries would take place from the loading bay on Yield Hall Place.
- Refuse collection for the proposed co–working space is to be stored in an adjacent dedicated refuse store and collected from the adjacent loading bay on Yield Hall Place from where deliveries for the co-working space would take place.
- Refuse collection and deliveries for the proposed residential units would also take place from the adjacent loading bay on Yield Hall Place

7.5.25 The application is accompanied by plans to demonstrate that the loading bay on Yield Hall Place is acceptable to the Highway Authority in terms of size and location and that it can accommodate access by vehicles of appropriate sizes for both small and bulky

deliveries and collections, including refuse collection vehicles. The proposed refuse collection and servicing arrangements for YHP1 are considered to be acceptable.

YHP2 - Delivery, Servicing & Refuse Strategy

7.5.26 It is proposed that the YHP2 proposals would be serviced from two dedicated areas. Bulky deliveries and refuse collections for the proposed YHP2 residential units will be made from the existing servicing area, accessed from Mill Lane adjacent to the western façade. This bay, as well as the adjacent service yard located under the Riverside Car Park will continue to be used by the proposed cinema and restaurant units for refuse collections as is the case with the current occupiers.

7.5.27 The refuse stored within the eastern and central residential stores and the eastern retail store would have to be transported 90m-100m and 5m-60m along the Mill Lane footway/cycleway to the collection point. The bins are proposed to be transported by way of a pedestrian bin tug or tow tug. This method could create conflict with pedestrians and cyclists; however, given that the proposals facilitate for provision of an improved compliant pedestrian / cycle route along the IDR to the south of the YHP2 building then the Highway Authority has confirmed that this method of transport the bins to the collection point would be acceptable. This is on the basis that the tug is pulled manually and is not a mechanically driven tug, the details of which can be secured through a condition.

7.5.28 Technical drawings have been submitted with the application which demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Highway Authority that the servicing bay and refuse collection point to the west elevation of YHP2 are acceptable in terms of size and location and can be suitably accessed by vehicles of the necessary sizes, including refuse collection vehicles.

7.5.29 All servicing and deliveries for YHP2 will be accommodated in the western loading bay. To ensure that the western loading bay can accommodate servicing for all of YHP2, a capacity modelling exercise has been completed by the applicant. This has been reviewed by RBC Transport Officers who confirm that they are satisfied that the loading bay has capacity to service all of YHP2. It is noted that in the scenario that the western loading bay is fully occupied, when a servicing vehicle arrives, there is a holding area, to the west under the car park exit ramp, where vehicles can wait and loop around once space has become available.

7.5.30 The YHP2 proposals originally incorporated an additional kerbside drop off bay on the IDR to the south of the YHP2 building intended to facilitate smaller/quick deliveries associated with the proposed residential dwellings. However, this bay was considered unacceptable by RBC Transport Officer due to concerns that there we insufficient measures to dissuade larger vehicles for more substantial deliveries from using the bay which would not be appropriate. As such this kerbside drop off bay has been removed from the proposed plans. However, removal of this bay as created potential for ad hoc vehicles mounting the kerb and unsafely parking in this location. The Applicant has put forward a proposals to combat this which includes provision of kassel of terif kerbs to prevent mounting of the kerb. The principle of this is accepted by the Highway Authority with detailed plans and agreement to a s278 highway works agreement to provide the works to be secured as part of the s106 agreement for the YHP2 development.

7.5.31 Fire tender access for both YHP1 and YHP2 is considered to be acceptable.

YHP1 and YHP2 - Delivery, Servicing & Refuse Strategy Trip Generation

7.5.32 The applicant has undertaken an assessment of the proposed trip generation relating solely to the servicing of both developments which concludes that such trips would not have a detrimental impact upon operation of and can be accommodate by the existing highway network. This assessment has been reviewed by RBC Transport Officers who consider it to have been carried out to an appropriate standards and that the findings are acceptable.

Highway Landscaping

7.5.33 The location and type of all proposed street trees have been confirmed and as these are to be fastigiate. The applicant has assessed the impact of the trees alongside the surrounding Highway infrastructure and considers that trees would not detrimentally impact the visibility to any of the highway signage or signal heads apart from the directional signage located along the southern boundary of YHP2. The Applicant has submitted a drawing which proposes that this directional signage could be relocated west of its current position so that it is no longer obstructed by the proposed trees and this has been deemed an acceptable proposals by the Highway Authority. A requirement for the applicant to enter a s278 highway works agreement to carry out this works it proposed to be secured as part of the s106 agreement for YHP2.

7.5.34 The low level herbaceous planters proposed to the crossing Island at the junction of London Street and the IDR (Queens Road) are shown on the proposed plans to be set back 450mm from the kerb edge and to be flush to the ground (i.e. not a raised planter edge). Subject to a condition to secure that planting to this planter is low level only, it is not considered that this planter would adversely impact upon visibility of pedestrians and cyclists using the adjacent uncontrolled crossing.

7.5.35 All landscaping on the Highway would be handed over to the Highway Authority to maintain and as such this will incur appropriate fees through a S278 Agreement (secured via the s106 agreement for both applications).

YHP1 and YHP2 Travel Plan

7.5.36 A Framework Travel Plan has been submitted for both applications which outlines appropriate measures to encourage sustainable and non-car modes of travel for visitors to both sites. A detailed Travel Plan will also be required for both developments which is recommended to be secured by way of conditions for both applications.

YHP2 - Public Highway Matters

7.5.37 It is noted that the existing Public Highway extends to within the existing building line of The Oracle within the YHP2 site and as such this must be rationalised as part of any planning application and areas of Highway not usable for Highway purposes need to be formally ‘stopped up’. Figure 66 below shows the extent of the existing Public Highway within the existing building.



Figure 66 – Extent of existing public highway to be stopped up shown shaded blue

7.5.38 It is not clear to Planning or Transport Officers why this stopping up did not take place during the construction of The Oracle 25 years ago. The drawing in figure 66 above shows the proposed area of stopping up and considered to be acceptable. As shown in the recommendation box for the YHP2 application at the top of this report stopping up of the Public Highway in this location is proposed to be secured as part of the section 106 legal agreement for this application.

YHP2 - Street Lighting Matters

7.5.39 There is an existing high mast street lighting column in the south east corner of the YHP2 site which will result in an unacceptable relationship with the proposed residential units to the upper floors of the south and east elevations of YHP2. The Applicant has considered that this would not result in a detrimental impact upon the residential occupiers, however, the Highway Authority advises that the existing high mast generates a lux level of between 50-100 lux, which would be well in excess of the permitted light spill levels into residential properties which is just 5 lux.

7.5.40 The applicant has stated the proposal will include the provision of blackout blinds which are designed to block external light from entering a room. However, officers advise that this is not considered to be an acceptable solution and the introduction of residential dwellings in this location needs to properly deal with the issue. Therefore, the section 106 obligations for the YHP2 proposal include a requirement for the Applicant to enter into a s278 agreement to submit and agree a scheme for replacement of the high lighting mast with standards lighting columns in this location and around the IDR to provide the same extent of illumination to the IDR but at a lower level so as to not impact of the proposed residential windows. The Applicant would be fully responsible for the costs of this agreement and associated works.

7.5.41 In summary, with the required conditions, obligations and highways agreements, both applications are considered to be suitable in transport terms.

6. Flooding and the Natural Environment

Flooding

7.6.1 Policy EN18 (Flooding and Sustainable Drainage Systems) states that development will be directed to areas at lowest risk of flooding and that where development in areas at risk of flooding is necessary it will not reduce the capacity of the flood plain, impede flow of flood water or in any way increase risks to life and property arising from flooding and that wherever possible should be designed to reduce flood risk both on and off-site. All major developments are also required to incorporate SuDS to ensure that, as a minimum, run-off rates are no greater than existing conditions of the site.

7.6.2 Both applications are accompanied by a detailed Flood Risk Assessment (FRA). This identifies that the majority of both application sites and all areas where buildings are proposed are located within Flood Zone 1 which, as outlined in the National Planning Practice Guidance, is land at the lowest risk of flooding but that there are small areas of land within both sites along the banks of the River Kennet, which dissects the sites, that are located within Flood Zone 2 (land at a medium probability of flooding) and Flood Zone 3 (land at a high probability of flooding). As per National (NPPF chapter 14 – Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change, Flooding and Coastal Change) and Local Planning Policy and Guidance, development should be directed to areas at the lowest risk of flooding and both proposals are considered to satisfy this requirement with all new proposed buildings (both residential and commercial uses) as well as all routes for safe ingress and egress to the buildings located within Flood Zone 1. Modelling also confirms that no part of either site is located within the modelled flood plain given the topography of the river channel is such that all flood plain areas are contained within the river bank.

7.6.3 The Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) submitted with both applications has been reviewed by the Environment Agency (EA) who are a Statutory Consultee for developments such as the YHP1 and YHP2 proposals which are located within 20m of a main river. The EA have confirmed that the FRA has been carried out to an appropriate standard, and they are satisfied with its findings and as such they do not object to either application on flood risk grounds, subject that finished floor levels of both developments are set no lower than 38.15 metres Above Ordnance Datum (AOD), to safeguard the development from flooding events associated with possible future climate change. This condition is considered necessary for both developments in order to protect future occupiers from flooding and to ensure compliance with Policy EN18.

Drainage

7.6.4 The Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) currently objects to both applications because the submitted SuDS proposals fail to demonstrate that the developments would not result in run-off rates from both sites that reflect greenfield conditions nor a rate which is not greater than the existing run off rates for both sites as required by Policy EN18. The Applicant has been asked to address this matter for both the YHP1 and YHP2 proposed developments and officers will provide an update on this matter via an update report or at the committee meeting.

7.6.5 The EA have also commended in regard to SuDS for both developments and have identified that any future detailed SuDS proposals need to ensure that water quality measures are taken into consideration and incorporate mitigation to prevent contaminant runoff arising from hardstanding areas impacting upon water quality within the Kennet. Should the Applicant provide information to satisfy the LLFA concerns discussed above regarding run off rates then it is recommended that details of the water quality mitigation measures within the SuDS proposals as required by the EA be secured by way of conditions for both proposed developments.

Ecology and Biodiversity

7.6.6 The river Kennet runs between the two application sites and is identified as a significant Green Link through the Central Area and also a Priority Habitat area in accordance with Policy EN12 (Biodiversity and The Green Network) which requires such features to be maintained, protected, consolidated, extended and enhanced. Given the proximity of both the YHP1 and YHP2 proposals to the river, they will have an effect upon species and their habitats. The applications are accompanied by detailed ecological surveys which conclude that both proposed developments are unlikely to directly impact upon priority habitats or protected species within either site; however pigeons are recorded as nesting on the roof of the buildings and vegetation on the sites is likely to support nesting birds. The RBC Ecology Adviser is satisfied that the ecology surveys have been carried out to an appropriate standard and recommends a condition for both proposals to require that any demolition or vegetation clearance is carried out outside of the bird nesting season (March – August) unless a suitably qualified ecologist is present on site for the duration of works to check whether nesting birds are present.

7.6.7 There is also potential for both sites to be traversed by a range of protected and priority species which utilise the environment within the river channel , and this includes otters and bats. Both proposed developments have potential to impact upon the habitats within the river channel during both construction and operational phases as a result of contamination/pollution, such as surface run-off, noise, dust or littering, overshadowing by the proposals tall buildings, external lighting, increased footfall close to the river, disturbance of nesting birds and wildlife resting places.

7.6.8 In terms of construction phase impacts, the BC Ecology Adviser and the EA recommend a condition for both proposals to secure submission and approval of a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) prior to commencement of each development to demonstrate measures to protect both wildlife and the environment of the River Kennet

from deterioration during construction. With regard to the operational phase of both proposed developments, it is considered that this would be largely the same as the existing situation at The Oracle, with active commercial uses located directly either side of the river channel. Both applications are accompanied by a range of ecological enhancements including street level public realm and roof terrace level nature landscaping, including new tree planting, biodiverse green roofs to flat roof areas not used as terraces as well as a variety of bird and bat boxes including those specifically designed for Swifts, Black Redstarts and a Peregrine Falcon nest box. Full details of the proposed ecological enhancements would be secured by condition for both applications including to require, as a minimum, provision of 25 integrated bat boxes and 50 integrated bird boxes for each development. A further condition is also recommended to ensure that all new external lighting proposed as part of each development is wildlife friendly.

7.6.9 The EA initially raised an objection to both applications over concerns that the proposed tall building elements would overshadow and adversely impact the river and its in-channel vegetation. In response the Applicant carried out a River Condition Assessment which identified that in-channel vegetation to the section of the river which runs through The Oracle is very limited. The Applicant also carried out a Daylight Impact Assessment on the river which shows that as existing the part of the river that passes through The Oracle receives 2+ hours of sunlight for 96% of its area and that as a result of the proposals when considered on a worst case scenario (i.e. cumulative impact of both the YHP1 and YHP2 proposals) 2+ hours of sunlight would be received to 92% of its area, concluding that no significant adverse impact from the proposals is considered to result. The EA, following review of both the River Condition Assessment and Daylight Impact Assessment, have removed their objection to both proposed developments, subject to a condition being applied to both proposals to require submission and approval of a landscape and ecological management plan to detail long term (up to 30 years) management and maintenance responsibilities for all proposed soft landscaping and ecological enhancement works, including details of treatment of site boundaries around water bodies. This condition, together with other ecological conditions explained above are considered reasonable to ensure that the proposals deliver long term ecological benefits to both sites and preserve and enhance the Green Link (River Kennet) in accordance with Policies EN12 and EN11 (Waterspaces).

7.6.10 It should be noted that both proposals would require an Environmental Permit to be obtained from the Environment Agency under the Environmental Permitting Regulations 2016 which is separate to the planning application process and may place additional requirements upon the developer in terms impacts upon the River Kennet. An informative can advise the applicant of this.

7.6.11 Both applications were submitted prior to biodiversity net gain (BNG) requirements becoming a statutory requirement for new development. Nonetheless Policy EN12 requires that all development demonstrates that it would not result in a net loss in biodiversity and should wherever possible result in a net gain. The applications are accompanied by BNG assessments which as a result of the existing dominance of built form and lack of vegetation cover and the proposed new landscaping and ecological enhancements described above, demonstrate that both applications would each result in an on-site net gain in biodiversity of over 100%. The BNG assessments submitted have been reviewed by the RBC Ecology Adviser who is satisfied that they have been carried out to an appropriate standard and demonstrate compliance of both proposed developments with Policy EN12, subject to the required enhancements being delivered.

Trees and Landscaping

7.6.12 A Tree Survey and Arboricultural Impact Assessment have been submitted in support of both applications. Within and adjacent to both application sites there are a total of 35 trees and 3 groups. 2 of the trees identified are Category A trees (trees of high quality), 32 of the trees identified and the 3 tree groups are Category B trees (trees of moderate quality) and 1 tree is a Category C tree (of low quality).

7.6.13 The YHP1 proposals would result in loss of 3 x Category B trees and 1 x Category C tree to facilitate the proposed new buildings and public realm works, whilst the YHP2 proposals would result in loss of 2 x B Category trees. The RBC Natural Environment Officer recommends a condition to secure a detailed Arboricultural Method Statement for both proposals prior to the commencement of development, including any demolition works, to demonstrate that all other existing trees that are proposed to be retained will be suitably protected during demolition, construction and future operation of both developments. It is noted that proposed underground servicing details (pipes, cables etc.) are not yet known for both developments, which could have an impact on the ability to retain trees, and as such this information is required to be included within the Arboricultural Method Statement and the proposed conditions will be worded accordingly.

7.6.14 As discussed in the Public Realm section of this report above (Section 3 of this Appraisal), both proposals incorporate extensive soft landscaping schemes both to public realm areas on and surrounding the sites at riverside, to Yield Hall Place and the IDR (Queens Road) and at roof level to the large roof terrace areas that are proposed. For the YHP1 proposals this includes the planting of 25 trees within the street level public realm areas within the site, resulting in a net gain of 21 public realm trees; whilst the YHP2 proposals include the planting of 27 trees; resulting in a net gain of 25 public realm trees. Across both proposals there are also 47 ornamental roof garden trees proposed, resulting in a significant net gain in trees for both proposed developments. Extensive soft landscaped planters are also proposed at street and roof level.

7.6.15 The proposed landscaping for both applications would satisfy the requirements of Policy EN14 (Trees, Hedges and Woodlands) which requires that the Borough's vegetation cover is extended and also contributes towards meeting the aims Borough's Tree Strategy (2021) which identifies Abbey Ward as having low tree canopy coverage and seeks that this is increased. Note is also given to (new) emerging Policy EN19 (Urban Greening Factor) within the Local Plan Partial Update (2025) and draft Town Centre Public Realm Strategy (2025) which heightens the need for a soft landscape-led approach to development. The RBC Natural Environment Officer is satisfied with the diversity of tree planting indicated in the proposed landscaping strategy. It is however concerning that as the position and extent of proposed underground services for both proposals is not yet known, this could reduce the viability of locations for proposed landscaping in terms of available soil volumes and therefore conditions are recommended for both applications to secure detailed landscaping proposals including locations of all underground services. Further conditions are also recommended to secure retention of all trees on both sites other than those proposed for removal, given the paucity of canopy cover identified within Abbey Ward and in line with requirements of the EA, details of a landscape and ecological management plan are also required for both developments.

7. Amenity Matters

7.7.1 Policy CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity) and CR6 (Living in Central Reading) seek to protect the amenity of existing surrounding and future occupiers. Policy EN16 (Pollution and Water Resources) seeks to protect surrounding and future occupiers from the impacts of pollution, including contamination. Policy CR10 (Tall Buildings) also seeks that that new development ensures adequate levels of daylight and sunlight are able to reach buildings and spaces within the development and avoid significant negative impacts on existing residential properties and the public realm in terms of outlook, privacy, daylight, sunlight, noise, light glare and wind.

7.7.2 Both application sites are separated by from existing nearby residential properties by roads and there are no directly adjacent residential uses to either site but both proposals seek to introduce significant new residential blocks. The impact on both existing surrounding and future occupiers of both developments must be considered.

Daylight Sunlight and Overshadowing

Existing Occupiers

7.7.3 The applications are accompanied by a daylight, sunlight and overshadowing report which considers the impacts of both proposals upon existing surrounding residential properties in relation to the standard Building Research Establishment (BRE) guidelines. The report has been carried out on a 'worse case' scenario basis and considers the cumulative impacts of both the YHP1 and YHP2 proposals. Due to the technical nature of the report, this has been independently reviewed on behalf of the LPA by a specialist daylight, sunlight and overshadowing consultant (BRE themselves). The report has identified the following nearby properties as potential sensitive receptors that could be impacted by the proposed developments:

- New Century Place, East Street (student accommodation)
- George Hotel, Minster Street (upper floor hotel accommodation)
- Dukesbridge Chambers, Duke Street (office accommodation)
- Townsend House, Crosslands Road (supported living accommodation)
- 33 London Street (upper floor hotel accommodation)
- 35 London Street (upper floor flats)
- 46 London Street (upper floor flats)
- 48 London Street (upper floor flats)
- Garner Hotel, 4-8 Duke Street (upper floor hotel accommodation)

7.7.4 In terms of daylight, the report makes three assessments. The first is of Vertical Sky Component (VSC) which measures the percentage of the total unobstructed view that is available once the development is placed within the view, calculated from the centre of a window, measuring the amount of light available following the introduction of the new buildings. A further assessment relates to No Sky Line (NSL)/Daylight Distribution (DD). The NSL/DD assessment divides those areas of the room which can receive direct sky light from those which cannot. If a significant area of the room lies beyond the NSL/DD (i.e. it receives no direct sky light), then the distribution of daylight in the room will be poor). The Annual Probable Sunlight Hours (APSH) is also used which measures the average total number of sunlight hours received at the centre of a habitable room window across the year.

7.7.5 The independent review of the daylight sunlight and overshadowing report advises that the applicant's report has been carried out to an appropriate standard using relevant methodologies. The review agrees that the proposed developments would not have a significant adverse impact in terms of the VSC assessment and all properties assessed would continue to meet BRE guidelines in this respect. In terms of the NSL/DD assessment, the review concludes that there would be a minor adverse impact to 1 x studio apartment (student accommodation) to the ground floor of New Century Place as a result of the YHP2 proposals but all other rooms within New Century Place and other buildings would not be adversely affected. The review notes that the impact to the single studio apartment affected is as a result of the deep nature of the room itself, which means it will always be difficult to not impact upon NSL. In terms of the APSH assessment, no adverse impacts are identified on existing surrounding properties. In terms of overshadowing, the independent review confirms that all existing amenity areas surrounding the site will exceed BRE targets and will retain good levels of sunlight. In overall terms, no significant adverse impacts to existing surrounding properties are identified in terms of daylight and sunlight receipt and overshadowing when considering the proposals on a 'worst-case' cumulative basis. Although separate studies have not been submitted, officers consider that it is reasonable to conclude that if only one of the proposals were implemented, then impacts would either remain the same or more likely lessen.

Proposed Occupiers of YHP1 and YHP2

7.7.6 The daylight, sunlight and overshadowing report also considers the standard of accommodation to be provided for future occupiers of the proposed developments in the context of relevant BRE guidelines. This part of the report also has been independently reviewed on behalf of the LPA by a specialist daylight, sunlight and overshadowing consultant (BRE) who conclude that the report provided by the Applicant has been carried out to an appropriate standard. The reports have been carried out on a 'worst-case' scenario basis and consider the cumulative impacts of both proposals.

7.7.7 The independent review concludes that 73% of the habitable rooms across both proposed developments will receive adequate levels of daylight. Where habitable rooms fall short of BRE standards in terms of receipt of daylight this largely relates to various dwellings spread across both developments that are located to the lower floors facing the other blocks and which have windows positioned beneath projecting balconies. With this in mind BRE agree with the applicant's daylight sunlight consultant that these units would overall still receive good levels of daylight. The independent review agrees with the findings of the Applicant's report in that the levels of daylight receipt for both proposed developments are in line with expectations for large scale high density town centre development with balconies and that overall, both proposals demonstrate that that they would receive adequate daylight in line with BRE guidelines.

7.7.8 In terms of receipt of sunlight, the independent review concludes that 42% of habitable rooms across both developments will receive levels of sunlight in line with BRE criteria. Where habitable rooms fall short of the BRE standards for receipt of sunlight advice from the independent review is that this is largely in relation to dwellings across both developments which do not have a main living space window orientated within 90 degrees of south which means adequate sunlight to these spaces is less achievable and that in these circumstances, BRE guidance accepts that such spaces will be unable to receive adequate levels of sunlight. The independent review carried out on behalf of the LPA concludes that levels of sunlight receipt being achieved for both proposed developments are in-line with the expectation for what can be achieved for large-scale high-density town centre developments.

7.7.9 Whilst BRE advise that the overall both developments, perform relatively well in terms of receipt of daylight and sunlight for future occupiers, the finding that just over a quarter of the dwellings proposed across both developments would receive levels of daylight below recommended standards is disappointing. Albeit BRE's view that the impact dwellings would still receive good level of daylight provides reassurance. Officers consider that as a result of competing demands upon the developments there is a degree of inevitability that some dwellings would be impacted given the orientation of some elevations of the buildings and because the buildings incorporate protruding elements, such as balconies, which have benefits in their own right but also invariably reduce access to daylight. Officers conclude that access to daylight for future occupiers of some dwellings is a shortfall of both proposals and a disbenefit of the developments which will fall to be considered as part of the planning balance assessment for both applications.

7.7.10 The Applicant has also carried out an overshadowing assessment in relation to the public realm areas surrounding both sites as well as the proposed podium and roof level amenity terrace areas. BRE guidance is that open spaces should receive at least 2 hours of direct sunlight across 50% of their area each day. The independent review concludes that at both the March Equinox (the part of the year when day and night are most equal in length so the best average representation of overshadowing throughout the year) and Summer Solstice (when the sun is at the highest point in the sky and when outdoor spaces are most likely to be used) all public realm and terrace areas would meet BRE criteria and that it can be concluded that these spaces would receive adequate sunlight throughout the year. It is considered that these spaces would provide high quality areas of communal outdoor space and access to sunlight for residents of both proposed developments.

7.7.11 It is not considered that the YHP1 or YHP2 proposals would result in any significant impact upon existing surrounding occupiers in terms of loss of daylight or overshadowing. Access

to daylight for future occupiers of the developments is a slight concern to some (around a quarter of units) and disbenefit of the proposals.

Noise and Disturbance

7.7.12 Both applications are accompanied by a noise impact assessment which considers the impact of the proposals upon future occupiers of the developments and also upon existing surrounding occupiers.

7.7.13 RBC Environmental Protection Officers have reviewed both proposed developments and the submitted noise impact assessment. Their advice is that the most significant potential impacts in terms of noise from both proposals would be noise from the existing and proposed commercial uses within The Oracle upon future occupiers of the proposed upper floor flats. The noise assessment proposes various forms of noise mitigation including glazing specifications, floor/ceiling sound insulation and a mixture of Mechanical Ventilation with Heat Recovery (MVHR), background ventilation and intermittent extract fans to address potential overheating in dwellings within parts of each development where external noise levels are likely prevent future occupiers from opening windows for ventilation at certain times of the day. RBC Environmental Protection Officers consider the proposed measures to be reasonable and appropriate to mitigate against potential noise impacts from the range of commercial uses that could occupy the proposed flexible commercial units within both developments. Submission and approval of full and final details of the noise mitigation proposals for each development would be secured by way of conditions.

7.7.14 Mindful of the range of proposed uses which could be permitted to operate within the YHP1 and YHP2 commercial units, and the considerable floorspaces involved and given the close proximity to the proposed upper floor dwellings; it is considered necessary to include an hours of use condition in respect of all commercial units to assist in protecting future occupiers from noise and disturbance, particularly spill out noise from patrons. The following hours of use for the commercial units within both YHP1 and YHP2 would be secured by way of condition:

- Monday to Saturday 08:00hours – 23:00 hours;
- Sunday, Bank Holidays 08:00 hours – 22:00 hours

7.7.15 Given the significant size of the units to be provided within the retained Debenhams floor space (1000+sqm each) a condition is recommended to be attached to require that no more than 20% of floorspace within the proposed flexible Class E and/or Sui Generis Bar units is floorspace to be for Sui Generis (bar/drinking establishment) use. Officers consider that, a solely bar use of this scale could have more intensive impact and create concerns in respect of anti-social behaviour and disturbance to existing and proposed residential occupiers.

7.7.16 This is also mindful of there already being a degree of late-night noise/disturbance which can reasonably be expected in this Central Reading / primary shopping area / central core location. With this condition secured these impacts are not envisaged to substantially worsen.

7.7.17 Notwithstanding the above, the RBC Environmental Protection Officer has identified a significant concern in respect of the proposed replacement cinema unit within YHP2 and potential noise/vibration spill to the proposed residential dwellings above. The Applicant has provided a technical note to support their noise impact assessment in respect of cinema noise. RBC Environmental Protection Officers advise that the technical note provides confidence that appropriate cinema noise mitigation can be provided and that full and final details can be secured by way of condition. Given the level of noise mitigation required will need to go beyond the level of mitigation provided to other parts of the proposed YHP2 building a separate condition is recommended to secure submission and approval of these details prior to commencement of the development of the YHP2

proposals. A similar condition is also recommended in respect of both the YHP1 and YHP2 proposals to cover potential occupation of any unit as a gym.

7.7.18 A further condition is also proposed in relation to both proposals to limit deliveries/waste collection times to preclude this being possible from 23:30 – 06:00 (and from 22:30 on Sundays/Bank Holidays), in order to protect the amenity of future occupiers of the residential dwellings within both proposed developments. Also noting that this is a town centre location where the balance between providing active uses and protecting amenity must be balanced.

7.7.19 The submitted noise assessment also identified a particular existing noise impact due to machinery which regularly cleans the existing car parks at The Oracle. RBC Environmental Protection Officers have recommended a condition to secure a car park cleaning management plan to detail hours and frequency of cleaning and measures to prevent noise from the cleaning impacting upon the proposed residential occupiers of both developments. The Applicant has confirmed that that the car parks are within their ownership and control and therefore they accept a condition to secure these details.

7.7.20 In terms of noise from mechanical plant, given there would be residential dwellings to both sites, an acoustic assessment is required prior to the installation of any externally located plant. Given that the future commercial operators are unconfirmed, the applicant is seeking for a condition to prevent any externally-located mechanical plant being installed prior to a noise assessment being submitted. Officers are content with this approach, in the context of the proposals. Linked to noise matters, external cooking odour is often a significant problem from commercial kitchens and therefore an odour assessment will be required prior to any hot-food cooking premises being occupied. within both proposed developments. The reference to hot-food cooking is included as many uses within Class E could include the preparation of food with odours, not just Class E (b) restaurants. As such, the condition seeks to ensure that any odours are managed accordingly.

7.7.21 Given the distances to the nearest existing residential uses to both sites, which are all over 30m away and separated by roads, it is not considered that the YHP1 or YHP2 proposals would result in any adverse noise impacts to existing surrounding dwellings. The increase in general activity at both sites would be significant due to the introduction of such a high number of residential units. However, due to the nature of the site, in the town centre, it is not considered that there would be any undue increase in noise or disturbance for existing neighbours, especially given the distances involved.

7.7.22 Likely noise and disturbance impacts are also identified from both proposed developments at demolition and construction phase as well as a range of other impacts including from dust and vibration. These impacts may also affect new occupiers in one of the application sites from the other site, should this come forward earlier than the other. In this respect conditions are recommended to secure submission and approval of a detailed construction and demolition method statement prior to the commencement of either development to ensure suitable mitigation measures are put in place and adhere to through the development. Further conditions are also proposed to ensure all construction, demolition and associated deliveries takes place just normal daytime working hours only and that there should be no burning of waste on site which could adversely impact upon air quality.

7.7.23 Subject to the above recommended conditions it is not considered that the YHP1 or YHP2 proposals would result in any unacceptable noise impacts upon existing or proposed occupiers.

Air Quality

7.7.24 Both applications sites are located within an air quality management area (AQMA) and are accompanied by an air quality assessment which concludes that the levels of

pollutants at the new dwellings are likely to be below limit values. RBC Environmental Protection Officers consider that the assessment has been carried out to an appropriate standard and advise that subject to a condition to secure final details of the location of ventilation inlets for both developments it can be accepted that the proposals would not expose future occupiers to poor air quality. In terms of the proposed developments themselves creating air quality issues, the assessment concludes that as both proposals are to be car free, they would not have a negative impact upon air quality. This is accepted by RBC Environmental Protection Officers; however the introduction of a significant number of new residents to the area is likely to increase traffic movements, including from deliveries and taxis and therefore it is considered reasonable that some further air quality mitigation is provided by both development to mitigate for this. A condition is recommended for both the YHP1 and YHP2 proposals to secure submission and approval of a scheme or air quality mitigation, which could include measures such as moss tiles or bricks which absorb contaminants and release oxygen

7.7.25 Subject to the above recommended conditions it is not considered that the proposals would result in any unacceptable impacts upon air quality and that future occupiers would not be adversely impacted by poor air quality either.

Overlooking and Privacy

7.7.26 Given the distances to the nearest existing residential uses to both sites which are all over 30m away and separated by roads, it is not considered that the YHP1 or YHP2 proposals would result in any adverse impacts in terms of overlooking or loss of privacy. Whilst both proposals are significant in terms of its height and scale, and would be visible from nearby residential properties, the distances would ensure that it would not appear directly overbearing from a residential amenity perspective in this relatively dense urban environment.

7.7.27 Proposed upper floor residential windows would face each other within the three blocks (C, D and E) which form the YHP2 proposals. The distance between facing window within blocks D and E (the two taller blocks) would be 19m and distances between facing windows in blocks C and D would be 16m. Policy CC8 recommends a minimum separation distance between facing habitable room windows of 20m to prevent overlooking and loss of privacy for residential occupiers. However, within the Central Area, separation distances are often slightly less than this given the higher density of developments and in this respect the separation between facing windows in blocks D and E and C and D of YHP2 is not considered to result in any detrimental living conditions for future occupiers in terms of overlooking or privacy issues or to be unusual within the Central Area. There is a small part of proposed block C that juts out and projects even closer to block D and in this location separation distances between the blocks is as close as 11m. As can be seen in figure 67 below this situation affects two or three flats only on each floor in both blocks. The impacted flats in Block C, unlike those impacted in Block D, are dual aspect and it is proposed that the windows to the relevant flats facing Block C would be obscurely glazed. This is considered to provide suitable mitigation to prevent any unacceptable overlooking or loss of privacy, whilst the dual aspect nature of the flats that would be required to have some obscurely glazed windows means that they would still be served by adequate daylight and outlook. Subject to a condition to secure relevant windows within Block C as obscurely glazed and retention of these in place, there are not considered to be an unacceptable relationships within YHP2 in terms of overlooking.



Figure 67 – YHP2 – Layout of proposed Blocks C and D

7.7.28 Between the two residential blocks (A and B) which form part of the YHP1 proposals the closest relationship between facing residential windows would be 16m which is considered adequate to prevent any detrimental impact upon the living conditions of future occupiers in terms of overlooking.

7.7.29 The relationship between the YHP1 and YHP2 proposals also needs to be considered. A large number of the proposed dwellings to the upper floors of both buildings would face each other across the river. However, at the closest point the separation distance between the two buildings would be 35m. This far exceeds the recommended 20m separation distance required within Policy CC8 to prevent overlooking and loss of privacy for residential occupiers and as such, it is not considered that there would be any unacceptable relationships between the two buildings in this respect. It is acknowledged that there is a proposed development of 170 residential dwellings within an 8 storey building on the site of the John Lewis Collection Point which borders the IDR across from the YHP2 site. Planning permission for this development was resolved to be granted at Planning Applications Committee on 8th October 2025, but the planning permission has not yet been issued because a section 106 agreement first needs to be drafted and signed. This proposal incorporates habitable room windows to its north elevation which would face the proposed habitable rooms window within the YHP2 development across the IDR. The separation distance between the proposed habitable room window in both developments would exceed 30m and as such no adverse overlooking or loss of privacy impacts are identified.

7.7.30 No significant adverse impacts are identified in respect of the YHP1 and YHP2 proposals in terms of overlooking or loss of privacy.

Standard of Accommodation to be Provided and Accessibility

7.7.31 Part a. of Policy H5 (Standards for New Housing) requires that all new building housing outside of the Reading Central Area complies with the Nationally Described Space Standards (NDSS). The policy does not require new building housing within the Central Area to adhere to these standards. Within the YHP1 proposals 20% of the 1 bed units,

34% of the 2 bed units and 27% of the 3 bed units would fully meet the NDSS. Within YHP2 45% of the 1 bed units, 19th of the 2 bed units and 100% of the 3 bed units would fully meet the NDSS. The applicant explains that where overall unit sizes do not fully comply with NDSS, all habitable rooms (bedroom and living rooms) within these units do satisfy NDSS standards for individual rooms and that it is the absence of hallways areas and porches that cause the units overall to fall short of fully meeting the NDSS. The applicant sets out that NDSS standards do not take account of the specific characteristics of BtR accommodation, and the significant levels of communal amenity space provided as part of the scheme. Officers consider failure of a significant number of dwellings to fully comply with the NDSS is disappointing, albeit acknowledge compliance is not required by Policy H5 for new dwellings in the Central Area.

7.7.32 Both proposals incorporate a number of measures within the accommodation and landscaped areas to meet the accessibility needs of all users. A level approach/threshold would be provided to all entrances, and the main concierges and management hubs will have disabled access toilets and concierge desks will be designed in accordance with Part M of the Building Regulations. The ground floor levels have been designed to be step-free and designated apartments across all blocks will be wheelchair adaptable to meet the specific requirements of residents. Provision of a minimum of 5% of the total number of dwellings within each development as wheelchair user dwellings will be secured by way of conditions in accordance with part f. of Policy H5. Furthermore, such dwellings are also proposed to be located closest to fire escape routes. All external and internal doors and corridors will have a openings suitable for wheelchair users and all passenger lifts are also sized accordingly. Provision of and retention of lifts in good working order is proposed to be secured by way of condition for both proposed developments. An accessible w.c. will be provided within the entrance level of the apartments and all electrical switches and socket outlets will be mounted within the prescribed height limits. Both proposed developments are considered to be suitably accessible in accordance with Policy H5 and also Policy CC7 (Design and The Public Realm) which requires proposals are accessible, usable and easy to understand for all.

7.7.33 All public realm areas and entrances to residential lobby areas within both proposed developments are considered to benefit from good surveillance and access arrangements and to provide appropriate safe access for all. The Oracle has its own CCTV network, and the proposed developments would be connected to this and details are to be secured by way of conditions in respect of both developments.

7.7.34 The proposed BTR residential accommodation within both development is considered to provide an adequate standard of accommodation for future occupiers, in particular by providing access to the large podium and roof level terraces, ground floor residential lobby areas containing communal facilities, on-site 24 hour site management and maintenance services, cleaning services and pet-friendly dwellings.

External Lighting

7.7.35 As discussed within the design and public realm sections of this report (sections 2 and 3 above) both proposals would incorporate a range of external lighting features. To ensure future occupiers of both developments are not adversely impact by the proposed external lighting, a condition is recommended for each proposal to secure submission and approval of a detailed external lighting scheme to ensure all lighting is designed such that lux levels would not exceed those recommended in close proximity to residential dwellings. Subject to the recommended condition it is considered that external lighting impacts upon future occupiers at both sites can suitably managed to ensure no harm results to residential amenity.

Contaminated Land

7.7.36 A contaminated land desk study has been submitted with both applications which outlines that given the investigations and mitigation works that took place when both sites were

developed when The Oracle was first built, conditions within the ground are unlikely to be materially different to that reviewed and considered to be acceptable previously. Nonetheless, given this was some 25 years ago, conditions may have changed and also given the current proposals seek to introduce new residential occupiers to both sites, RBC Environmental Protection Officers recommend conditions are attached in relation to both proposed developments. These would secure submission, approval and implementation of contamination investigations and, if necessary, remediation schemes to ensure the sites are suitable for the proposed intended uses. The investigations need to take place after demolition and before construction and the proposed conditions will be worded accordingly to reflect this.

7.7.37 The recommended conditions would ensure that both developments would, in terms of potential contamination, be suitable for their proposed intended use.

Bin Storage

7.7.38 Policy CC5 (Waste Minimisation and Storage) requires that new developments incorporate facilities for storage of all type of waste and recycling. RBC Waste Officers have reviewed the bin storage proposals for both developments in respect of commercial and residential stores and are and are satisfied that the stores and bin collection points proposed are of suitable size to accommodate the necessary number of bins for each proposed use and development. As discussed in the Transport section of this report above (section 5) it is considered that the refuse collection arrangements proposed are also acceptable in respect of both developments. However, a condition is proposed for both developments to secure details of a refuse management strategy which will detail how all bins will be transferred between the stores and collection points to ensure the site is tidy and bins are not left at the collection points, as well as vermin control measures for all bin stores to ensure they are secure from pests.

Wind and Microclimate

7.7.39 A technical report assessing the microclimate/wind impacts of both proposed developments on future occupiers (and also nearby occupiers and future users of the area), has been submitted with the application. The assessment considers the impacts upon microclimate/wind impacts cumulatively in the event that both YH1 and YHP2 are built out and also individually in the event that one development is built and out and the other not. Given the technical nature of the report it has been independently reviewed on behalf of the LPA by a specialist consultant. Advice received from the independent review is that with either or both the proposed developments in place, the wind microclimate in and surrounding the application sites would remain suitable for the planned uses within the boundaries of best practice for wind microclimate assessments within the UK. A condition is recommended to be applied to both developments to ensure the proposals are carried out in accordance with the submitted wind/microclimate report which includes provision of appropriate safety balustrades to the edges of upper floor external terraces.

Fire Safety

7.7.40 Both the YHP1 and YHP2 applications are accompanied by a Fire Statement. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) have reviewed both proposals and the Fire Statement and advise that they are content with the fire safety design for both proposals in respect of the land uses proposed. Both the HSE and the Royal Berkshire Fires and Rescue Service advise that the Applicant will need to address further matters at the later regulatory stages of the build but for the planning stage of both developments the submitted information is considered to be satisfactory. The Fire Statement outlines a number of fire safety measures for both proposals including dual stair cores for escape purposes to all blocks apart from Block C within YHP2 which is less than 18m in height and therefore the Regulations do not require a dual stair core for buildings of this height. Fire alarms and sprinklers will also be provided through the buildings within both developments.

7.7.41 Overall both individually and cumulatively, the YHP1 and YHP2 proposals are considered to provide a satisfactory standard of accommodation for future occupiers and the applications are considered to satisfactorily demonstrate that they would not result in any significant adverse impacts upon existing surrounding occupiers. Both proposals are considered to demonstrate compliance with Policies CC7, CC8, EN15, EN16, EN17, and CR10.

8. Sustainability and Energy

7.8.1 Policy H5 (Standards for New Housing) requires that all new-build housing is built to high design standards. In particular, new housing should adhere to water efficiency standards in excess of the Building Regulations and achieve Zero Carbon homes standards (for major schemes), Policy CC2 (Sustainable Design and Construction) and Policy CC3 (Adaption to Climate Change) seeks that development proposals incorporate measures which take account of climate change. Policy CC4 (Decentralised Energy) requires developers to consider inclusion of decentralised energy infrastructure, in particular any development of more than 20 dwellings and/ or non-residential development of over 1,000 sq m shall consider the inclusion of decentralised energy provision, within the site, unless it can be demonstrated that the scheme is not suitable, feasible or viable for this form of energy provision.

7.8.2 Both applications are accompanied by a Sustainability and Energy Statement which outline have the proposals have been designed to satisfy the above policy requirements. In terms of measurable performance of the developments with regard to sustainability and energy efficiency the Sustainability and Energy Statements outline that the non-residential elements of both developments have all been designed to achieve a BREEAM Excellent standard which satisfies the requirements of Policy CC2. A series of conditions are recommended for both applications to require design stage and 'as built' final BREEAM certification to be submitted and approved to confirm the BREEAM performance of the developments achieve Excellent. The projected BREEAM performance of both proposals has been reviewed on behalf of the LPA by a specialist consultant who confirms that the projections have been carried out to an appropriate standard and are reasonable and achievable.

7.8.3 In terms of the residential elements of both applications, Policy H5 requires all new residential dwellings to achieve Zero Carbon Homes standards. In accordance with the adopted RBC Sustainability and Design SPD (2021) adherence to the Zero Carbon Homes standards requires a minimum 35% improvement in the dwelling emission rate over the 2013 Building Regulations standard, and a financial contribution towards carbon offsetting within the Borough to off-set the remaining dwelling emission rate to zero. The Building Regulations were updated in 2021 to require a higher standard dwelling emission rate performance from all dwellings which is already a 31% improvement over 2013 Building Regulations Standards. The Sustainability and Energy Statements for both the YHP1 and YHP2 proposals model/predict that the proposals will both achieve over a 50% improvement in the 2021 Building Regulations emission rate which equates to an even higher performance when compared to the 2013 Building Regulations standards as required by Policy H5. A financial contribution to off-set the dwelling emission rate performance of both developments to zero is also proposed to be secured by way of s106 financial contribution obligation for both applications. A series of planning conditions are also recommended for both applications to secure design stage and as built stage final SAP assessment for all dwellings to confirm the actual performance of the developments and amount of carbon off-setting contribution required. The projected dwelling emission rate performance of both proposals has also been reviewed on behalf of the LPA by a specialist consultant who confirms that the performance projections have been carried out to an appropriate standard and are reasonable and achievable and that the LPA can have confidence that both developments will achieve a dwelling emission rate performance which exceeds the standards required by Policy H5.

7.8.4 In demonstrating compliance with the above standards, the proposals have been designed to incorporate a range of sustainable construction techniques and measures to adapt to climate change including use of sustainable and thermally efficient materials, high efficiency water fittings and the extensive on-site ecological and soft landscaping enhancements discussed earlier in this report to align with Policies CC2 and CC3. Key to achieving these standards is also provision of sources of decentralised energy within the developments in accordance with Policy CC4.

7.8.5 Initially both applications proposed that the main source of on-site decentralised energy provision for the developments would be utilising Ground Source Heat Pump (GSHP) systems which rely on underground coils or boreholes to extract latent heat from the ground, or as was proposed in this instance, from the latent water temperature heating from the adjacent River Kennet. Policy CC4 and the adopted RBC Sustainable Design and Construction SPD (2021) require that all developments consider use of GSHPs first over other forms of decentralised energy, given they enable greater seasonal efficiencies.

7.8.6 However, following further investigation and consideration of the viability of GSHP, the Applicant subsequently advised that they were changing approach and instead were proposing to utilise Air Source Heat Pumps (ASHPs) within both developments. They explain that reasons for change of approach are the timescales needed to investigate and ascertain the suitability of the local geology for use of GSHP (around 6 months) which they have not yet commissioned; and the impact this would have upon the development programme, the costs of such investigations including drilling of boreholes (£50,000 to £100,000) which they have not yet commissioned; as well as the additional timescales needed to obtain Licenses from the Environment Agency for boreholes and operation of GSHP. Given the above time and costs would be 'at risk' with no guarantee that GSHP systems can be provided, the Applicant advised that they are switching approach to utilise ASHP instead.

7.8.7 Officers (in consultation with the Council's Sustainability Manager) consider the removal of proposed GSHP systems from both developments to be disappointing given the adjacency of both sites to the river which was considered to provide an ideal source for river-based GSHP to be incorporated within the proposals. The RBC Sustainable Design and Construction SPD outlines under paragraph 8.6 that evidence should be provided at the detailed planning application stage where GSHP systems are discounted, and ASHP systems selected, with the following technical analyses included:

- Calculated system seasonal efficiency comparison;
- Evidence of any constraints on boreholes related to existing utilities or other sub-surface infrastructure;
- Borehole spatial constraints; and
- Any other technical reasons why GSHP cannot be progressed and ASHP must be taken forward as the primary heat technology.

7.8.8 The justification provided by the Applicant for moving away from provision of GSHP, advises of cost and time related issues and uncertainties more so than technical matters; which is not considered to robustly demonstrate sound technical reasons as to why GSHP is being discounted. However, the Applicant has agreed to undertake a study based upon the above technical criteria to determine whether or not it is feasible for both or either developments to incorporate GSHP using the river. This will be secured via condition for both the YHP1 and YHP1 proposals.

7.8.9 Instead, both the YHP1 and YHP2 proposals propose a combination of ASHP (for heating and hot water) and photovoltaic panels to provide sources of decentralised energy. Whilst, as discussed above GSHP, is the clear policy preference, ASHP in their own right are commonly provided and considered to be an appropriate form of decentralised energy provision. In terms of photovoltaics the Energy and Sustainability Statement set out that photovoltaics would be provided to the large flat roof spaces of both YHP1 and

YHP2 with 128 panels proposed to YHP1 and 65 panels to YHP2. The proposed use of ASHP and photovoltaics together with other sustainable construction techniques and measures to adapt to climate change still ensure that the proposals meet and exceed Local Plan targets in terms of BREEAM and zero carbon homes performance of the developments.

7.8.10 Notwithstanding the above, advice of the RBC Sustainability Manager is that both application sites are ideally located for possible future connection to a Reading Centralised Heat Network. Plans for the Heat Network are at an early stage but at present include a possible network extending from the Central Area to areas beyond in a south easterly direction and with the intention to run the network from GSHP utilising the River Kennet. Following discussions with the Applicant and the RBC Sustainability Manager it seems unlikely, given the early stages of a potential Reading Centralised Heat Network, that provision and implementation of such a network within a timeframe that would align with and facilitate possible connection and linking up with the proposed YHP1 and YHP2 development would be possible within this project's timeframe. Whilst it would be unreasonable to require the developments to be paused whilst heat network rollout catches up, the Applicant has agreed to an obligation within the s106 agreements for both applications that requires a pre-commencement of development feasibility review of connecting to a Reading Centralised Heat Network, to consider whether some a connection is possible from both a timing and technical perspective. Depending on the Applicant's timeframe for implementation of both applications it could be possible that one or both of the developments could connect to the Centralised Heat Network. For instance, if YHP1 were to be implemented first and built out it could be that by the time YHP2 implementation begins the Heat Network may be more advanced to make forming a connection to the YHP2 proposals more achievable. Officers are satisfied that the

7.8.11 Overall, with the proposed level of CO2 emission reduction, thermal efficiency measures and BREEAM Excellent rating, the proposals are considered to comply with policies CC2, CC3 and H5 and achieving these standards is considered to be a benefit of both proposals. In terms of decentralised energy, the proposed s106 terms to secure a feasibility review of possible connection of both developments to a future Reading Centralised Heat Network based around GSHP and the river is welcomed and together with the on-site ASHP provision and photovoltaic panels is considered to demonstrate compliance with Policy CC4 (Decentralised Energy Provision).

Waste Minimisation

7.8.12 It is noted that The Oracle is a relatively modern development, and it is questioned whether removing large areas of the built form is a sustainable approach. Policy CC5 (Waste Minimisation and Storage) sets out that development should demonstrate measures to minimise the generation of waste in the construction, use and life of buildings and promote more sustainable approaches to waste management, including reuse and recycling of construction waste. The RBC Sustainable Design and Construction SPD (2019) supports a hierarchical approach to dealing with waste associated with development as shown in figure 68 below.

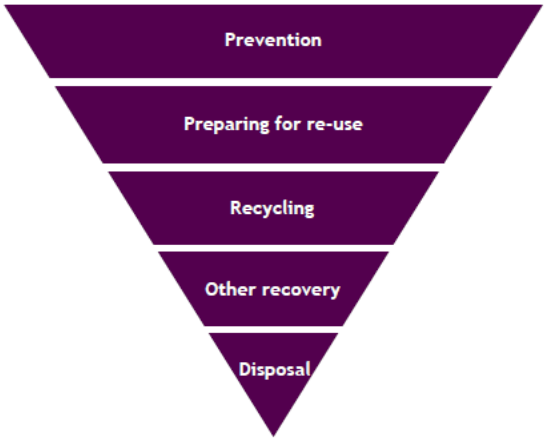


Figure 68 – Waste Hierarchy

7.8.13 As shown in the waste hierarchy from the SPD above, the preferred options for development are to prevent waste and for re-use of resources and materials. The YHP1 proposals achieve this in part by proposing to demolish only some of the existing building with the large- scale leisure and flexible commercial units to the rear of the YHP1 building to be provided by way of retention and conversion of the rear part of the existing building. Due to the nature, construction load and reinforced foundations required for the taller parts off the YHP1 and YHP2 proposals the parts of the site where these elements of both developments would be located are proposed for demolition. Notwithstanding this both applications set out that that the developments will follow the waste hierarchy principles to reduce the amount of waste sent to landfill and promote recycling. It is stated that any suitable materials from demolition waste would be crushed and re-used on the site during the construction of the proposals and that off-site re-use, recycling or recovery of demolition and construction waste would also be maximised where possible with waste only being sent to landfill as a last resort if there is no alternative disposal route.

7.8.14 Both applications also state that primary construction materials to be used will include internal and external concrete, steel frame and cladding, timber, brick and tarmac which, where possible, will be sourced from the local area. All timber and wood-based products would be sustainably sourced and procured from known and legal sources, whilst recycled aggregate will be given preference over virgin aggregate, a finite resource, wherever such material can meet the required specification for use. Further details with regard to construction materials and practices and opportunities to reduce waste through management and procurement will be set out within a Site Waste Management Plan (SWMP), submission and approval of which is to be secured by way of pre-commencement condition for both proposed developments.

7.8.15 It is acknowledged that The Oracle was only constructed around 25 years ago which is a relatively short lifetime for a building to then be proposed to be demolished. Given the significant difference in scale and appearance of the proposed developments compared to the existing shopping centre buildings it is accepted that from a practical perspective retention of all of the existing buildings is not realistic and in this respect part retention of the existing YHP1 building demise is welcomed. It must also be acknowledged that a significant part of both proposed developments is to enhance The Oracle from a visual perspective given the rather limited/dated architectural merit of the existing shopping centre buildings. It is considered that the proposals, at least from a purely design perspective, achieve a visual improvement particularly from street level and the public realm areas around both sites, which is unlikely to have been possible with a proposal that retained all of the existing buildings.

7.8.16 It is considered that both applications have presented a reasoned approach to waste minimisation and demonstrate a suitable and sustainable approach to demolition and construction in accordance with Policy CC5 and the RBC Sustainable Design and Construction SPD. Full details of the approach of both developments to waste

minimisation can be secured by way of submission and approval of a SWMP under appropriately worded pre-commencement conditions. As discussed above both the proposed YHP1 and YHP1 developments are considered to perform well in terms of adherence to Local Plan policies in respect of energy efficiency and sustainability and in overall terms the development is considered to demonstrate a suitable approach to sustainable design and construction.

9. Other matters

Archaeology

7.9.1 Policy EN2 (Areas of Archaeological Significance) requires developments to ensure that they do not have an unacceptable impact on archaeological remains, and for proposals to undertake appropriate safeguarding. The applicant has submitted a desk-based archaeological assessment for both the YHP1 and YHP1 application sites, which indicates that there is known archaeology within the vicinity of both site from the medieval period which could be impacted by the proposed developments. Berkshire Archaeology have reviewed the submitted archaeological assessment are recommend that conditions are attached in relation to both developments to secure submission, approval and implementation of written schemes of archaeological investigation to ensure the identification and recording of any buried archaeological remains, in accordance with Policy EN2.

Public Viewing Observatory Access

7.9.2 Policy CR10 requires tall building proposals to incorporate managed public access to an upper floor observatory and to ground floors where appropriate. The proposed commercial uses to the ground floor of both YHP1 and YHP2 facilitate managed public access to those parts of the developments. Whilst neither proposal includes an accessible upper floor observatory for the general public the nature of the upper floor residential uses to both YHP1 and YHP2 means that public access to these areas would raise a number of security concerns for residents of both developments. The Applicant notes that rooftop amenity spaces are provided through the scheme for use by residents within the BtR units. These spaces will be accessible by all residents and through the building management arrangements will be able to be booked by residents for private functions, which can be attended by non-residents. As such there would be some, albeit limited, potential for, non-residents to experience views created by the tall buildings.

Matters Raised in Public Representations

7.9.3 All matter raised are considered to have been addressed within the Appraisal section of this report.

10 Legal Agreement

7.10.1 Policy CC9 (Securing Infrastructure) states that proposals for new development will not be permitted unless, infrastructure, services, resources, amenities other assets lost or impact upon as a result of developments or made necessary by developments will be provided through direct provision or financial contributions.

7.10.2 This section below provides a brief overview of the reasoning for each of the section 106 contributions and obligations proposed to be secured for the YHP1 and YHP2 proposed developments:

7.10.3 **Affordable housing**: Policy H3 requires 30% on-site provision in Major schemes, although the Affordable Housing SPD advises the use of a deferred payment mechanism (DPM) in instances where the development, at the time of determination, cannot sustain the policy requirement level.

7.10.3 Following extensive discussions and examination of both proposals viability, agreement with the applicant has been reached on the provision of an (initial) on-site affordable housing provision, equating to 10%of dwellings within YHP1 and 10% of dwellings within YHP2 and the delivery and mix of the units is considered to be reflective of the overall dwelling provision for both applications. The figures of 10% have been arrived at following an open book viability discussions between the Applicant and the Council and has been agreed as being deliverable for both proposed developments.

7.10.4 **Affordable housing deferred payment mechanism**: via an 'open book' viability discussion, it has been agreed that there would be a mechanism to potentially capture a policy compliant 30% (equivalent) affordable housing provision for both the YHP1 and YHP2 proposals, on the basis that either or both developments achieves better than expected returns.

7.10.5 **Public realm/open space/leisure –** A financial contribution of £1.2million towards soft and hard landscaping works on land to the rear of Queens Road Car park, soft and hard landscaping working to the riverside foot and cycle ways between The Oracle and Waterloo Meadows and towards replacement play equipment to St Giles Play Area. To be provided by whichever of the YHP1 or YHP2 developments is implemented first. To provide necessary setting, open space and leisure mitigation for either and both developments.

7.10.6 **Public Realm works to the IDR/London Street junction** - Provision of scheme of works and its implementation to provide low level hard and soft landscaping in-front of the black history mural on Mill Lane, planting of 5 trees to the central reservation of the IDR to the west of the London Street junction and a feasibility study for replacement of existing crash barriers over the IDR crossing with low level soft landscaped planters and implementation. To provide necessary setting for the YHP2 development.

7.10.7 **Public art** – To require both YHP1 and YHP2 proposals to submit for approval of details, a scheme of public artwork to be provided within the public realm areas of both site. This will ensure that the art responds to its context and forms an integral part of the public realm areas within the sites.

7.10.8 **Medical facilities**: The addition of the 218 new residents in each of YHP1 and YHP2 will have an impact on medical facilities in the Central Area. The NHS Integrated Care Board has sought a financial contribution towards the provision of extra primary clinical capacity to mitigate the increased impact of both developments on primary care function in local GP practices in Abbey ward and adjacent wards. The NHS ICB in consultation with your officers and the applicant has agreed a relevant contribution of £188,352 from each application which would be secured through a S106 obligation. This is required to offset the additional impact of each proposals on medical facilities in the Central Area as a result of the population increase via the development in accordance with Policy CC9 and also reflects emerging requirements in respect of (new) Policy CC10 (Health Impact Assessment) H11 within the draft Local Plan Partial update (2025) which requires developments to mitigate negative impacts upon health. Other developments in the central area may also contribute towards this facility (as may be appropriate to those developments' individual circumstances and impacts).

7.10.9 **Transport:** there are various transport obligations required to ensure that both the YHP1 and YHP2 developments provide and are supplied with the necessary transport infrastructure and to facilitate the proposed on and off-site public realm works, including traffic regulation orders (TROs), section 278 agreement(s) and a car club.

7.10.10 **Heat network and energy**: to secure a carbon off-setting contribution for both YHP1 and YHP2 in accordance with Polich H5 and submission, approval and implementation of a feasibility study for connection of either or both developments to a Reading Centralised Heat Network in accordance with Policy CC4.

7.10.11 **Employment, skills and training**: provision of construction and end user phase employment and skills plans or equivalent financial contributions for both the YHP1 and YHP2 developments in accordance with the adopted Employment, Skills and Training SPD (2011) in order to ensure suitable skills, training and job opportunities are provided within the borough. Obligation wording for both developments to facilitate provision of either plans or equivalent financial contributions. All contributions to be calculated using the formula within the SPD.

7.10.12 **Build to rent restrictions**: the Recommendation box includes a detailed list of BTR restrictions which are considered necessary and have been used for similar developments within the borough to ensure control over the BTR development, for instance, setting out suitable approaches to for nomination rights.

7.10.13 **Monitoring section 106 costs/other**: this section includes the s106 monitoring costs and for the cancels reasonable legal costs to be paid.

7.10.14 Other obligations, as set out, are required in order to carefully control the delivery of the development and the trigger points and the details of the obligations themselves are considered to be necessary in order to provide a suitable development and deliver the various public benefits.

7.10.15 It is considered that each and every obligation, as also summarised at the outset of this report, would comply with the National Planning Policy Framework and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) in that they would be: i) necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms, ii) directly related to the development and iii) fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development, as set out in the National Planning Practice Guidance. They are also considered to comply Policy CC9 (Securing Infrastructure) and the and The Heads of Terms have been agreed with the applicant and the adopted Planning Obligations under Section 106 SPD (2015).

11. Equality implications

11.1 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.

11.2 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

12. Conclusion & planning balance

12.1 As with all applications considered by the Local Planning Authority, both of these planning applications are required to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise, in accordance with Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

12.2 Any harmful impacts of the proposed developments are required to be weighed against the economic, social, environment and any other public benefits in the context of national and local planning policies, as detailed in the appraisal above. In this instance the harmful impacts of both proposals include the identified incidences of less than substantial harm

to statutory and non-statutory heritage assets, including their settings, which as per paragraphs 215 and 216 of the NPPF (December 2024) and Policy EN1 of the RBC Local Plan 2019, must also be weighed against the public benefits of the proposals.

12.3 It is also pertinent that both the YHP1 and YHP2 applications propose developments which depart significantly from adopted policies within the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019). Both proposals are a departure in respect of Policy CR10 (Tall Buildings) given they incorporate tall building elements on sites that are both situated outside of the areas stated within the policy as being the only locations with the Central Area appropriate for tall buildings. Furthermore, the YHP2 proposals are also a departure in respect of Policy CR14g (The Oracle Extension, Bridge Street and Letcombe Street) which allocated a wider parcel of land within which the YHP2 site is located for retail uses only. The planning balance assessment for both applications therefore needs to consider whether there are material planning considerations that justify such departures form the Local Plan.

12.4 The proposals relate to two separate planning applications and therefore two separate planning balance assessments need to be undertaken.

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12.5 The harmful impacts identified by Officers in the assessment above are:

- Visual harm to the character and appearance of a various visually-sensitive parts of the Central Area, notably to views from the east along the Kennet around the High Bridge and from the north around Minster Street, St Marys Butts and Market Place as a result of the scale and visual dominance of the proposed buildings (Policy CC7 and CR10).
- Less than substantial harm at a high level to the settings of no. 2-4 London Street (London Street Brasserie), no.1 London Street (Grade II Listed Buildings and High Bridge (a Grade II Listed Building and Scheduled Ancient Monument) (Policy EN1 and CR10).
- Less than substantial harm at a moderate level to the setting of St Laurence Church (Grade I Listed), no.s 23-26, 27-28, 29-31, 32, 33-14, 48-49, 50-51 & 52 Market Place, no. 10 High Street, no.s 7-15 Gun Street and to the character, appearance and setting of the St Marys Butts/Castle Street Conservation Area and the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area (Policy EN1 and CR10).
- Less than substantial harm at a low level to the setting of no.s 33, 35, 37-39, 41, 49-53, 44-46, 48-52, 54-58, 62-66, 68, 69, 70, 72, 74-76, 80, 81, 86, 88, 89-93, 95-97, 99, 101, 103, 90, 92, 94, 104, 108 and 110 & 114 London Street (all Grade II Listed Buildings), no.s 73 & 75, 77 & 79 London Street (all Grade 2* Listed Buildings), no.s 43-75, 55-57, 60, 78, 82-84, 83-85, 87, 106 and 107 London Street all Buildings of Townscape Merit), St Marys Church (Grade I Listed Building) and Grade II Listed St Marys Churchyard and no.s 24-52 Queens Road, Telephone Exchange building at 41-45 Minster Street and the George Hotel and Restaurant at 10-12 King Street (all Grade II Listed Buildings) (Policy EN1 and CR10)
- Failure to provide an appropriate mix of dwellings within an overdominance of 1 bedroom dwellings (51% compared to the CR6 guidance of a maximum of 40%). Failing to meet the housing mix needs of the Borough (Policy H2)
- Sub-optimum standard of accommodation to some dwellings in terms of receipt of daylight (Policy CC8)

12.6 Public benefits associated with the YHP1 proposals are considered to be:

- Provision of 218 dwellings towards meeting the Council's housing needs on an accessible brownfield site (Policy CC6)
- Provision of 10% of dwellings as affordable housing despite the viability constraints of the proposed development, contributing towards the critical need for affordable

housing within the Borough including agreement to a deferred payment mechanism (Policy H3)

- Visual enhancements at street level from the high quality architecture to the shop fronts and ground floor frontages of the buildings (Policies CC7, CR2 and EN11)
- Activation of Yield Hall Place through provision of glazed frontages providing visual enhancement and vibrancy to a current poor quality part of the Central Area (Policies CC7, CR2 and RL1)
- Significant public realm enhancements along the riverside and Yield Hall Place including creation of a small pocket park (Policies CC7, CR3, EN9 and RL1)
- A net gain in on-site tree planting and significant soft landscaping proposals within the public realm areas and to roof top amenity terrace areas (Policies CC7 and EN14)
- A significant net gain in on-site biodiversity and provision of ecological enhancements (Policy EN12)
- Provision of a financial contribution towards off-site open space, public realm and leisure enhancements (Policies EN9, CR3 and CC9)
- Agreement to a future feasibility study for connection of the development to a future Reading Heat Network (Policy CC4)
- Provision of all commercial units at BREEAM Excellent standard and agreement a zero carbon off-setting contribution (Policies CC2 and H5).
- Diversification of part of The Oracle, a key contributor to the Reading Central Area and its vitality and viability to address retail market trends and address vacancy of existing retail floorspace, including the significant floorspace of the former Debenhams department store (Policy RL1)
- Facilitating significant investment in The Oracle strengthening its role in the evolving Central Area and Readings role a key regional centre and attracting people to the town (Policy RL1)
- Provision of a range of flexible Class E/Sui Generis bar use units, including a possible significant leisure offer, increasing the potential for occupancy of units by wider range of occupiers creating potential to enhancing the both the day and nighttime economy offer for the local community adding vibrancy to the Central Area (Policy RL1)
- Improved connectivity/permeability between The Oracle and the Central Area to the north via removal of the gate and replacement with bollards at the junction of Yield Hall Place and Minster Street (Policies CC7 and TR1)
- Creation of jobs at both construction and end user phases (Policy CC9)
- Provision of a financial contribution towards healthcare facilities within Abbey and adjacent wards (Policy CC9)

12.7 The Recommendation box advises that two matters are outstanding at this time. The progress and satisfactory conclusion to these matters will be factors in the planning balance and commentary will be provided in and update report or at the committee meeting.

12.8 Notwithstanding the above, Officers consider the planning balance to be very finely poised. The harms identified, particularly in relation to scale and visual dominance, extensive harmful heritage impacts and overdominance of 1 bed units with the dwelling mix are considered to be significant. However, there are also considered to be significant public benefits including the substantial enhancements to public realm areas both on and off site, street-level activation and creating visual interest via new shopfronts to existing poor quality parts of the Central Area, provision of 218 dwellings towards meeting the Council's housing needs whist providing a high standard of accommodation for future occupiers as well as the range of benefits evidenced by the Applicant in terms of securing diversification of The Oracle to facilitate it to secure its existing and future important role in the overall vitality and viability of the Central Area and Readings role as a key regional centre within the Thames Valley, in accordance with Policy RL1. Whilst the proposals are a departure from Policy CR10 of the Local Plan Officers considered that adequate material planning considerations and public benefits have been demonstrated by the Applicant to justify the specific departure identified in this instance.

12.9 In this finely balanced case, it is recommended that planning permission be granted, subject to the completion of a s106 agreement and the conditions outlined in the recommendation box at the top of this report for this application.

PL/22/1917/FUL – YHP2

12.10 The harmful impacts identified by Officers in the assessment above are:

- Visual harm to the character and appearance of a various parts of the Central Area, notably to views from the south from the IDR (Queens Road), London Street, east along the Kennet around High Bridge and from the north around St Marys Butts and Market Place as a result of the scale and visual dominance of the proposed buildings (Policy CC7 and CR10).
- Less than substantial harm at a high level to the setting of no. 2-4 London Street (London Street Brasserie), no.1 London Street (Grade II Listed Buildings and High Bridge (a Grade II Listed Building and Scheduled Ancient Monument) (Policy EN1 and CR10).
- Less than substantial harm at a moderate level to the setting of St Laurence Church (Grade I Listed), no.s 23-26, 27-28, 29-31, 32, 33-14, 48-49, 50-51 & 52 Market Place, no. 10 High Street, no.s 7-15 Gun Street, no.s 33, 35, 37-39, 41, 49-53, 44-46, 48-52, 54-58, 62-66, 68, 69, 70, 72, 74-76, 80, 81, 86, 88, 89-93, 95-97, 99, 101, 103, 90, 92, 94, 104, 108 and 110 & 114 London Street (all Grade II Listed Buildings), no.s 73 & 75, 77 & 79 London Street (all Grade 2* Listed Buildings), no.s 43-75, 55-57, 60, 78, 82-84, 83-85, 87, 106 and 107 London Street all Buildings of Townscape Merit) and to the character, appearance and setting of the St Marys Butts/Castle Street Conservation Area and the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area (Policy EN1 and CR10).
- Less than substantial harm at a low level to the setting of no.s, St Marys Church (Grade I Listed Building) and Grade II Listed St Marys Churchyard and no.s 24-52 Queens Road all Grade II Listed Buildings) (Policy EN1 and CR10)
- Failure to provide an appropriate mix of dwellings within an overdominance of 1 bedroom dwellings (44% compared to the CR6 guidance of a maximum of 40%) Contrary to Policies CR6 and H2 and failing to meet the housing mix needs of the Borough
- Sub-optimum standard of accommodation to some dwellings in terms of receipt of daylight (Policy CC8)

12.11 Public benefits associated with the YHP2 proposals are considered to be:

- Provision of 218 dwellings towards meeting the Council's housing needs on an accessible brownfield site (Policy CC6)
- Provision of 10% of dwellings as affordable housing despite the viability constraints of the proposed development, contributing towards the critical need for affordable housing within the Borough including agreement to a deferred payment mechanism (Policy H3)
- Visual enhancements at street level from the high quality architecture to the shop fronts and ground floor frontages of the buildings (Policies CC7, CR2 and EN11)
- Activation of Yield Hall Place and the IDR (Queens Road) through provision of glazed frontages providing visual enhancement and vibrancy to a current poor quality part of the Central Area (Policies CC7, CR2 and RL1)
- Significant on-site public realm enhancements along the riverside, Yield Hall Place and the IDR (Queens Road) (Policies CC7, CR3 and RL1)
- Provision of off-site public realm enhancements around the IDR (Queens Road)/London Street junction (Policy CC7, CR3, CC9 and RL1)

- A net gain in on-site tree planting and significant soft landscaping proposals within the public realm areas and to roof top amenity terrace areas (Policies CC7 and EN14)
- A significant net gain in on-site biodiversity and provision of ecological enhancements (Policy EN12)
- Provision of a financial contribution towards off-site open space, public realm and leisure enhancements (Policies EN9, CR3 and CC9)
- Agreement to a future feasibility study for connection of the development to a future Reading Heat Network (Policy CC4)
- Provision of all commercial units at BREEAM Excellent standard and agreement a zero carbon off-setting contribution (Policies CC2 and H5).
- Diversification of part of The Oracle, a key contributor to the Reading Central Area and its vitality and viability to address retail market trends and address vacancy of existing floorspace (Policy RL1)
- Facilitating significant investment in The Oracle strengthening its role in the evolving Central Area and Reading's role as a key regional centre and attracting people to the town (Policy RL1)
- Provision of a flexible Class E/Sui Generis bar use unit and, whilst smaller, more modern cinema leisure offer, increasing the potential for occupancy of units by a wider range of occupiers creating a better quality leisure offer more aligned to modern customer expectations, contributing towards both the day and nighttime economy offer for the local community adding vibrancy to the Central Area (Policy RL1)
- Improved connectivity/permeability between The Oracle and the Central Area to the south off-site via improvements to the crossings over the IDR (Queens Road) (Policies CC7 and TR1)
- Creation of jobs at both construction and end user phases (Policy CC9)
- Provision of a financial contribution towards healthcare facilities within Abbey and adjacent wards (Policy CC9)

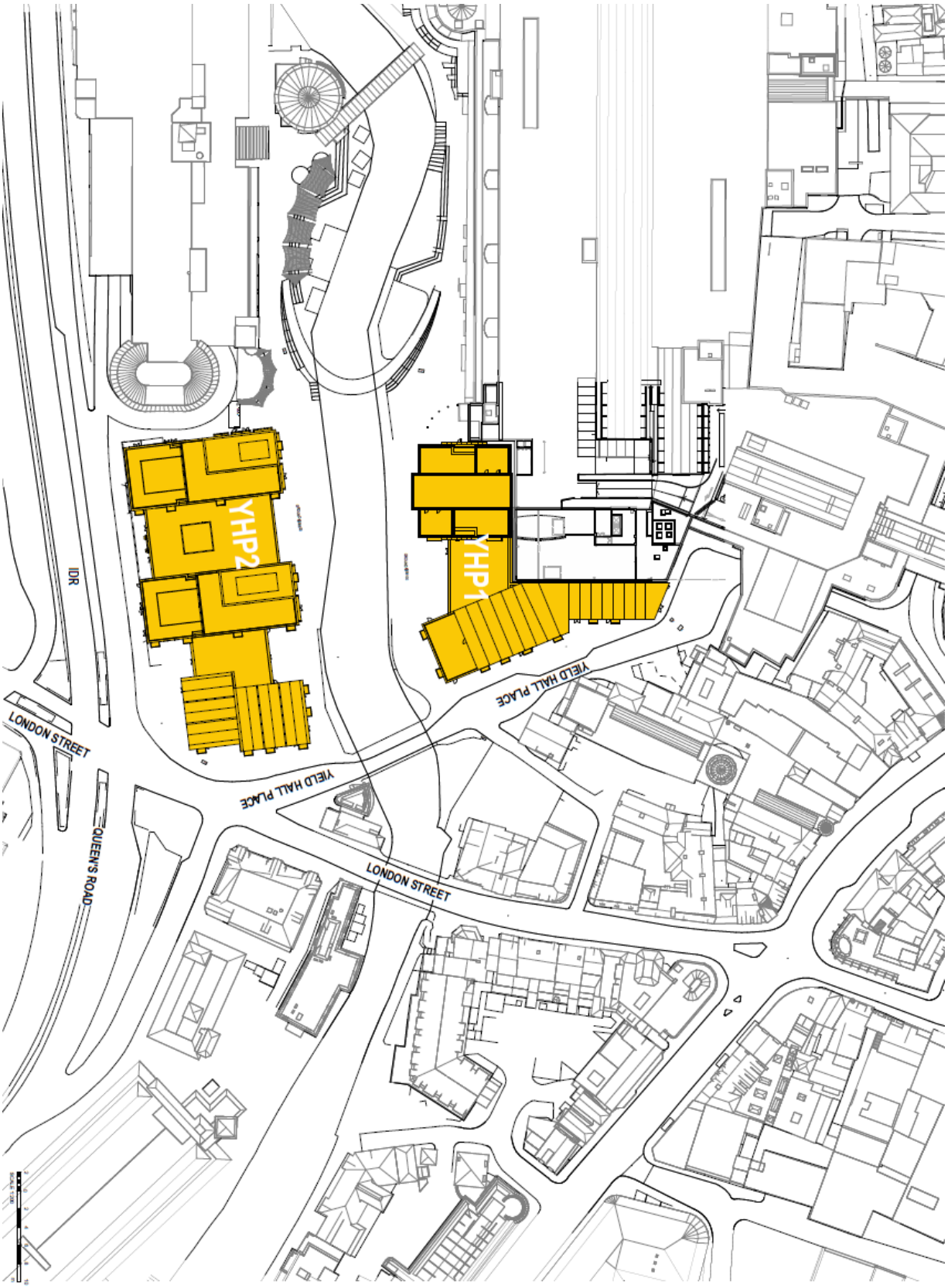
12.12 The Recommendation box advises that two matters are outstanding at this time. The progress and satisfactory conclusion to these matters will be factors in the planning balance and commentary will be provided in and update report or at the committee meeting.

12.13 Notwithstanding the above, Officers consider the planning balance for this application to also be very finely poised. The harms identified, particularly in relation to scale and visual dominance, extensive harmful heritage impacts and overdominance of 1 bed units with the dwelling mix are considered to be significant. However, there are also considered to be significant public benefits including the substantial enhancements to public realm areas both on and off site, street-level activation and creating visual interest via new shopfronts to existing poor quality parts of the Central Area, provision of 218 dwellings towards meeting the Council's housing needs whist providing a high standard of accommodation for future occupiers as well as the range of benefits evidenced by the Applicant in terms of securing diversification of The Oracle to facilitate it to secure its existing and future important role in the overall vitality and viability of the Central Area and Readings role as a key regional centre within the Thames Valley, in accordance with Policy RL1. Whilst the proposals are a departure from Policies CR10 and CR14g of the Local Plan Officers considered that adequate material planning considerations and public benefits have been demonstrated by the Applicant to justify the specific departures identified in this instance.

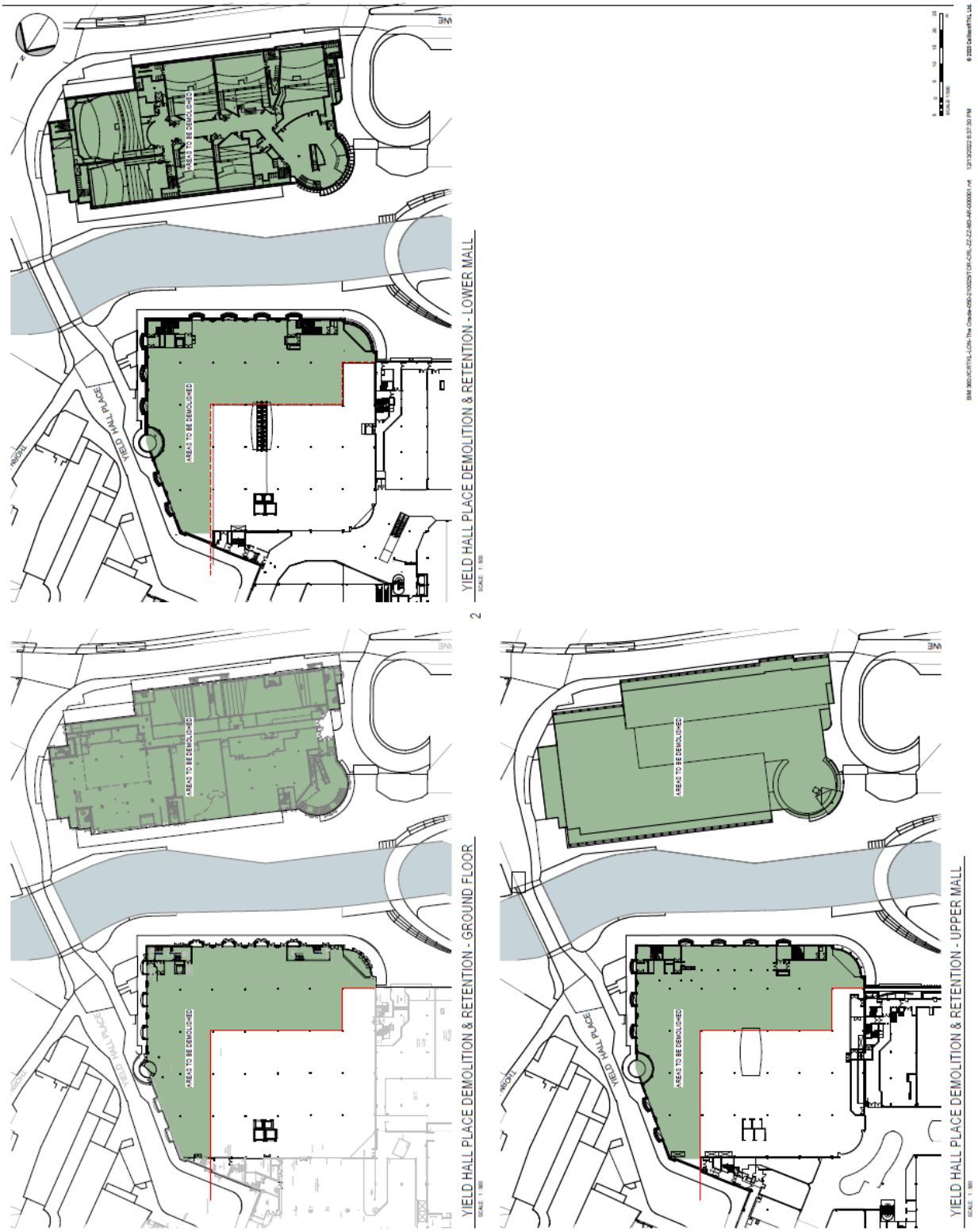
12.14 In this finely balanced case, it is recommended that planning permission be granted, subject to the completion of a s106 agreement and the conditions outlined in the recommendation box at the top of this report for this application.

Case Officer: Matt Burns

A selection of plans and drawings submitted (not all shown) with each application are shown below: Full sets of drawings can be viewed using the application search function on the Council website.



Proposed site plans (YHP1 and YHP2)



Propsoed demolition plan (YHP1 and YHP2)

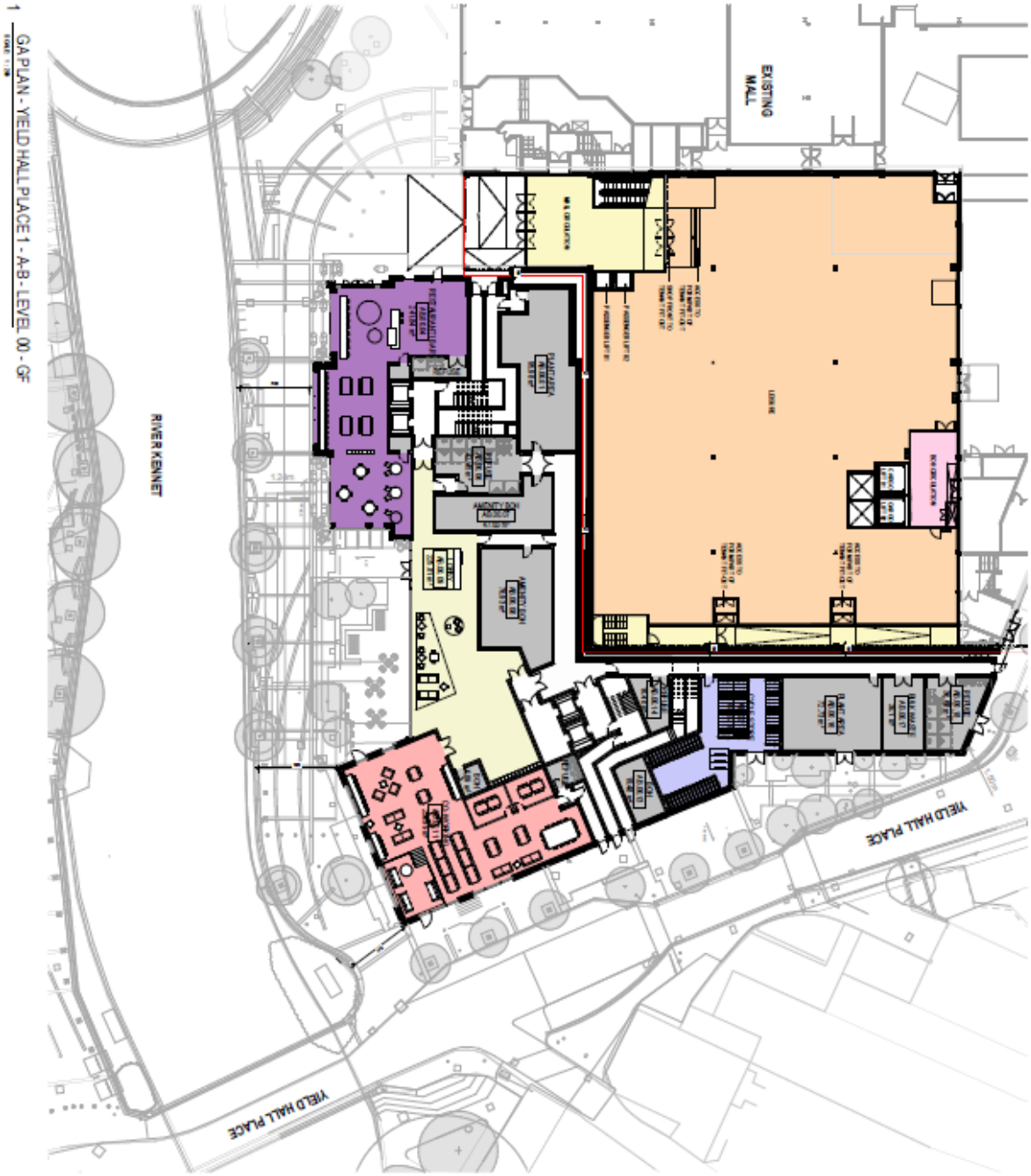
Building References

Yield Hall Place 1 (YHP1) : Blocks A, B.

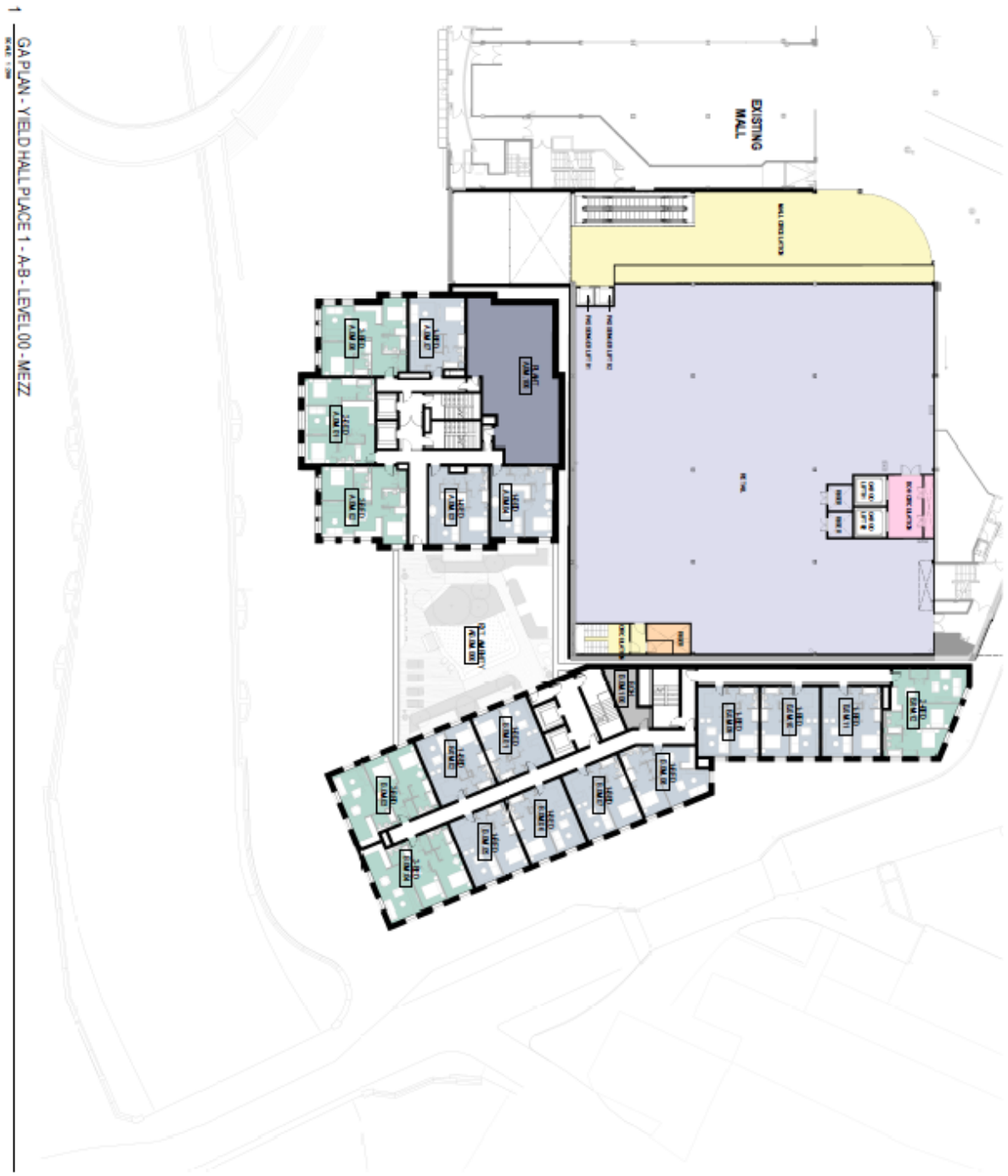
Yield Hall Place 2 (YHP2) : Blocks C, D, E.

Proposed block numbers (YHP1 and YHP2)

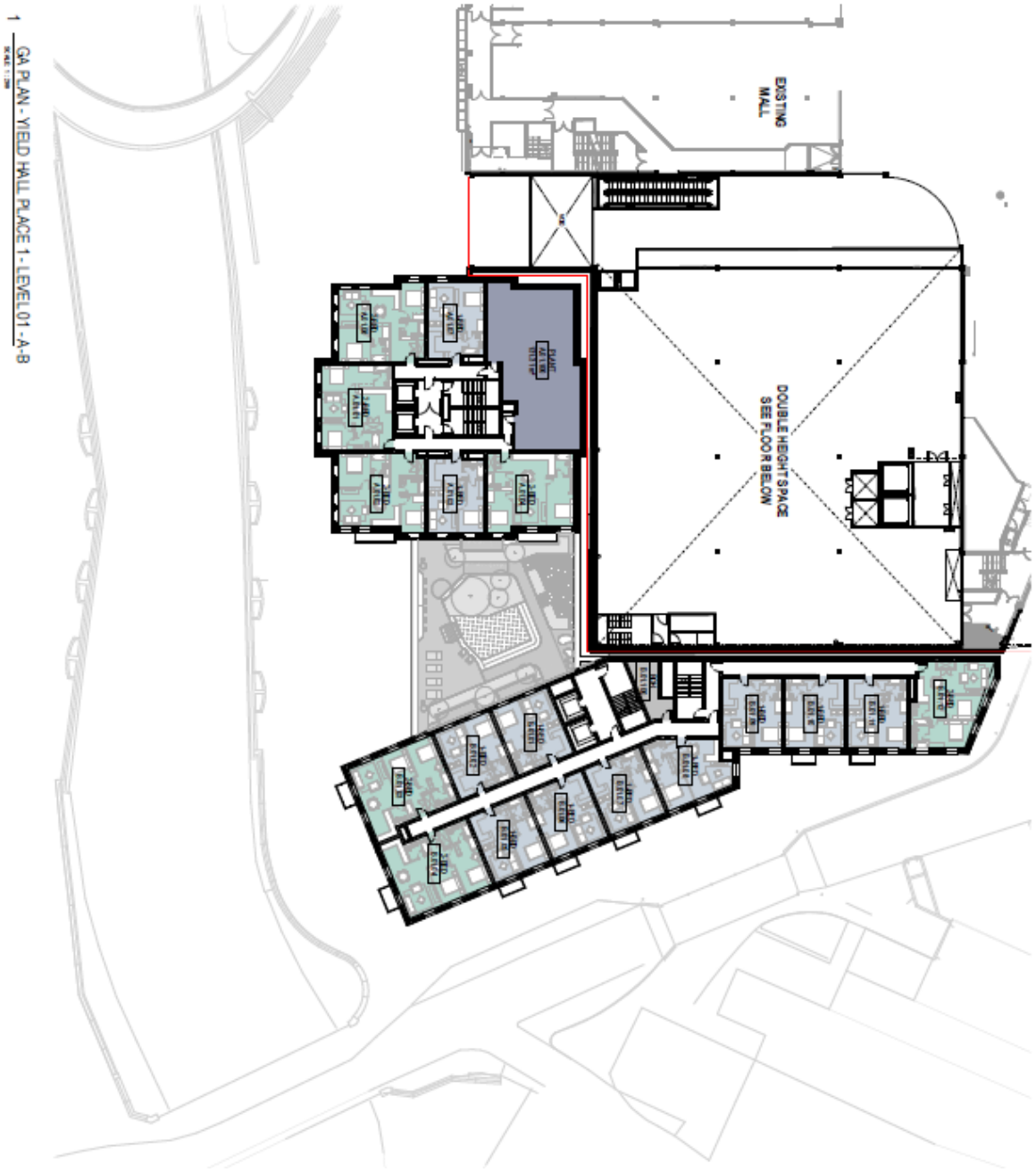
YHP1



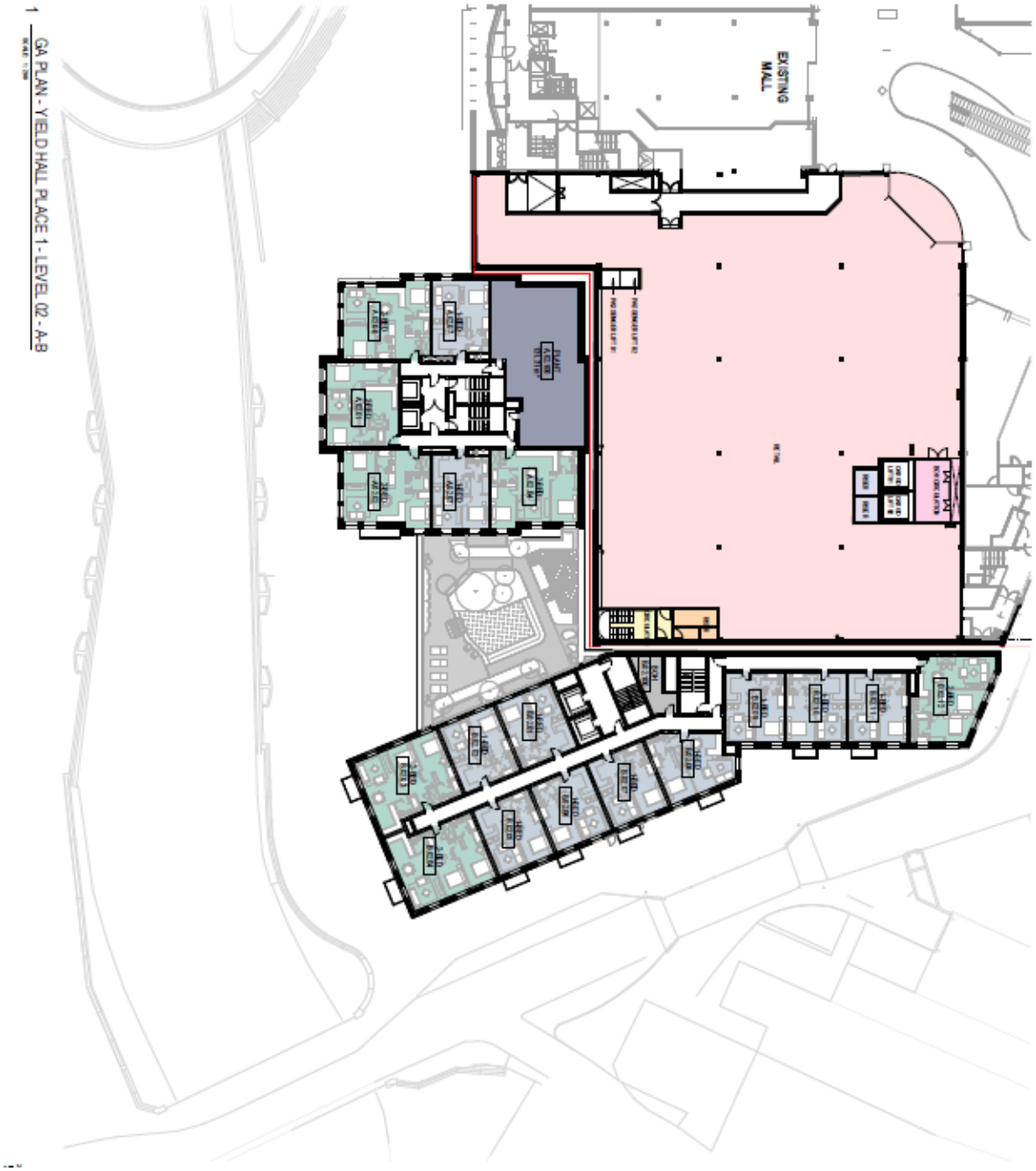
Propsoed ground floor plan



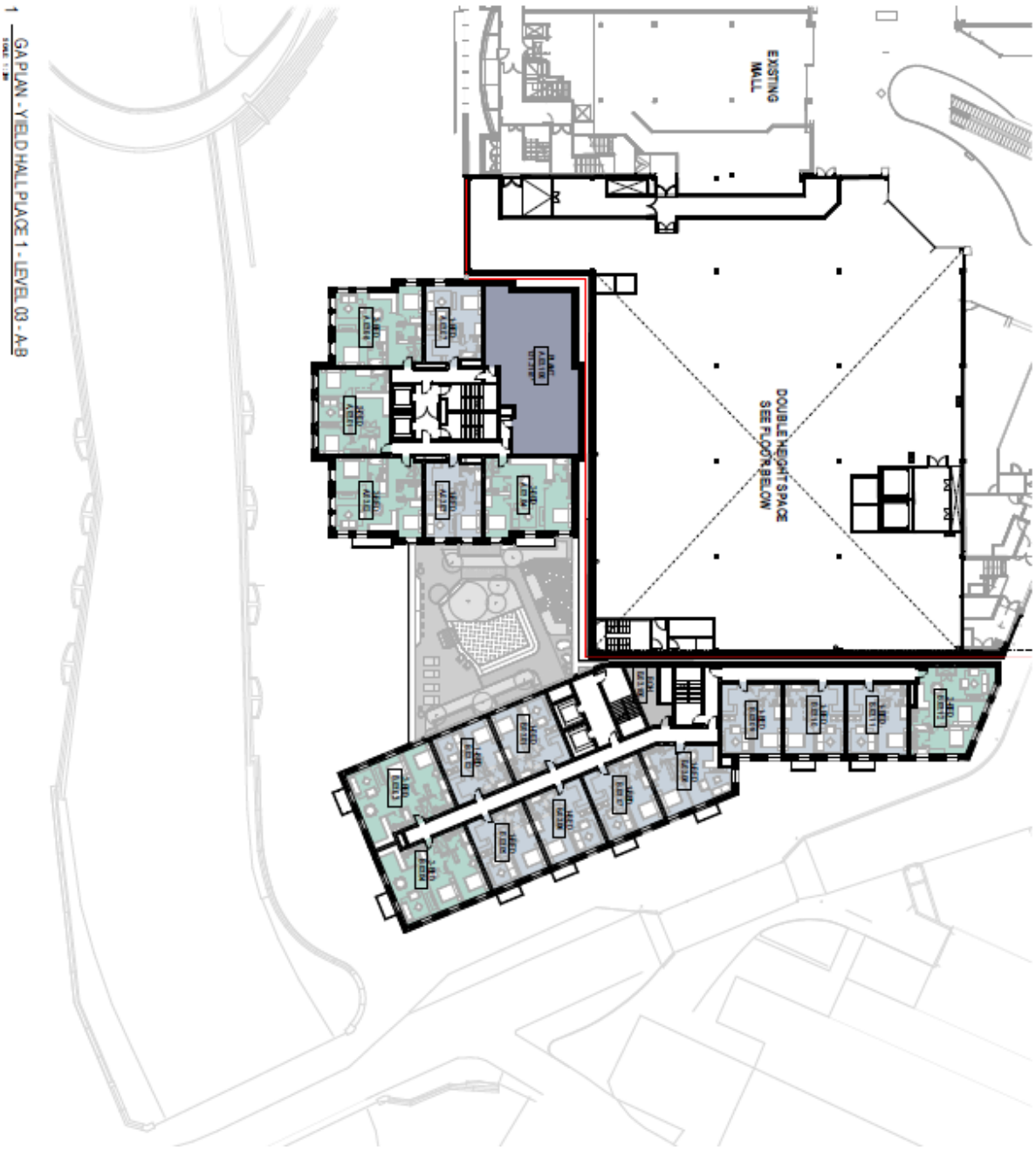
Proposed mezzanine floor plan



Proposed 1st floor plan



Proposed 2nd floor plan



Proposed 3rd floor plan



Proposed 4th floor plan



Proposed 5th floor plan



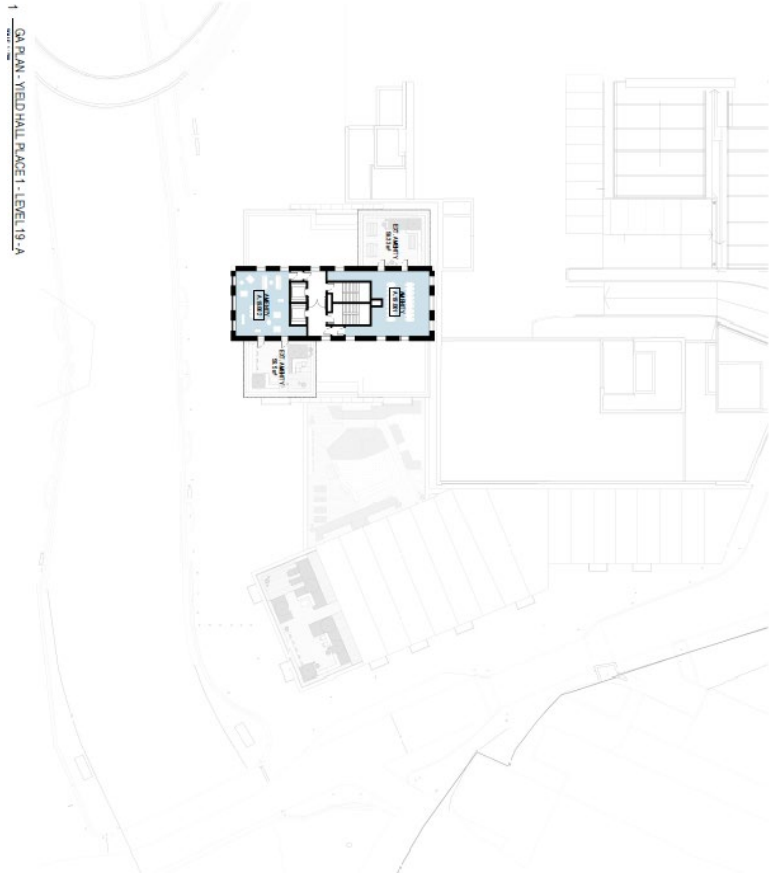
Proposed 6th and 7th floor plans



Proposed 8th and 17th floor plans (layout of in-between floor similar)



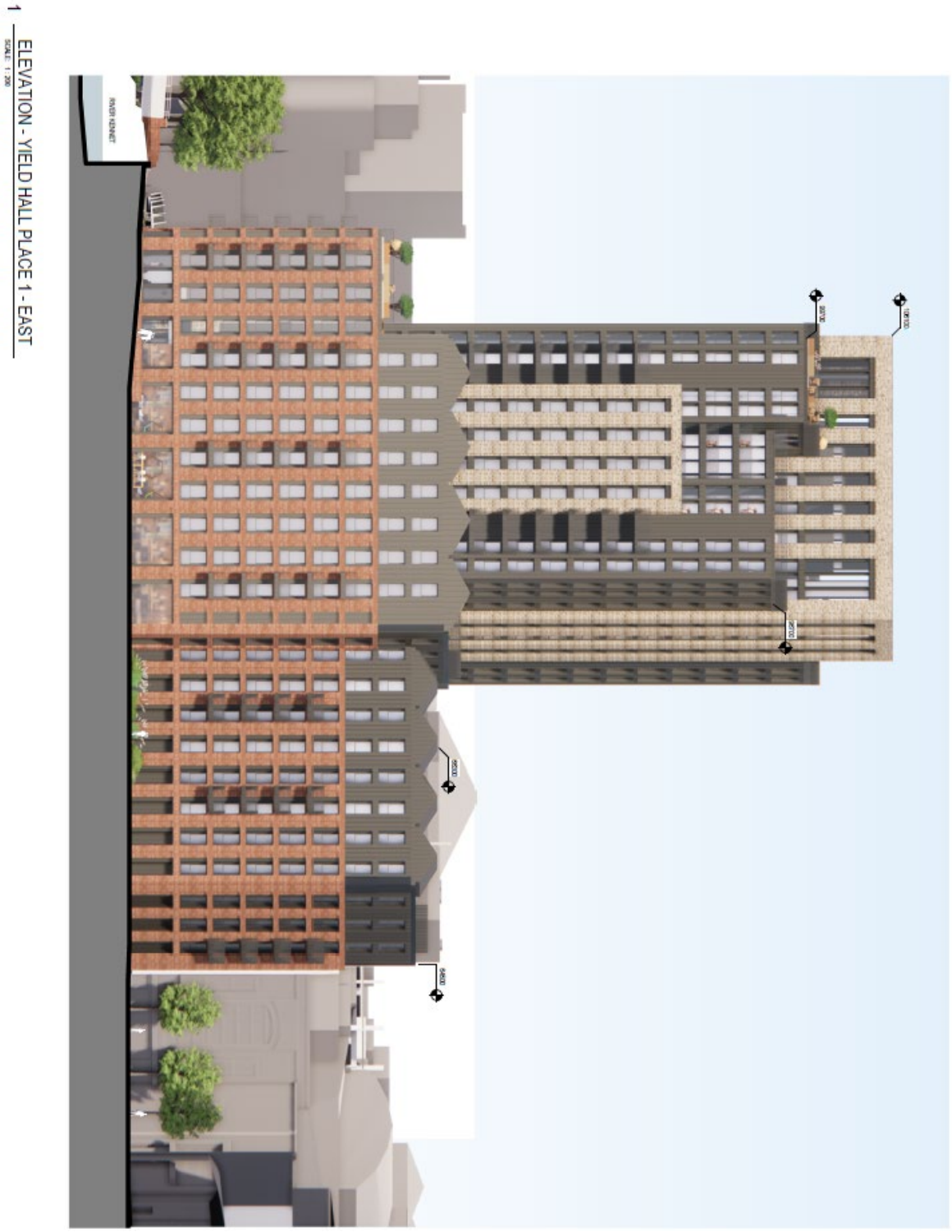
Proposed 18th floor plan



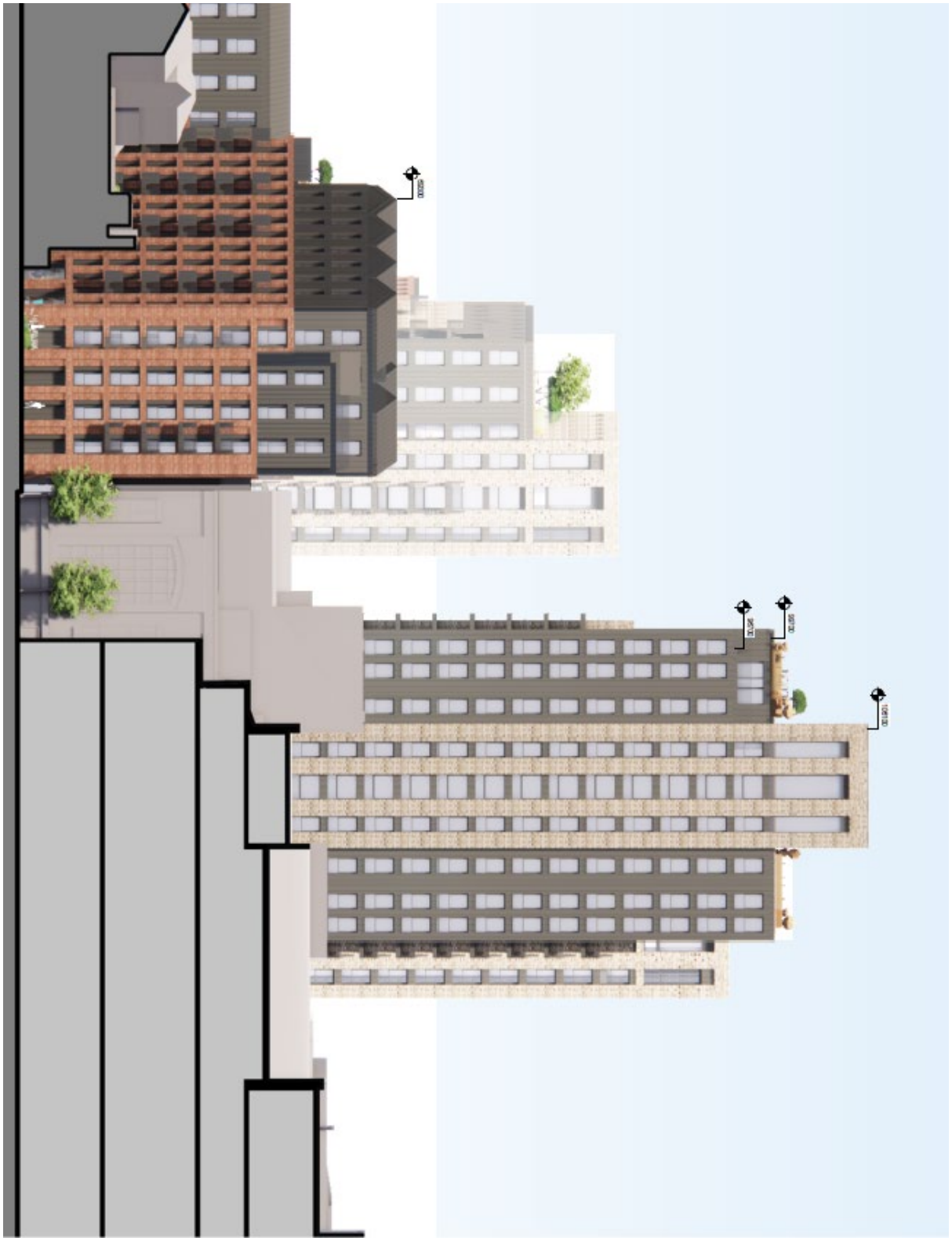
Proposed 19th floor plan



Proposed roof plan



Proposed East Elevation – Yield Hall Place



Proposed north elevation (YHP2 proposals shown in background)



Proposed South elevation (riverside)



Proposed east elevation



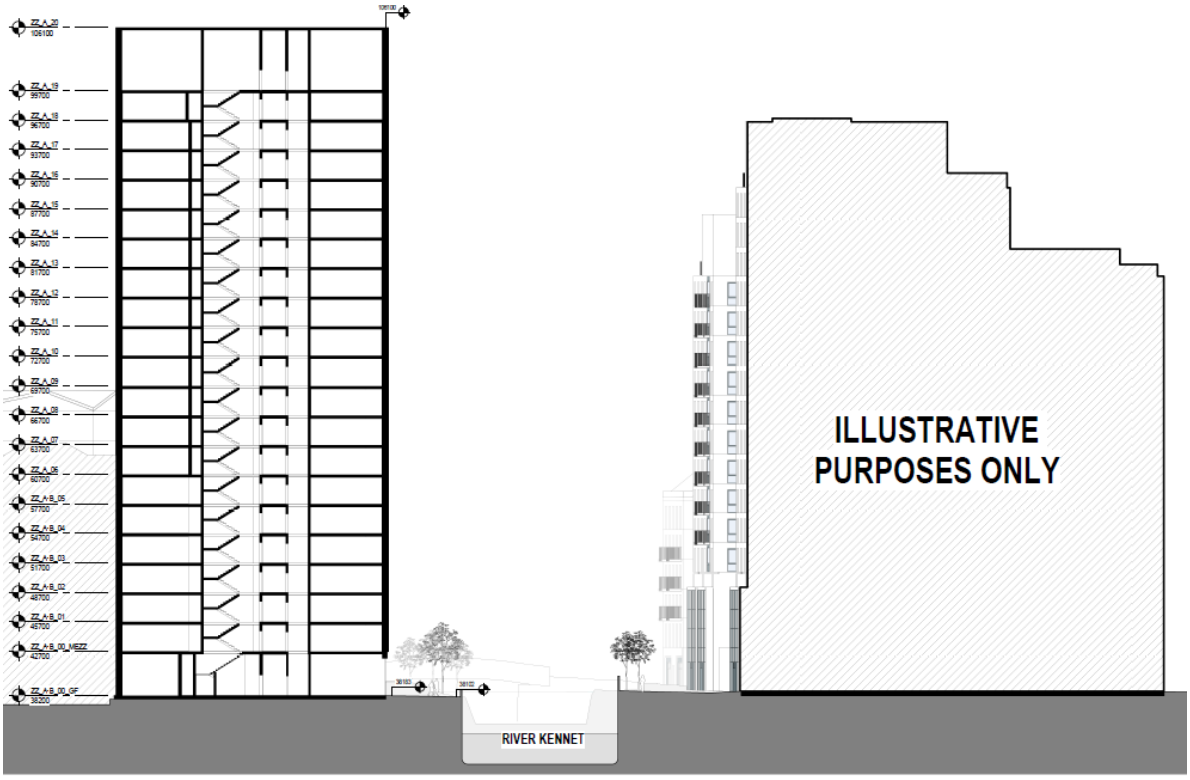
Proposed east elevation Block B



Proposed west elevation Block A



Proposed blocks A and B sections



Proposed block A section with river showing YHP2 proposals



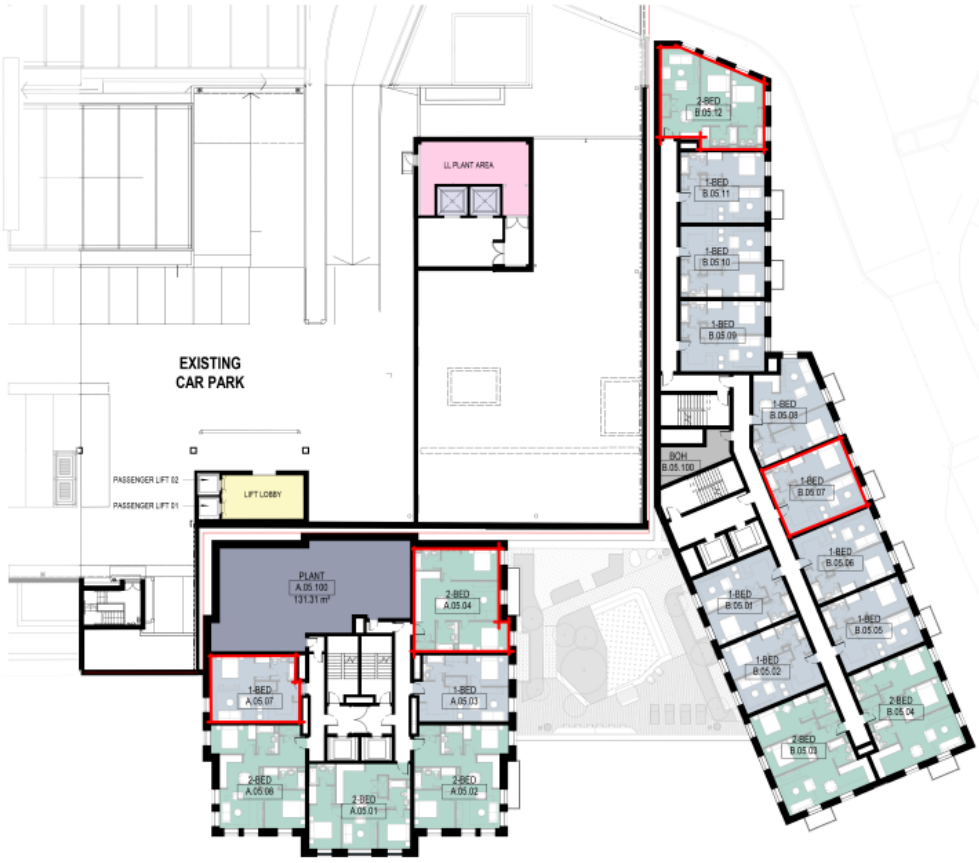
Proposed 1st floor plan – location of affordable dwellings outlined in red



Proposed 2nd floor plan – location of affordable dwellings outlined in red



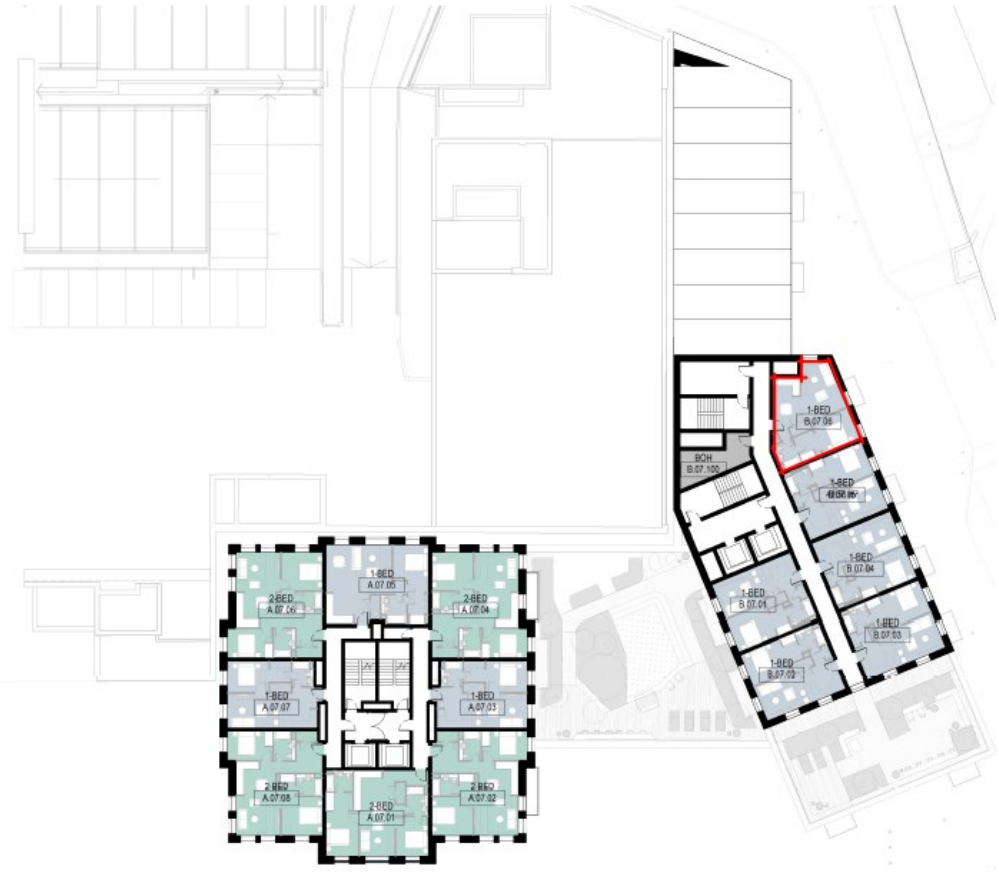
Proposed 4th floor plan – location of affordable dwellings outlined in red



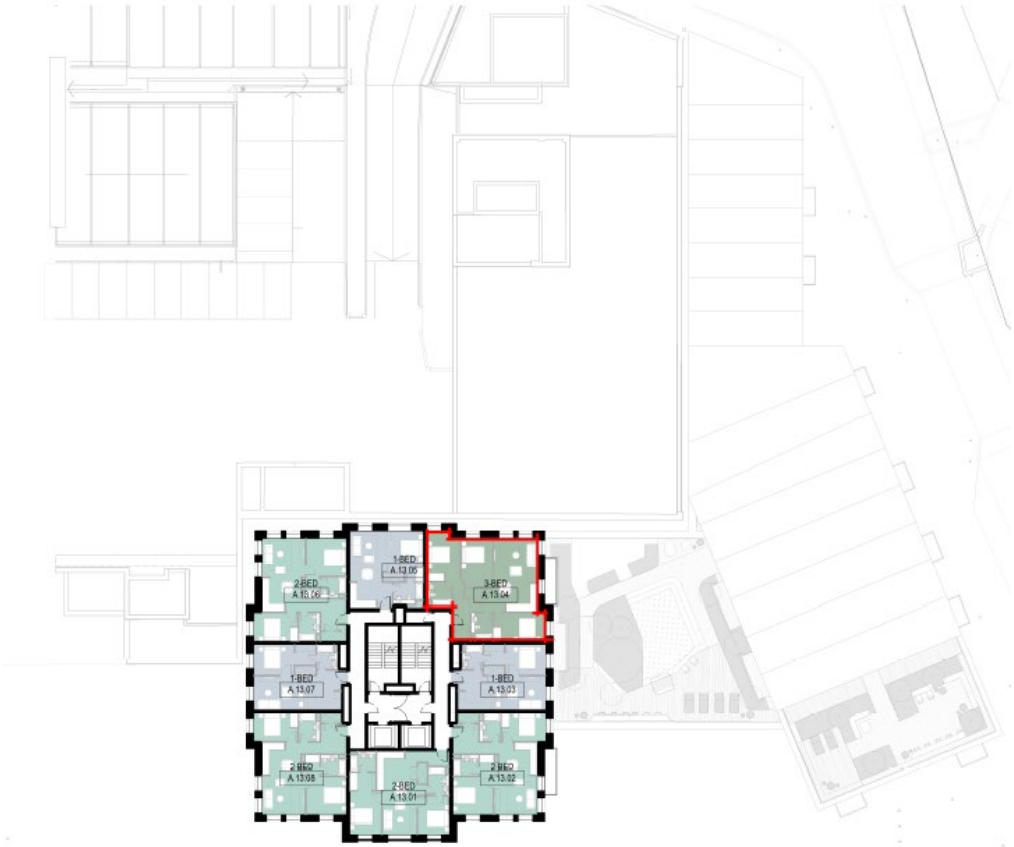
Proposed 5th floor plan – location of affordable dwellings outlined in red



Proposed 6h floor plan – location of affordable dwellings outlined in red

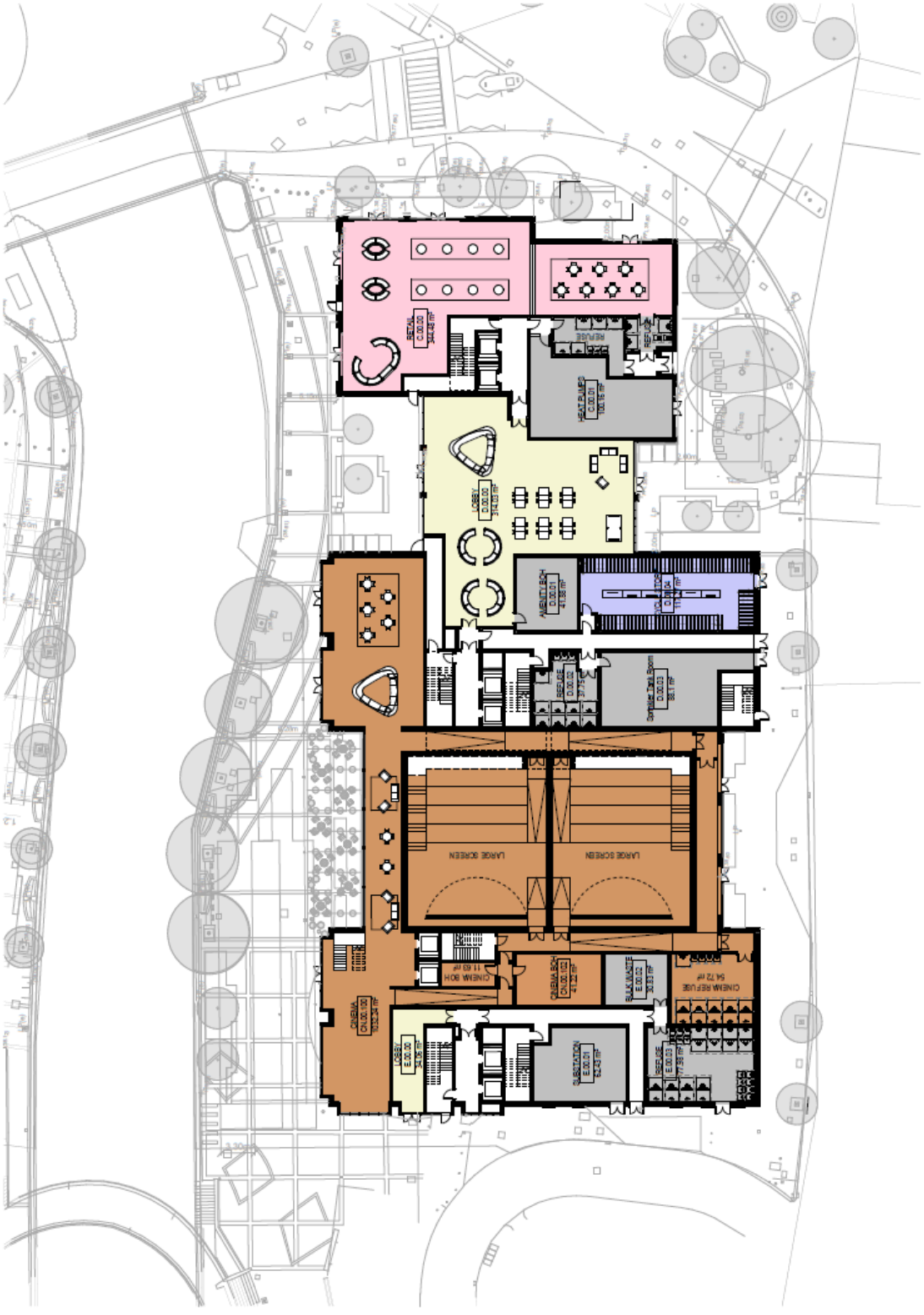


Proposed 7th floor plan – location of affordable dwellings outlined in red

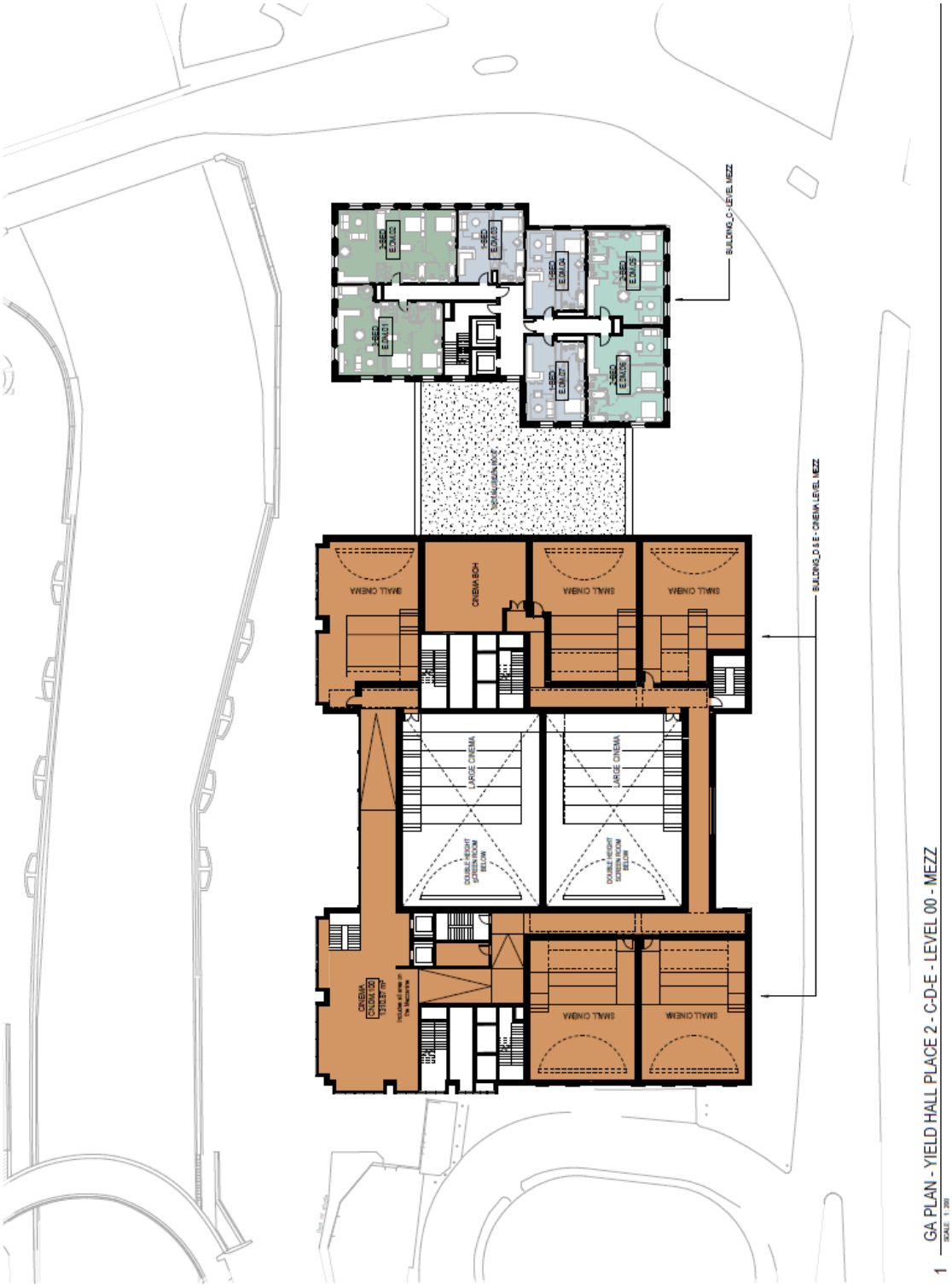


Proposed 13th floor plan – location of affordable dwellings outlined in red

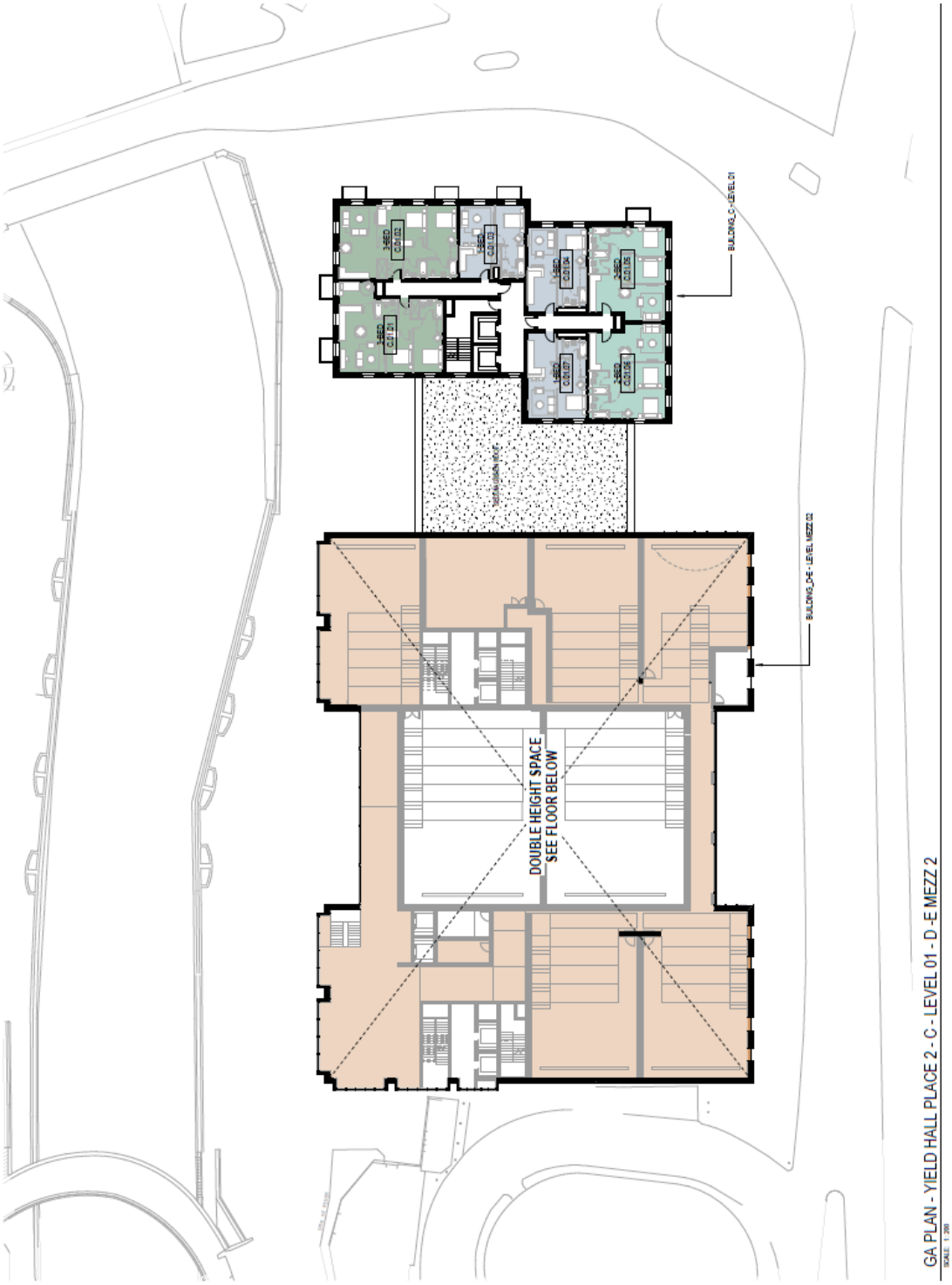
YHP2



Proposed ground floor plan



Proposed first mezzanine floor plan



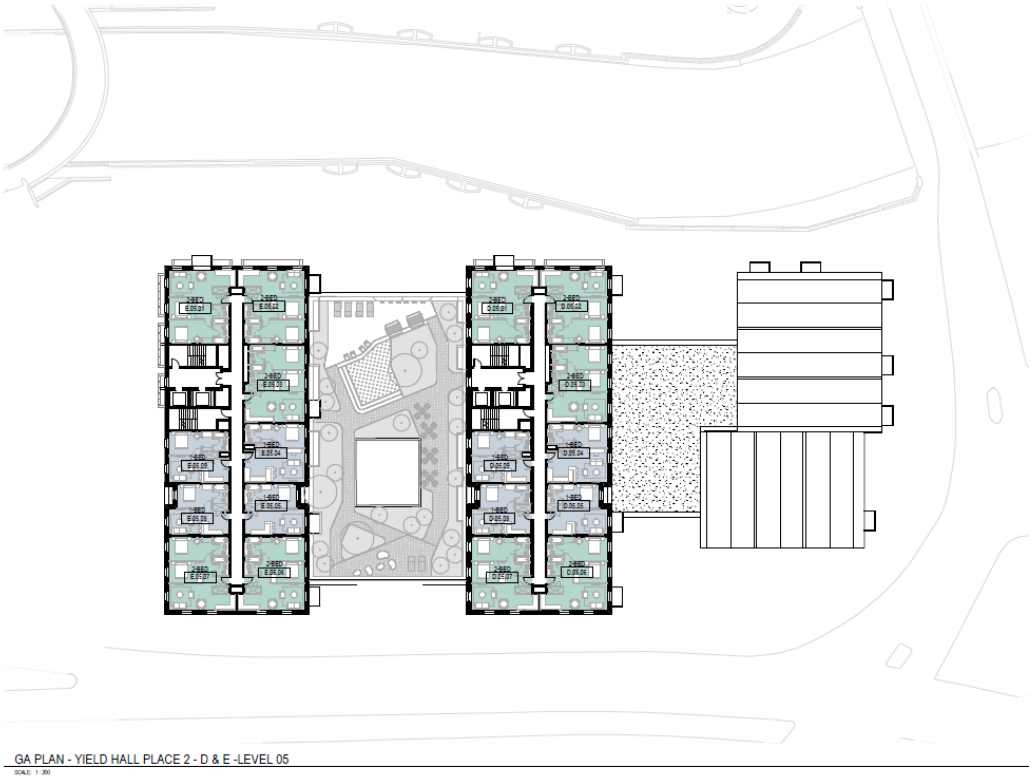
Proposed second mezzanine floor plan



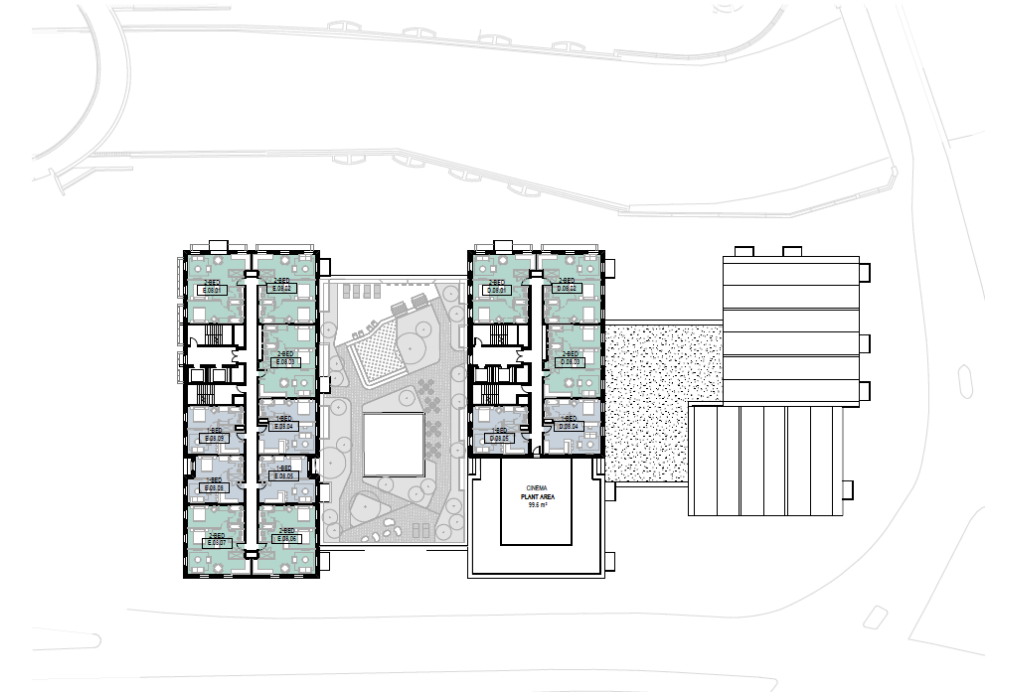
Proposed 3rd floor plan



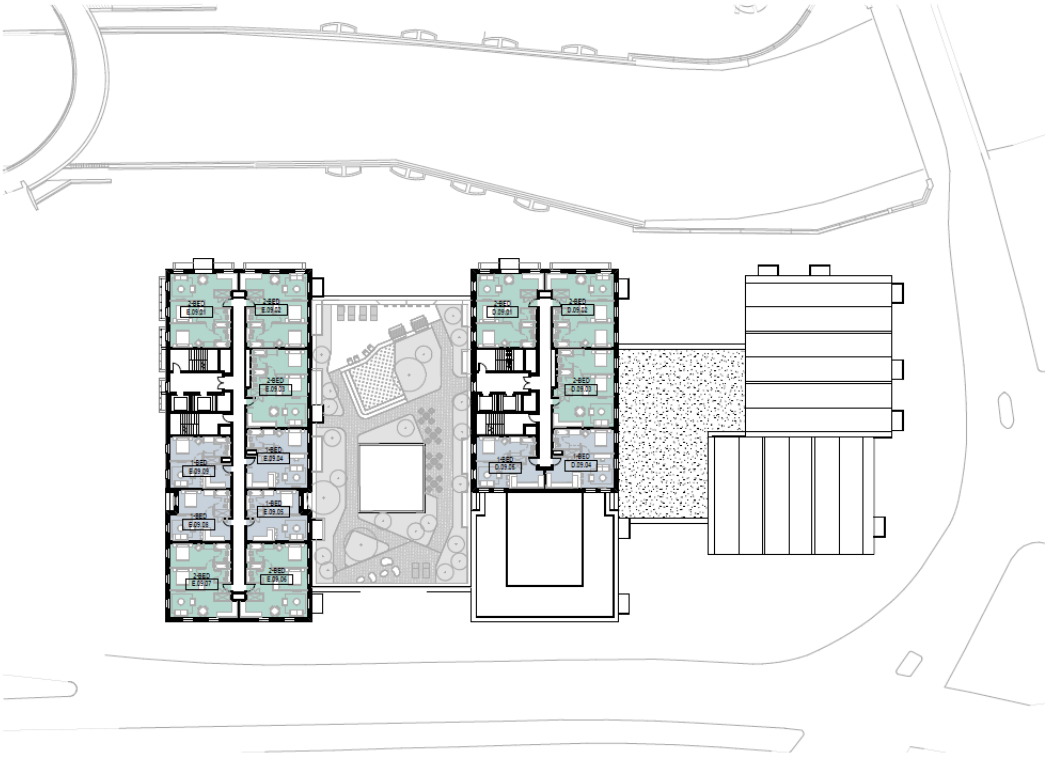
Proposed 4th floor plan



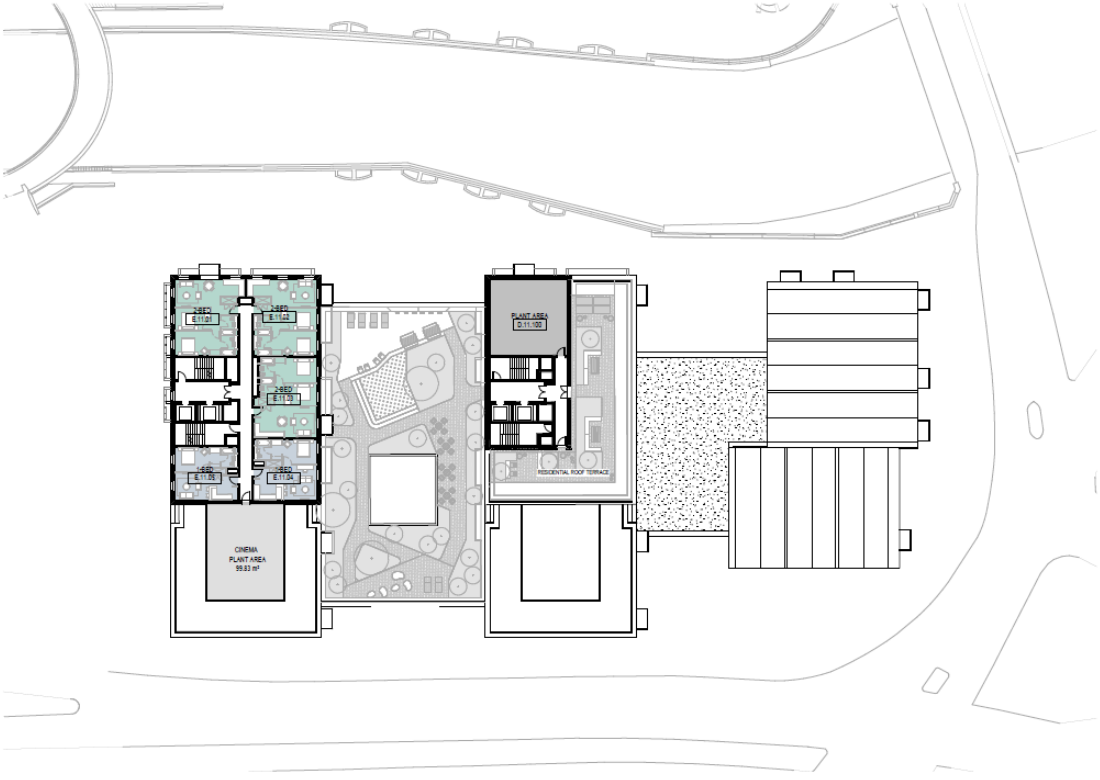
1 GA PLAN - YIELD HALL PLACE 2 - D & E -LEVEL 05



Proposed 5th to 8th floor plans

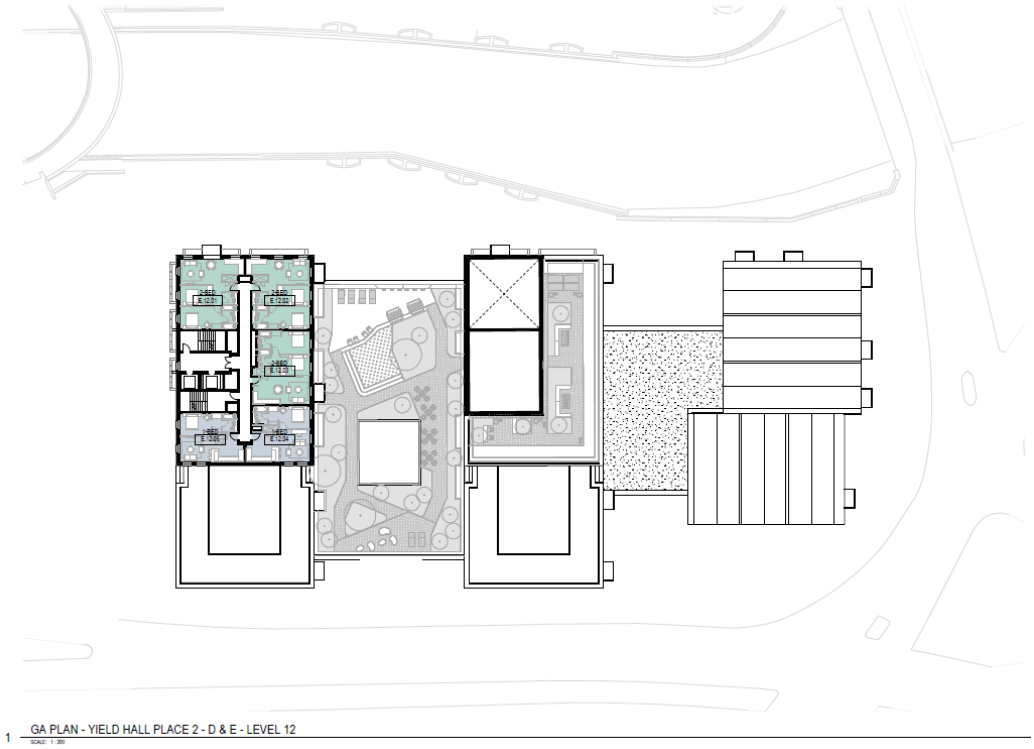


1 GA PLAN - YIELD HALL PLACE 2 - D & E - LEVEL 09

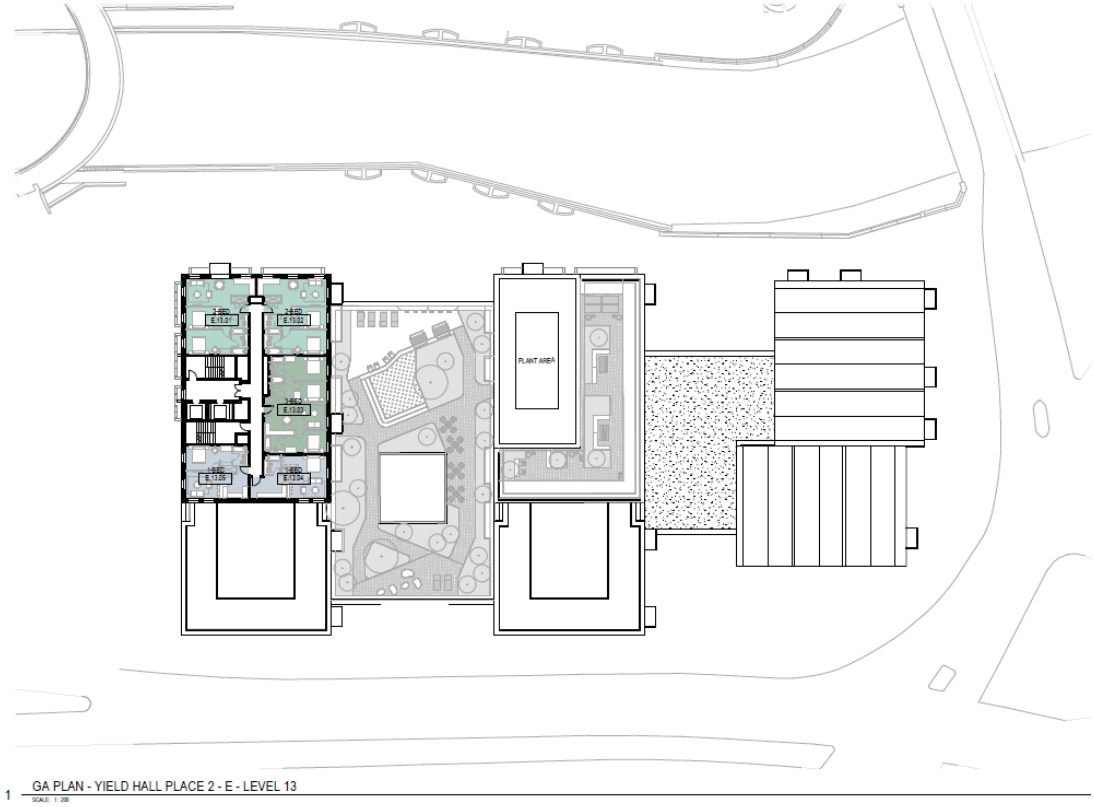


1 GA PLAN - YIELD HALL PLACE 2 - D & E - LEVEL 11

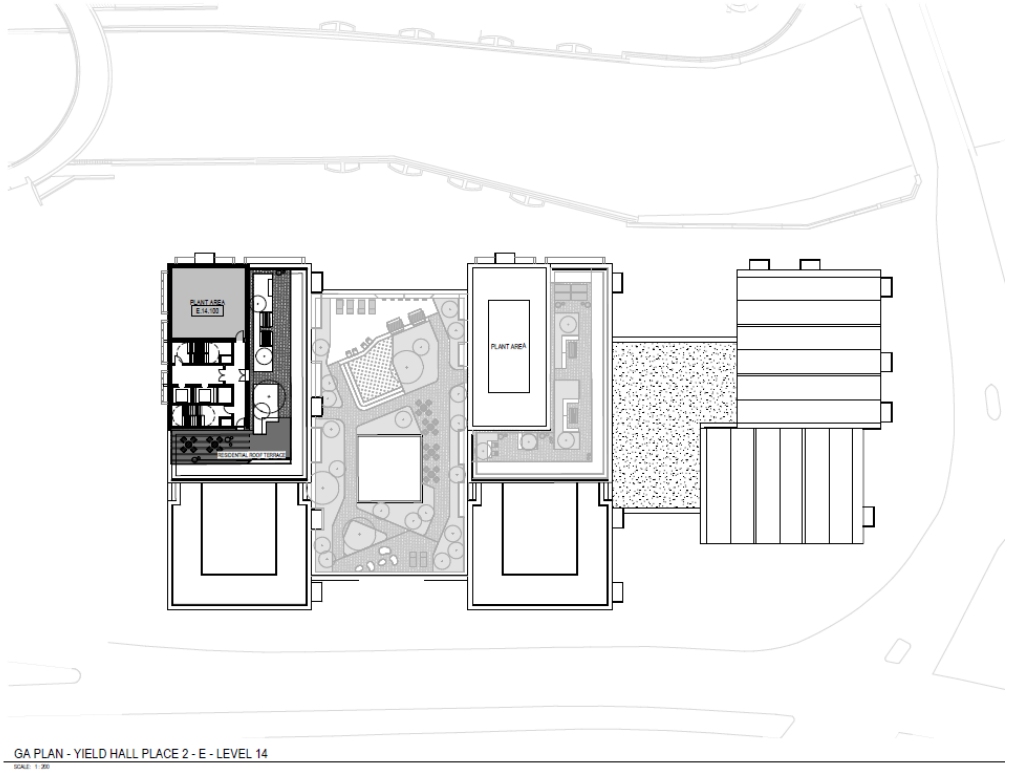
Proposed 9th to 11th floor plans

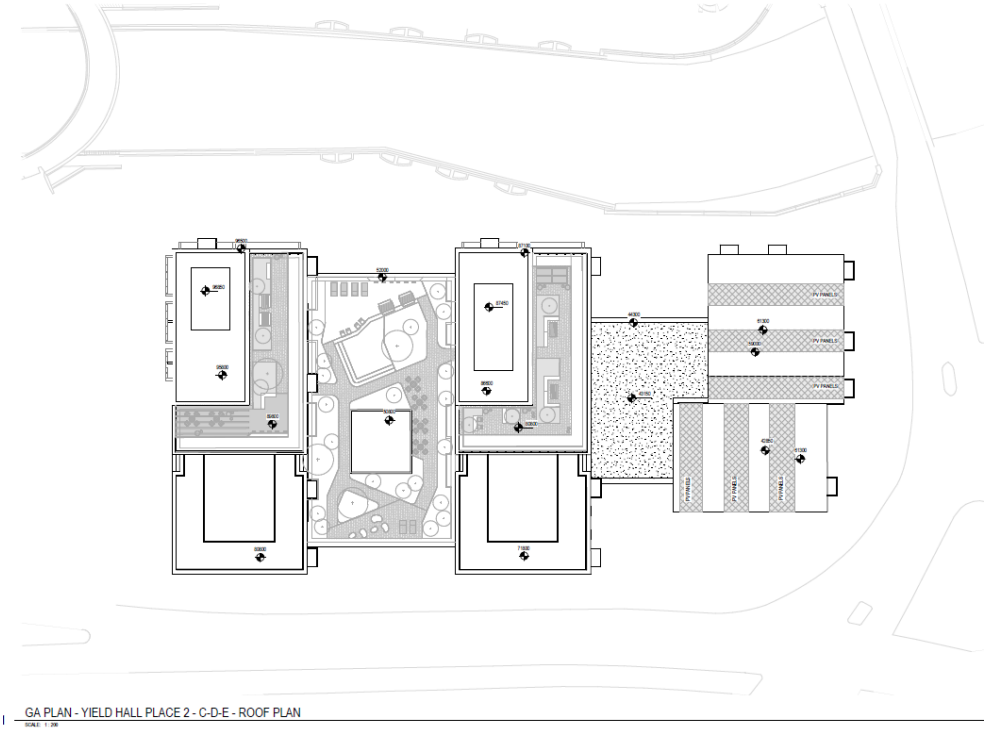


Proposed 12th floor plan

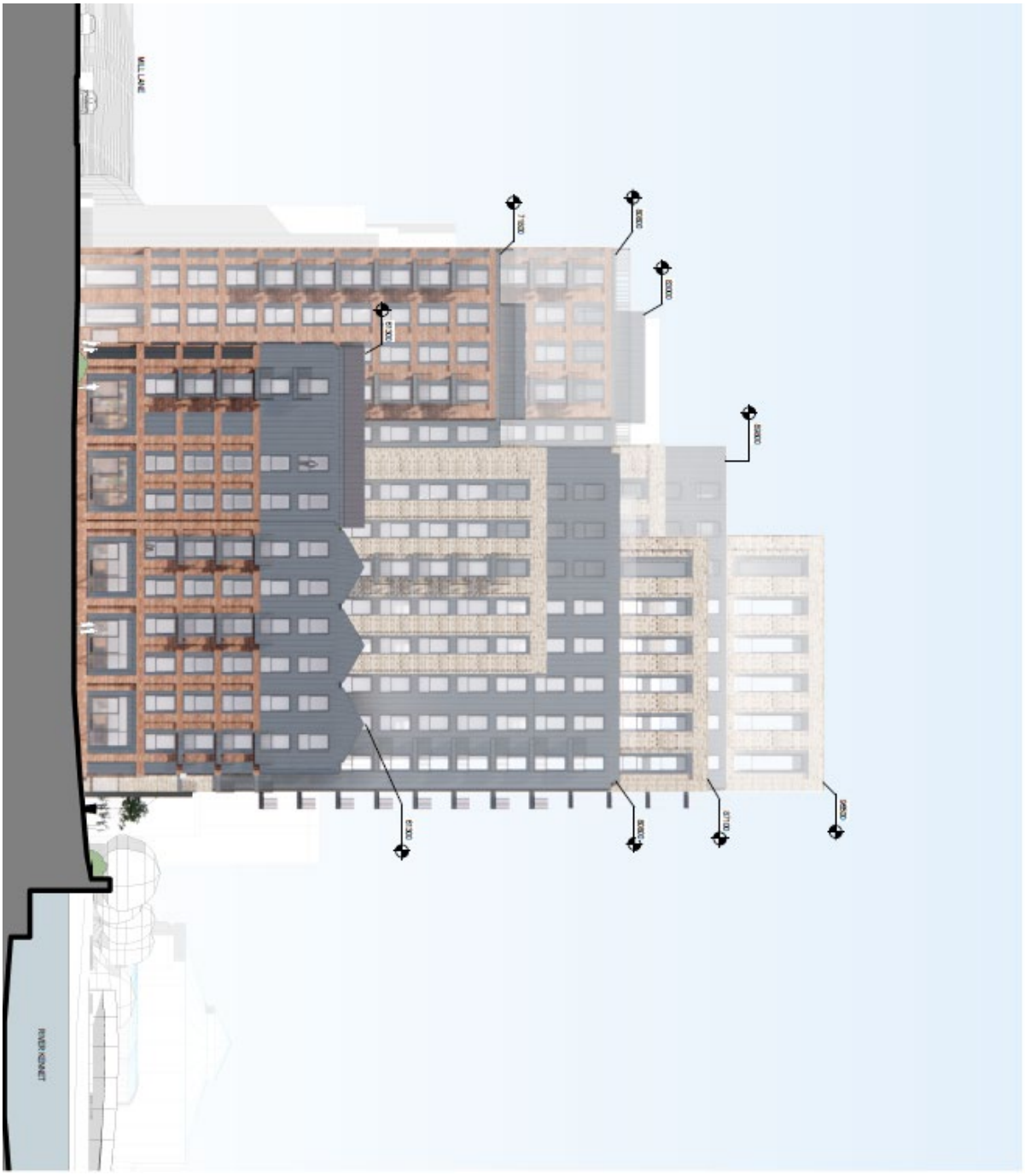


Proposed 13th floor plan





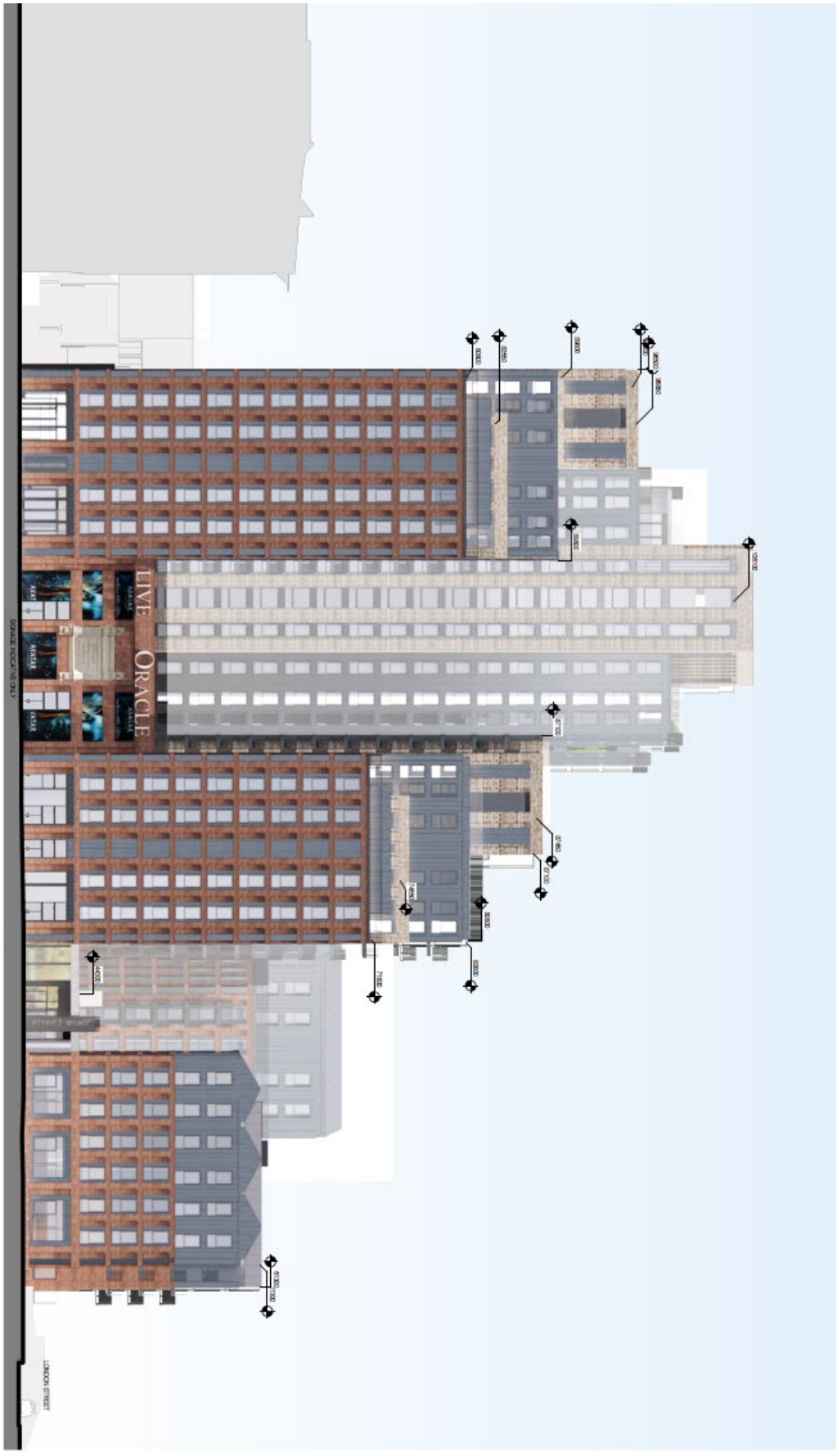
Proposed 14th floor and roof plan



Proposed east elevation – Yield Hall Place



Proposed north elevation – riverside



Proposed south elevation – IDR (Queens Road)



Proposed west elevation (Mill Lane) (block E)



Proposed west elevation (block D)



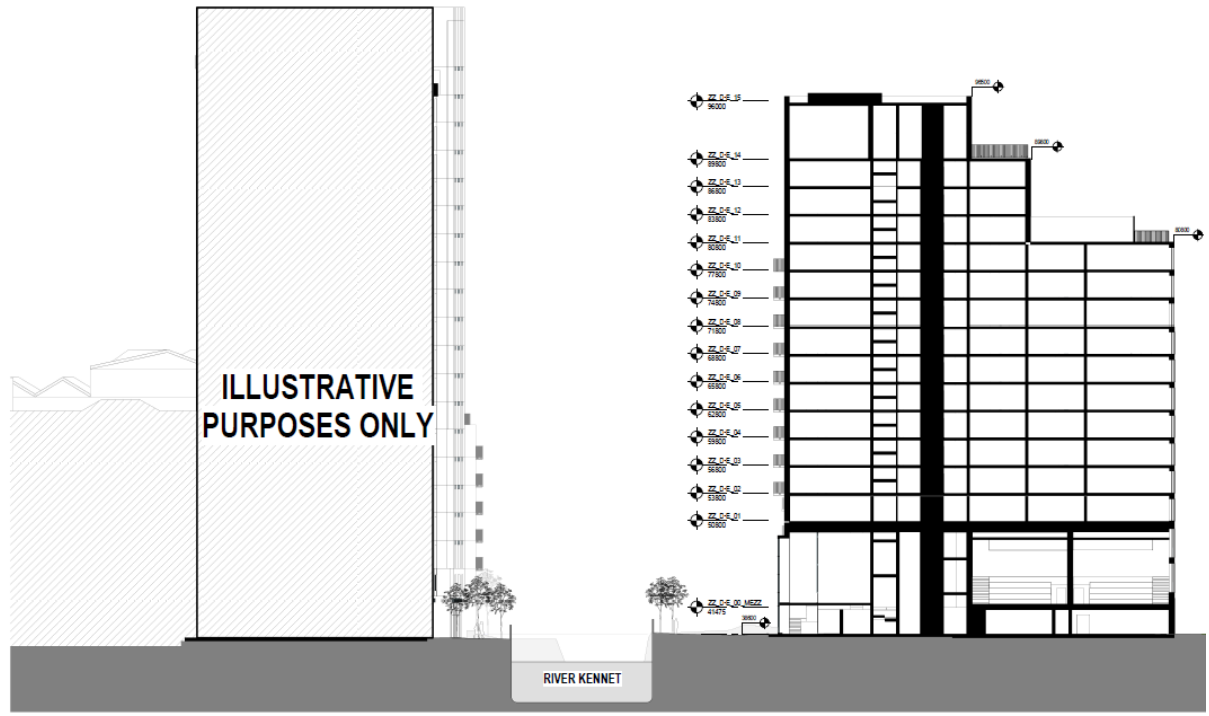
ELEVATION - YIELD HALL PLACE 2 - COURTYARD EAST 2

Proposed east elevation (block C)

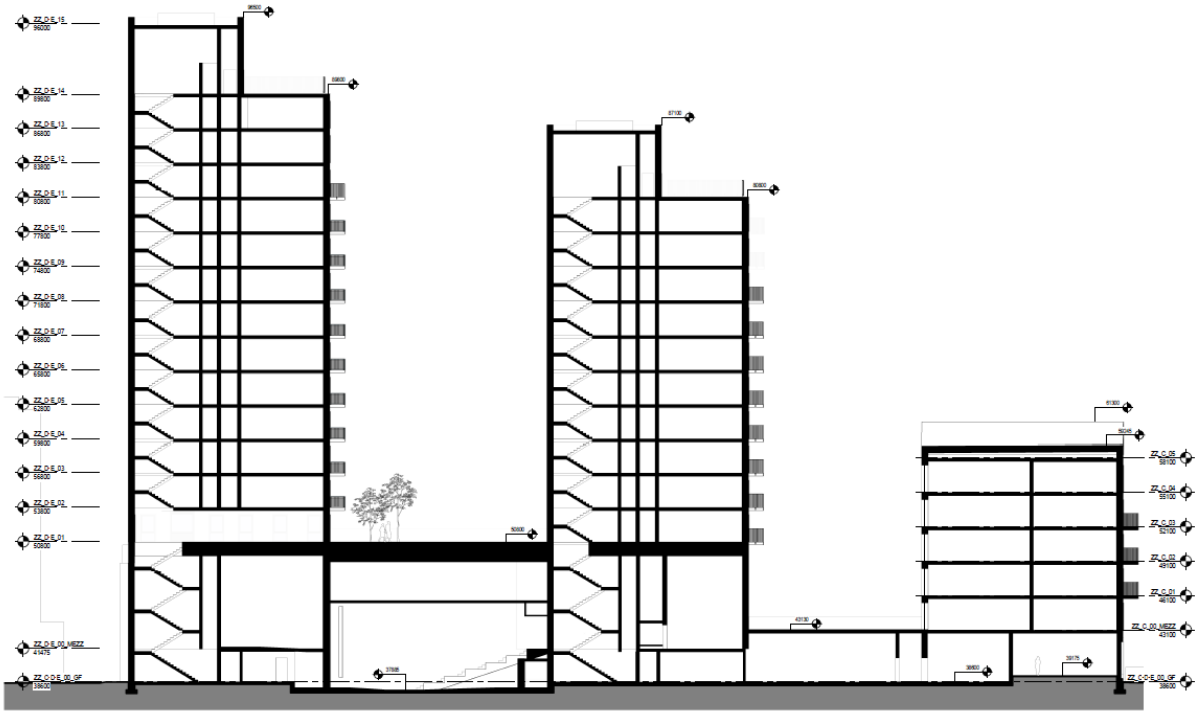


ELEVATION - YIELD HALL PLACE 2 - COURTYARD WEST 2

Proposed west elevation (blocks D and E)



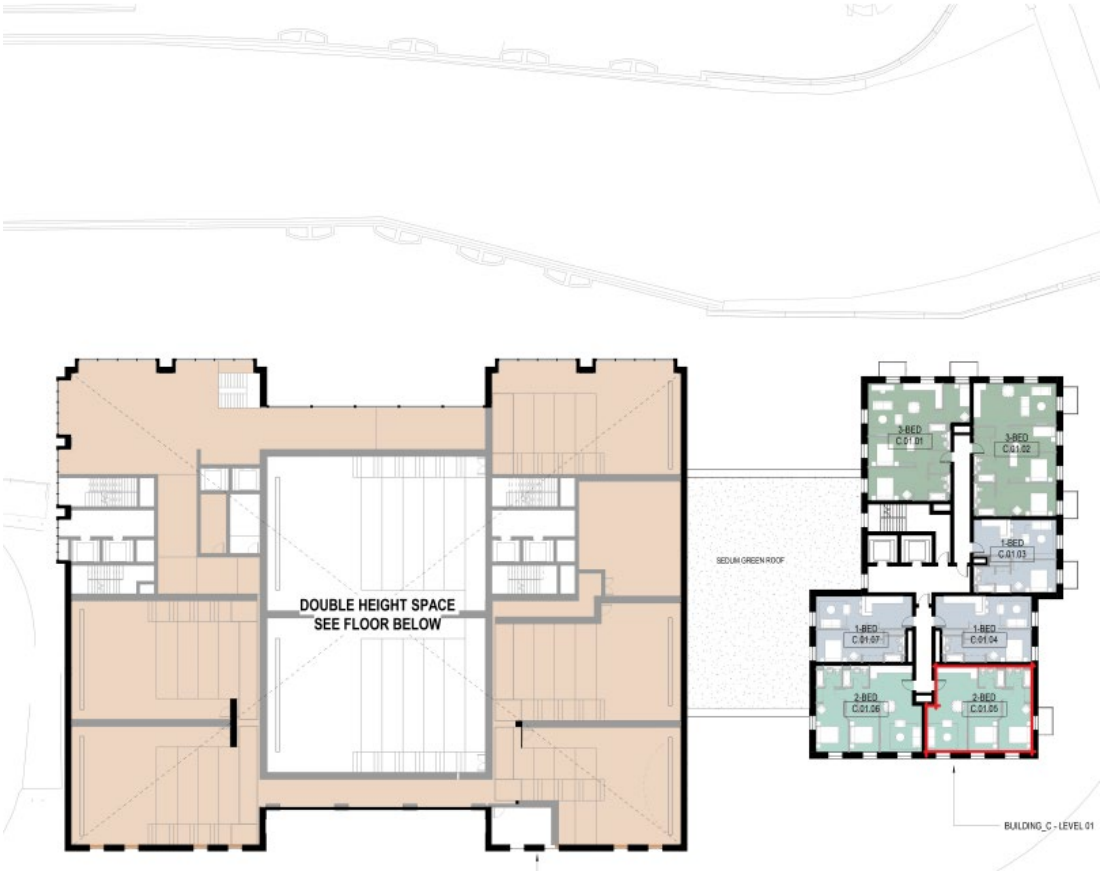
Proposed section with river (block E)



Proposed sections (blocks C, D and E)



Proposed mezzanine floor plan – affordable dwelling locations outlined in red



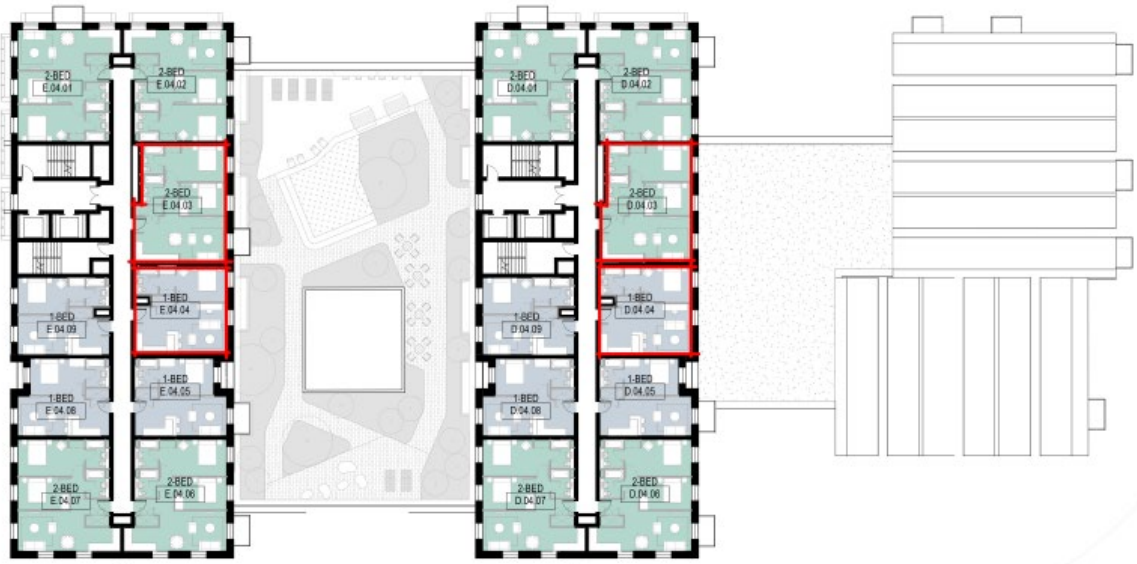
Proposed 1st floor plan – affordable dwelling locations outlined in red



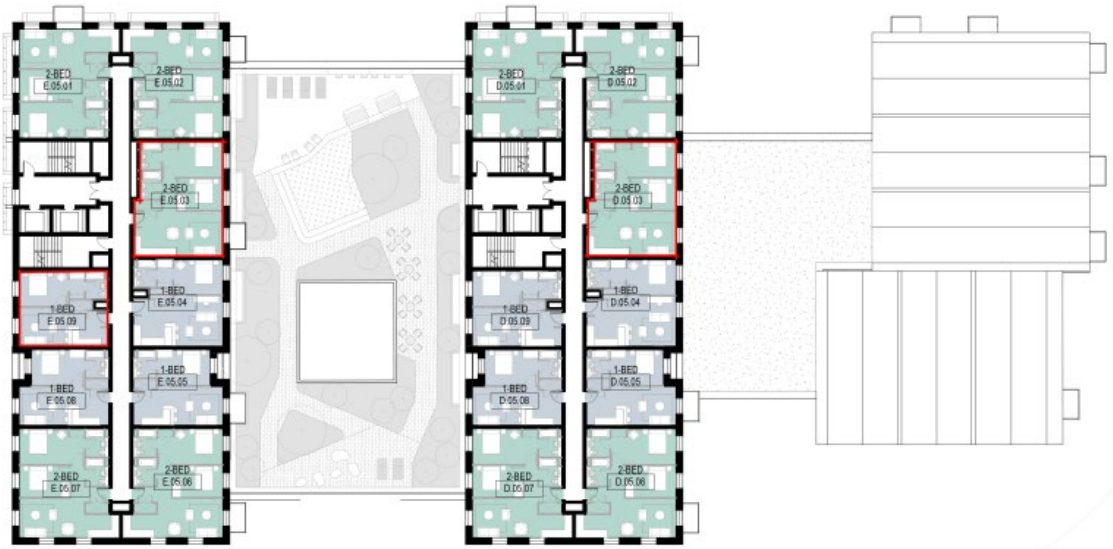
Proposed 2nd floor plan – affordable dwelling locations outlined in red



Proposed 3rd floor plan – affordable dwelling locations outlined in red



Proposed 4th floor plan – affordable dwelling locations outlined in red



Proposed 5th floor plan – affordable dwelling locations outlined in red

03 December 2025	Reading Borough Council Working better with you
Title	**PLANNING APPLICATION UPDATE REPORT**
Ward	Abbey/Katesgrove
Planning Application Reference:	PL/22/1916/FUL & PL/22/1917/FUL
Site Address:	PL/22/1916/FUL – Former Debenhams Department Store, west of Yield Hall Place ('Yield Hall Place 1'), The Oracle, Reading, RG2 2AS PL/22/1917/FUL – Existing Vue cinema complex west of Yield Hall Place/London Road ('Yield Hall Place 2'), The Oracle, Reading, RG2 2AG
Proposed Development	PL/22/1916/FUL - Mixed use development comprising part demolition of former department store and erection of new buildings comprising up to 218 build to rent residential dwellings (Class C3) & 1,209sqm commercial uses within Uses Class E and/or bar (Sui Generis Use). Reconfiguration and change of use of up to 5,866sqm remaining department store floorspace (Class E) to uses with within Use Class E and/or bar (Sui Generis Use) and/or experiential leisure use (Sui Generis Use). Associated public realm, infrastructure works & external alterations to shopping centre, including creation of new shopping centre entrance (amended description) (accompanied by an Environmental Statement) PL/22/1917/FUL - Mixed use development comprising demolition of existing buildings and erection of new building comprising up to 218no. build-to-rent residential dwellings (Class C3) & up to 3,046 sqm commercial floorspace comprising cinema (Sui Generis) and ground floor commercial uses within Use Class E and/or Bar (Sui Generis Use). Associated public realm and infrastructure works (amended description) (accompanied by an Environmental Statement)
PL/22/2916/FUL - Yield Hall Place 1 The Oracle, Reading RG2 2AG	
Deadline	**Target decision date:** 20th March 2023 **Extension of time date:** 13th February 2026
Recommendations	**Amended as follows from the main agenda report:** (deletions ~~crossed through~~ and additions in ***bold and italics***) ~~**Subject to:**~~ ~~**Confirmation of satisfactory details of the operation of the Deferred Payment Mechanism (DPM) terms,**~~ ~~**2. Confirmation from the Local Lead Flood Authority that SuDS issues are satisfactory**~~ Delegate to the Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection Services (ADPTPPS) to: i) **GRANT** full planning permission, subject to the satisfactory completion of a s106 legal agreement and delegate to ADPTPPS to make such minor changes to conditions or such additional conditions required, make such

	minor changes to Heads of Terms and details of the legal agreement as may be reasonably required to issue the permission; or ii) Refuse full planning permission if the legal agreement is not completed by 13/02/2026 (unless officers on behalf of the Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection Services agree to a later date for completion of the legal agreement)
S106 Heads of Terms	As per main report with the following amendments/additions: ***2. <u>Affordable Housing Deferred Payment Mechanism</u>*** ***Details agreed as follows:*** • ***Review trigger which will be the earlier of 80% occupancy or 12 months from Practical Completion (PC) (Review at PC is excluded)*** • ***Profit - 12.5% on Gross Development Value of BtR and 15% on Commercial*** • ***Finance rate - 2% over base rate (increased from the agreed 4.25%) and evidenced at review*** • ***OPEX to be evidenced at review (capped at 25%)*** • ***Professional fees – 7% based on actual build cost and evidenced at review*** • ***Build Cost – full disclosure of build contract and actual build costs incurred*** • ***Cost of s106 review to be covered by developer – including legal, accounting, viability, QS, valuation, and any other costs as deemed necessary by the Council*** • ***YHP1 Benchmark Land Value - £300, 000. YHP2 Benchmark Land Value - between £7, 000, 000 and £8, 600, 000 (final figure to be agreed with LPA post committee)*** ***17. Blue Badge Parking Strategy*** ***Pre-commencement submission and approval of a blue badge parking strategy.*** ***All measures within the approved strategy to have been implemented and provided prior to first occupation of any residential dwelling***
Conditions	As per the main agenda report
Informatives	As per the main agenda report
PL/22/1917/FUL - Yield Hall Place 2 The Oracle, Reading RG2 2AG	
Recommendations	**Amended as follows from the main agenda report:** (deletions ~~crossed through~~ and additions in ***bold and italics***) **Subject to:**

	~~**1. Confirmation of satisfactory details of the operation of the Deferred Payment Mechanism (DPM) terms, and**~~ ~~**2. Confirmation from the Local Lead Flood Authority that SuDS issues are satisfactory**~~ Delegate to the Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection Services (ADPTPPS) to: i) **GRANT** full planning permission, subject to the satisfactory completion of a s106 legal agreement and delegate to ADPTPPS to make such minor changes to conditions or such additional conditions required, make such minor changes to Heads of Terms and details of the legal agreement as may be reasonably required to issue the permission; or ii) Refuse full planning permission if the legal agreement is not completed by 13/02/2026 (unless officers on behalf of the Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection Services agree to a later date for completion of the legal agreement)
S106 Heads of Terms	As per main report with the following amendments/additions: ***2. Affordable Housing Deferred Payment Mechanism*** ***Details agreed as follows:*** • ***Review trigger which will be the earlier of 80% occupancy or 12 months from Practical Completion (PC) (Review at PC is excluded)*** • ***Profit - 12.5% on Gross Development Value of BtR and 15% on Commercial*** • ***Finance rate - 2% over base rate (increased from the agreed 4.25%) and evidenced at review*** • ***OPEX to be evidenced at review (capped at 25%)*** • ***Professional fees – 7% based on actual build cost and evidenced at review*** • ***Build Cost – full disclosure of build contract and actual build costs incurred*** • ***Cost of s106 review to be covered by developer – including legal, accounting, viability, QS, valuation, and any other costs as deemed necessary by the Council*** • ***YHP1 Benchmark Land Value - £300, 000. YHP2 Benchmark Land Value - between £7, 000, 000 and £8, 600, 000 (final figure to be agreed with LPA post committee)*** ***14. Blue Badge Parking Strategy*** ***Pre-commencement submission and approval of a blue badge parking strategy.*** ***All measures within the approved strategy to have been implemented and provided prior to first occupation of any residential dwelling***
Conditions	As per the main agenda report unless stated below: (deletions ~~crossed through~~ and additions in ***bold and italics***

	Condition 1 is amended as follows (but only if PAC resolves to grant planning permission for the YHP1 application, otherwise the condition to revert back to the standard 3 year time period for implementation) : 1. Time Limit for implementation – ~~3 years~~ ***5 years***
Informatives	As per the main agenda report

1. SuDS

1.1 The recommendation for both applications as set out in the main agenda report was subject to confirmation from the Local Lead Flood Authority (LLFA) that SuDS issues are satisfactory. Since publication of the main agenda report the applicant has submitted a revised SuDS strategy for both proposed developments. The revised SuDS strategy has been reviewed by the LLFA who have confirmed that the amended proposals mean that they no longer object to both applications.

1.2 The revised SuDS proposals include integration of the drainage strategy for both developments with areas of green roof; tree pits and use of rainwater harvesting along with provision of attenuation tanks at ground floor level to ensure that the run-off rate from both sites would be below that of existing (resulting in an average reduction in run-off rate of 86% across both sites). The LLFA consider the drainage strategy to be acceptable, but a condition is recommended for both proposed developments to secure submission and approval of the full details, including linking of green infrastructure (ie. usually landscaping) to the SuDS proposal and implementation of the drainage strategy prior to first occupation of any part of each development. This is secured via condition 14 of the YHP1 application ref. PL/22/1916 and condition 13 of the YHP2 application ref. PL/22/1917 as set out in the Recommendation box at the top of the main agenda report.

2. Heritage Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment (HTVIA)

2.1 Since publication of the main agenda report the applicant has submitted updated views studies of the proposed developments which consider the YHP1 and YHP2 proposals in isolation, compared to the cumulative views images included within the main agenda report which show both proposed developments together. Officers have reviewed the updated views study for each application and in the majority of instances this does not change the conclusions reached within the main agenda report in terms of visual and heritage impacts of each development.

2.2 There is once instance where the individual views study results in a slight change to the officer conclusions. This is in relation to the impact of the YHP2 proposals from Market Place. Within paragraph 7.2.69 of the main agenda report, officers identify ‘less than substantial harm at a moderate level’ to the setting of a number of listed buildings within Market Place. This harm is identified to the Church of St Laurence (Grade I Listed) and no.s 23-26, 27-28, 29-31, 32, 33-14, 48-49, 50-51 & 52 Market Place and no. 10 High Street (all Grade II Listed) as a result of the visual dominance of the YHP1 and YHP2 proposals with setting and views of these buildings from Market Place. However, the updated individual visuals provided by the applicant (see figures A and B below) demonstrate that the visual impact of YHP1 would be more pronounced than that of YHP2. Whilst the tops of the tower elements of the YHP2 proposals would still be visible from Market Place, the towers are lower in height than the YHP1 tower and also more distant in the view, appearing less dominant, meaning t Officers conclude that this would result in ‘less than substantial harm’ to the setting of the above referenced listed buildings but at a ‘low’ rather than ‘moderate level’. Officers still conclude that the YHP1 tower would result in less than substantial harm at a moderate level and that the cumulative impact of both proposals would also still be less than substantial harm at a moderate level.

2.3 The overall level of harm officers identify upon the character and appearance of the Market Place / London Street conservation area as result of the YHP2 proposals is also still also considered to be ‘less than substantial harm at a moderate level’ as per paragraph 7.2.71 of the main agenda report.

2.4 This slight change in the identified heritage harm to the setting of a number of listed buildings within Market Place as a result of the YHP2 proposals does not lead officers to come to different overall conclusion in respect of the planning balance position for the YHP2 proposals and the officer recommendation remains as per the main agenda report.



Figure A – Proposed view of the YHP1 development looking south from Market Place from junction with The Forbury



Figure B – Proposed view of the YHP2 development looking south from Market Place from the junction with The Forbury

3. Economic Benefits

3.1 Since publication of the main agenda report, the applicant has also submitted further information in respect of the individual economic benefits of each of the YHP1 and YHP2 proposals. This information has been reviewed by officers and further supports the conclusions already reached, namely that both applications would contribute to maintaining and enhancing the vitality and viability of The Oracle and Central Area as a whole as is the requirement under Policy RL1 (Network and Hierarchy of Centres) for development proposals within Central Area. This information does not change the officer recommendation for both applications which remains as per the main agenda report.

4. Timeframe for Implementation

4.1 As set out in paragraphs 3.7 to 3.8 and 7.1.49 of the main agenda report the YHP1 development is proposed to take place in two sub-phases: 1A and 1B, and the s106 Heads of Terms for the YHP1 development require both phases to be completed in their entirety within 5 years of commencement of Phase 1A. Whilst submitted as two separate planning applications, the applicant also presents the YHP1 and YHP2 proposals as two 'phases; stating that the YHP1 development would be carried out first followed by YHP2; albeit given they are separate applications there is no formal link to require either the developments to be carried out in this order, nor is there any clear reason why this would be necessary. The Applicant has also advised that they would not construct YHP1 or YHP2 concurrently (albeit, again there is no planning reason why this could not happen) with their intention being to implement and complete YHP1 in the first instance before commencing YHP2.

4.2 The standard time limit for commencement of a development is 3 years. However, under s.91(1) (b) of the Town and Country Planning Act (1990), it allows another period (whether longer or shorter) should the LPA consider appropriate. In this case, the applicant has requested a 5 year period to commence the YHP2 development given they estimate that as a minimum it is likely to take circa. 3 ½ years to complete YHP1 from commencement of the development. As such, if both developments were to be implemented in the sequence and timeframes set out by the applicant then it would appear likely that, if granted, the YHP2 permission would lapse before the YHP1 development is completed. In this specific instance, given the ordering and phasing of the developments indicated by the applicant, officers are recommending the timeframe for implementation of YHP2 is changed to 5 years from date of issue of the planning permission. This amended condition is shown in the Recommendation box for the YHP2 application at the top of this report.

4.3 There is of course no reason why the applicant could not carry out minimal works as necessary to 'commence' the YHP2 development within the standard 3 year period for commencement but there is risk to such an approach that this leaves behind unsightly construction works or incomplete development for an unknown period which officers do not consider would not welcome within such a prominent riverside setting. As such it is considered reasonable to facilitate the 5 year period for commencement of YHP2 in this instance which could assist in avoiding this eventuality.

4.4 In the event that the Committee resolves to refuse planning permission for YHP1 but grant planning permission for YHP2 then it is recommended that the time frame for implementation of development condition for YHP2 reverts back to the standard 3 year time period.

5. Highways matters

5.1 As set out in the main agenda report both proposed developments would be car free. Each proposed development would provide 11 wheelchair accessible dwellings and it has been brought to officers' attention that future occupiers of these dwellings could have a 'blue badge' that would allow them to park within nearby pay and display bays, such as those along Mill Lane and London Street, free of charge and for an unrestricted time limit. This could result in overspill parking that utilises these nearby parking bays given the

developments would be car free Therefore, it is considered necessary that each application should demonstrate that it would not have a detrimental impact on the Highway network as a result of overspill parking from the developments filling up these on-street bays.

5.2 The applicant has proposed to provide that blue badge parking spaces, which would need to be dedicated for the proposed developments, within the existing car parks at The Oracle (The Holybrook Car Park for YHP1 and The Riverside car park for YHP2). The exact location of these spaces within the car parks and how these are to be accessed still needs to be determined and agreed with officers. It should be noted that this may require the applicant to regularise any changes to the existing customer parking provision at The Oracle, provision of which is currently secured by historic planning permissions, via (a) separate planning application(s). In the event that the Committee resolves to grant planning permission for either or both developments, officers seek delegated authority from the Committee to resolve this issue with the applicant post-committee and before a decision is issued. An additional obligation has also been added to the section 106 Heads of Terms for each application, to require submission and approval of the blue badge parking strategy prior to commencement of each development, in order to secure implementation of measures necessary to provide the blue badge parking prior to first occupation of any residential dwelling within each development.

6. Nationally Described Space Standards

6.1 Paragraph 7.7.31 of the main agenda report discuss level of compliance of both the YHP1 and YHP2 proposals within the Nationally Described Space Standards (NDSS) for new residential dwellings. Since publication of the main agenda report the applicant has provided more detailed information as to the level of compliance of both proposed developments with these standards.

6.2 The information clarifies that whether or not an individual dwelling complies with the NDSS depends on the occupancy assumption for each unit. For example, for a 2 bedroom unit, NDSS figures allow for either 4 person occupancy (i.e. 2 couples sharing a 2 bed flat or 2 adults & 2 children) with a minimum recommended unit size of 70m2 or 3 person occupancy (i.e. 2 single adults renting A bedroom each or 2 adults and 1 child etc) with a minimum recommended unit size of 61m2.

6.3 The full level for compliance with the NDSS is shown in the tables below:

# Bedrooms	Area of Home (m2)	# Homes	NDSS Area m2 (1 bed 2 person)	% Compliance 1bed 2 person	% Compliance 1 bed 1 person (39 sqm)
1	43.5	93	50	13% below	12% in excess
	47	1	50	6% below	21% in excess
	48.3	1	50	3% below	24% in excess
	46.9	8	50	6% below	20% in excess
	58	8	50	16% above	32% in excess
		111		0%	

# Bedrooms	Area of Home (m2)	# Homes	NDSS Area m2 (2 bed 4 person)	% Compliance 2 bed 4 person	% Compliance 2 bed 3 person (61 sqm)
2	63.5	31	70	9% below	4% in excess
	66.5	30	70	5% below	9% in excess
	66.8	21	70	5% below	10% in excess

	67.8	12	70	3% below	11% in excess
	70	2	70	equal	15% in excess
		96		0%	

# Bedrooms	Area of Home (m2)	# Homes	NDSS Area m2 (3 bed 5 person)	% Compliance 3 bed 5 person	% Compliance 3 bed 4 person (74sqm)
3	80.3	8	86	7% below	9% in excess
	87.3	3	86	2% in excess	18% in excess
		11			
		218			

YHP2

# Bedrooms	Area of Home (m2)	# Homes	NDSS Area m2 (1 bed 2 person)	% Compliance 1 bed 2 person	% Compliance 1 bed 1 person (39 sqm)
1	40.6	35	50	18% below	4% in excess
	42.2	21	50	16% below	8% in excess
	44.4	5	50	11% below	14% in excess
	45.4	2	50	9% below	16% in excess
	46.4	10	50	7% below	19% in excess
	48.6	12	50	3% below	25% in excess
	48.7	8	50	3% below	30% in excess
	49.9	1	50	equal	28% in excess
	50.5	2	50	1% in excess	30% in excess
		96			

# Bedrooms	Area of Home (m2)	# Homes	NDSS Area m2 (2 bed 4 person)	% Compliance 2 bed 4 person	% Compliance 2 bed 3 person (61 sqm)
2	63.6	21	70	9% below	4% in excess
	64.57	34	70	8% below	6% in excess
	64.6	46	70	8% below	6% in excess
	66.25	10	70	6% below	9% in excess
		111			

# Bedrooms	Area of Home (m2)	# Homes	NDSS Area m2 (3 bed 5 person)	% Compliance 3 bed 5 person	% Compliance 3 bed 4 person (74sqm)
3	77.9	1	86	9% below	5% excess
	79.3	5	86	8% below	7% in excess
	83.2	5	86	3% below	11% in excess
		11			

6.4 As shown in the above tables, if considering the lower occupancy level, all of the proposed dwellings are NDSS compliant. Under the higher occupancy rate, it is noted

that a number of the proposed dwellings fall below the NDSS figure, but this is primarily within a 10% range of under provision of floor area and where this is the case all the habitable rooms within these units are compliant with NDSS minimum room dimensions. The applicant explains that the divergence from NDSS relates to the absence of internal corridors within the units.

6.5 Overall, this information does not change the conclusions of the main agenda report in respect of both applications. Although officers consider that the reduction in internal circulation space will make these dwellings less attractive to some potential occupiers (for instance medium-sized families), it is advised that compliance with the National Standards is not required by Policy H5 for new dwellings in the Central Area.

7. Affordable Housing Deferred Payment Mechanism (DPM)

7.1 Since publication of the main agenda report terms of the DPM have been agreed and are outlined within the recommendation box for both applications at the top of this report.

Case Officer: Matt Burns

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04 February 2026

Reading Borough Council
Working better with you

Title	**PLANNING APPLICATION REPORT**
Ward	Emmer Green
Planning Application Reference:	PL/25/0691 Outline planning permission: Some matters reserved
Site Address:	Land West of Kidmore End Road, Oxfordshire, RG4 8SG
Proposed Development	Outline planning application for the development of up to 70 homes (including affordable housing), new vehicular access, associated parking and landscaping (all matters reserved except for access).
Applicant	Fairfax (Reading) Ltd and Reading Golf Club (SODC) Ltd
Report author	Matthew Burns
Deadline:	08/08/2025
Recommendations	The Planning Applications Committee confirm that had they been able to determine the planning application they would have resolved to: Delegate to the Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection Services (ADPTPPS) to: i) **GRANT** outline planning permission, subject to the satisfactory completion of a s106 legal agreement and delegate to ADPTPPS to make such minor changes to conditions or such additional conditions required, make such minor changes to Heads of Terms and details of the legal agreement as may be reasonably required to issue the permission; or ii) Refuse outline planning permission had the s106 legal agreement not been completed within a reasonable agreed timeframe (unless officers on behalf of the Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection Services agree to a later date for completion of the legal agreement)
S106	**1. Transport/Highway Matters** A contribution of £50,000 towards upgrading of the operating system and/or improvements to the pedestrian and cycle facilities at the junction of Peppard Road / Henley Street / Westfield Road / Prospect Street. Payable prior to commencement of development and index linked from date of grant of planning permission. To enter into an agreement under Section 278 of the Highways Act 1980 to provide a surfaced active travel link (footway/cycleway) from the proposed new access points/entrance to the site on Kidmore End Road on the eastern boundary, and Highdown Hill Road on the western boundary, to the carriageway edge. The active travel links

	shall thereafter be constructed and open for pedestrian/cycle use prior to first occupation any dwelling permitted in relation to SODC planning application ref. PL/25/S1431/O. **2. Monitoring Fee** A contribution towards monitoring costs plus a separate commitment to pay the Council's reasonable legal costs and any further viability review costs in connection with the proposed S106 Agreement. To be payable whether or not the Agreement is completed
Conditions	**1.** Outline Time Limit – Reserved Matters to be submitted with 3 years **2.** Outline Time Limit – Development to commence within 3 years or 2 years from date of approval of reserved matters **3.** Outline Reserved Matters – Prior to commencement of development reserved matters in respect of layout, appearance, scale, landscaping to be submitted and approved **4.** Outline Principles – Reserved Matters in respect of layout, appearance and landscaping to accord with principles shown in approved plans and documents and approved access details **5.** No development to commence unless planning permission for the rest of the development within South Oxfordshire, under SODC planning application ref. PL/25/S1431/O, has been granted by SODC (or the Planning Inspectorate) **6.** Approved Plans - Development to be carried out in accordance with the approved plans only **7.** Hours of Construction – To be as per the Council's standard hours only: 0800hrs to 1800hrs Mondays to Fridays, and 0800hrs to 1300hrs on Saturdays, and not at any time on Sundays and Bank or Statutory Holidays **8.** No Burning of Waste on Site **9.** No development to commence until a construction management statement has been submitted and agreed
Informatives	**1.** Requirement to regularise any changes to the approved layout of the development taking place on the adjacent site within Reading under planning permission ref. PL/22/1312/VAR that are necessary to facilitate provision of the proposed accesses to the development **2**. Positive and Proactive Working – approval **3.** Pre-commencement conditions **4**. Highways Act information **5**. S106/S278 agreements relate to this application **6.** Terms and conditions information **7.** Building Control **8.** Complaints about construction **9.** CIL

1. Executive summary

1.1 This report assesses only the elements of the proposed cross-boundary development that fall within Reading Borough, namely the vehicular, pedestrian and cycle access points connecting to a wider development of up to 70 homes located in South Oxfordshire**.** The main body of the residential development lies outside Reading, and South Oxfordshire District Council has refused its part of the application; the applicant has since lodged joint appeals for both authorities' applications. Appealing the RBC application on the grounds of non-determination.

1.2 Within Reading, the proposed access arrangements are considered technically acceptable, making use of an existing road already constructed to serve the 223-home development on the former Reading Golf Club site. Minor modifications would be required to the approved landscaping for that adjacent scheme, but these can be appropriately regularised, and no significant impacts are anticipated on ecology, character, amenity or the natural environment within Reading.

1.3 Transport assessment work indicates that while the development would add modest levels of traffic locally, its impacts can be mitigated—principally through a financial contribution towards improvements at the Peppard Road / Henley Street / Westfield Road / Prospect Street junction. Pedestrian and cycle connectivity of the development would be strengthened through new pedestrian and cycle links, and accessibility to key local services is considered to be acceptable, despite extended walking distances to bus stops.

1.4 Overall, had RBC been in a position to determine the application, officers would have recommended granting planning permission, subject to a s106 agreement for the highway contribution and relevant conditions. The report therefore sets out the recommended stance for RBC's case at the forthcoming appeal**.**

2. Introduction and site description

2.1. The application site is 5.9 hectares in size and is located to the west of Kidmore End Road in Emmer Green. The site forms part of the land formerly occupied by Reading Golf Club, which ceased operations and moved to Caversham Heath Golf Club in 2020.

2.2 The application site traverses the administrative boundaries of both Reading Borough Council (RBC) and South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC). The significant majority of the proposed development and application site is within South Oxfordshire with just the access to the site located within Reading Borough. The parts of the application site proposed to accommodate new dwellings and associated areas of open space is all on land within South Oxfordshire.

2.3 As required where an application site crosses the administrative boundary between two LPAs, two identical planning applications have been submitted, to both SODC and RBC with each LPA responsible for determination as to whether or not planning permission should be granted for the parts of the proposed development within their administrative area.

2.4 Access to the development from the existing highway network is proposed to be via the new access leading from Kidmore End Road, which serves the residential development of 223 dwellings currently under construction on the southern part of the former golf course site located within Reading Borough. A cycle route access is also proposed from Highdown Hill Road.

2.5 The SODC application site borders existing suburban residential areas of Emmer Green to the east (Brooklyn Drive and Kidmore End Road) and west (Highdown Hill Road) within Reading Borough and the new residential development under construction on the southern part of the former golf course site, also within Reading Borough, to the south. The land to the north of the site is within South Oxfordshire, where a pocket of woodland known as Cucumber Wood (a designated Ancient and Semi-Natural Woodland) adjoins the northern boundary. This land as well as land to the north is within the same ownership as the application site. Beyond this woodland to the north the land is still used as a nine-hole golf course.

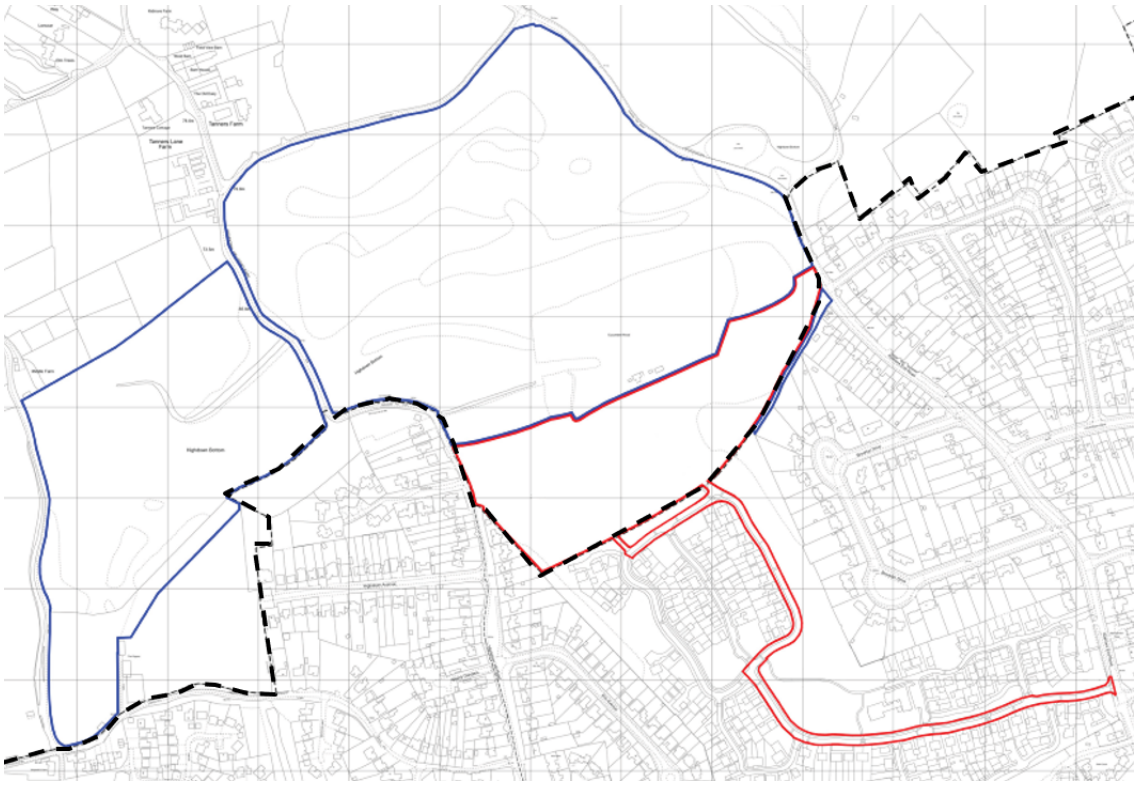


Figure 1A - Site Location Plan showing RBC and SODC administrative boundary (black dotted line)

2.5 The duplicate planning applications submitted seek outline planning permission for the proposed residential development with matters of Appearance, Landscaping, Layout and Scale reserved to be considered at a later date, and just Access-related matters being the only detailed matter subject to consideration at this stage. As the access road connecting the development to Kidmore End Road lies within Reading Borough this matter will mainly fall to RBC to consider, albeit access and movement beyond the main access road within the development site is a matter for SODC. Given all detailed matters apart from access are reserved for consideration at a later date, SODC's decision on the of the application primarily considers 'in principle' issues as to whether the application site can accommodate the nature of development proposed, impacts of the development upon surrounding areas and the countryside and setting any relevant development parameters. The RBC application subject of this report considers the access to the development only which is already in place and serving the existing development under construction on the part of the former golf course site within Reading Borough.

2.6 A Councillor site visit took place on 30th October 2025 to look at progress of the development currently under construction on the part of the former golf course site within Reading Borough.

2.7 At 5th November PAC the Adjacent Authority Consultation (ref. PL/25/0731) was considered which set out RBC comments to be sent to SODC for consideration as part of the determination of the planning application that they are dealing with for the parts of the development within South Oxfordshire. The consultation response that PAC resolved to agree set out that RBC did not object to the SODC application subject to SODC and the Applicant facilitating RBC being party to a s106 agreement to secure mitigation for the impacts arising from the parts of the development (the new houses) within South Oxfordshire upon Reading Borough. This included:

- RBC being party to the section 106 agreement linked to the planning permission and that a s106 financial contribution of **£150,000** (index linked from the date planning permission is granted by SODC) is secured as part of the section 106 agreement payable in full to RBC to go towards **upgrading of the operating system (traffic signals) and/or improvements to the pedestrian and cycle facilities at the junction of Peppard Road / Henley**

Road / Westfield Road / Prospect Street. The contribution to be paid to RBC prior to commencement of development.

- SODC secures a **financial contribution**, in accordance with NHS ICB's multiplier formula (in full) to go **towards increasing capacity at GP Surgeries within Reading Borough and more specifically GP Surgeries within Emmer Green, Caversham or Caversham Heights Wards.** The contribution to be paid in full to Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire NHS ICB prior to the commencement of development and index linked from the date planning permission is granted.

- RBC being party to a section 106 agreement linked to the planning permission to secure a **financial contribution**, in line with Sport England's demand Calculator (in full), **towards sport and leisure facilities within Reading Borough**. The contribution to be paid in full to RBC prior to commencement of development and index linked from the date planning permission is granted.

- SODC secures a s106 financial contribution in line with their adopted formula towards **bus service improvements** in the locality and agrees that any future spending of this contribution must be agreed in consultation with RBC

- SODC should request an updated **arboricultural method statement** from the Applicant, in respect of the impact of provision of the necessary visibility splay on Highdown Hill Road upon existing trees and hedgerows and consider any impacts as part of their determination of the planning application.

2.8 The above comments were sent to SODC on 11th November 2025.

2.9 However, planning permission for the main part of the development within South Oxfordshire was refused at SODC Planning Applications Committee on 3rd December 2025 where the committee overturned the SODC officers' recommendation to grant planning permission. The SODC reasons for refusal are set out below:

1. *That, the development is not in accordance with the Development Plan Policies as it is not an allocated site in the South Oxfordshire Local Plan or the Kidmore End Neighbourhood Development Plan. This is not infill development and will result in the separation of the settlement. This is contrary to advice set out in Paragraph 14 of the National Planning Policy Framework and policies STRAT1, STRAT2 and H1 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035 and policy LCI of the Kidmore End Neighbourhood Development Plan 2011-2035.*

2. *Having regard to the landscape setting this development would be detrimental to the character of the area. This is contrary to policies ENV1, DES1 and DES2 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035 and policies LCSS and LPLV of the Kidmore End Neighbourhood Development Plan 2011-2035.*

3. *Having regard to the distance of the development from the nearest bus stop, this development is not considered to be in a sustainable location. This is contrary to policy TRANS5 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035.*

4. *In the absence of a completed Section 106 legal agreement, the proposal fails to secure affordable housing to meet the needs of the district. As such, the development is contrary to policy H9 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035.*

5. *In the absence of a completed Section 106 legal agreement, the proposed development fails to secure infrastructure necessary to meet the needs of the development. As such, the proposal is contrary to policies INF1, TRANS4, TRANS5, EP3 and CF5 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035.*

6. *In the absence of a completed Section 106 legal agreement, the proposal fails to secure significant enhancements for the purpose of biodiversity net gain. As such, the proposed development fails to accord with Article 37A of The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 (as amended).*

2.10 SODC issued a refusal of planning permission decision notice on 3rd December 2025 and subsequently on the 5th December 2025 the Applicant submitted a notice of intention to appeal the refusal. The notice also set out the intention to appeal the application being dealt with by RBC on the grounds of non-determination seeking that both the RBC and SODC applications are considered as part of a joint appeal. The Applicant submitted their appeal to the Planning Inspectorate on 22nd December 2025. Whilst at the time of writing this report the appeal has not yet been made valid by the Planning Inspectorate, they have confirmed that it will be a joint appeal and that the appeal procedure will be Public Inquiry. A copy of the SODC officers committee report is attached for information as appendix 1 to this report.

2.12 Once the Applicant lodged the non-determination appeal the LPA could no longer issue a decision on the application with this responsibility now with the Planning Inspectorate. Therefore, this report sets out the assessment of the proposal and what the officer recommendation would have been had the LPA had the opportunity to determine the planning application. This report will form the basis of the Council's Appeal Statement and seeks agreement from Planning Applications Committee to the proposed recommendations to inform the LPA's approach to the appeal.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

2.13 Given all the residential floor space proposed as part of the development would be located within South Oxfordshire the proposals would not generate any levy for RBC with all the levy generated payable to SODC. As the application is an outline proposal where matters such as Layout and Scale are reserved for consideration at a later date it is not possible to know what the levy due would be at this stage.

2.14 There is no formal mechanism to require an authority to share or pass CIL to a different body or authority, such as for SODC to share or pass any levy generated as a result of the proposals, if approved, to RBC. Such sharing or passing of the levy would be entirely discretionary to SODC and cannot be secured or controlled. Therefore, there is no way to guarantee that RBC could share in any CIL generated as a result of the proposed development, nor is there any mechanism to establish how much CIL could be shared. Therefore, Officers have considered the proposals on the basis that no CIL would be generated for RBC.

2.15 However, where there are considered to be direct and demonstrable impacts upon Reading Borough as a result of the proposed development within South Oxfordshire, Officers are seeking that RBC is party to a section 106 legal agreement between the Applicant and SODC to secure necessary mitigation in the form of contributions or works. Where this is the case, this is discussed in the appraisal section of this report below.

3 The Proposal

3.1 As explained above identical planning applications have been submitted to both RBC and SODC seeking outline planning permission for the development of up to 70 homes (including affordable housing), new vehicular access, associated parking and landscaping with all matters reserved except for access.

3.2 Paragraph 006 of The National Planning Practice Guide defines access as *'the accessibility to and within the site, for vehicles, cycles and pedestrians in terms of the positioning and treatment of access and circulation routes and how these fit into the*

surrounding access network'. It is these access related matters that are to be considered in detail as part of this outline planning application with matters relating to layout, scale, landscaping and appearance reserved for consideration at a later should outline planning permission for the development be granted.

3.3 Notwithstanding the above an indicative master plan of the proposed dwellings and external areas within the development (all located within South Oxfordshire) has been submitted with the application which is shown below in Figure 1B below.



Figure 1B – Proposed indicative development Masterplan

3.4 RBC can only consider whether or not to grant planning permission for the parts of the proposed development within its jurisdiction.

3.5 As shown in figure 1A above the part of the development within Reading Borough primarily relates to the access road. It is proposed that the existing road which provides access from Kidmore End Road to the development of 223 dwellings (planning permission ref. 22/1312/VAR) that is already under construction on the part of the former golf course site within Reading Borough would be extended to also serve and provide access to the proposed dwellings within South Oxfordshire.

3.6 Figures 2, 3 and 4 below detail how the proposed development within South Oxfordshire could connect to the road within the development currently under construction within Reading Borough. There would be a small single extension of the existing road northwards in the north east corner of the existing development site within Reading. The road extension would require laying of 12m length of hardstanding 5.5m in width. As shown in figure 4 below a similar footway link between the two developments is also proposed to be provided alongside the road to link the footways between the two developments. A separate secondary cycle and pedestrian access and connection between the two developments is also proposed further to the west along the boundary between the two sites as also shown in figures 2, 3 and 4. This 3.7m wide strip of hardstanding would incorporate collapsable bollards at either end to prevent vehicular access other than in emergencies. Both the vehicular and cycle/pedestrian connections would link with the layout of the residential development currently under construction within Reading Borough.



Figure 2 - Proposed indicative Site Layout Plan

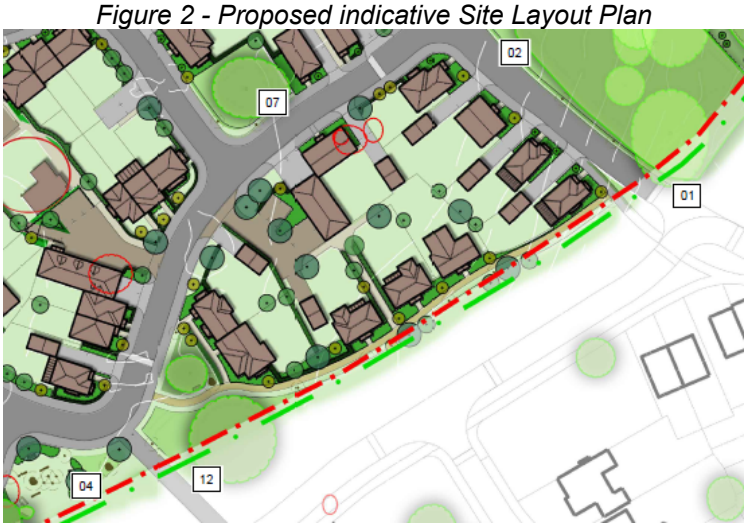


Figure 3 - Zoomed in view of area outlined red in figure 2 above showing proposed connections to the development from the development under construction on the part of the former golf course within Reading Borough

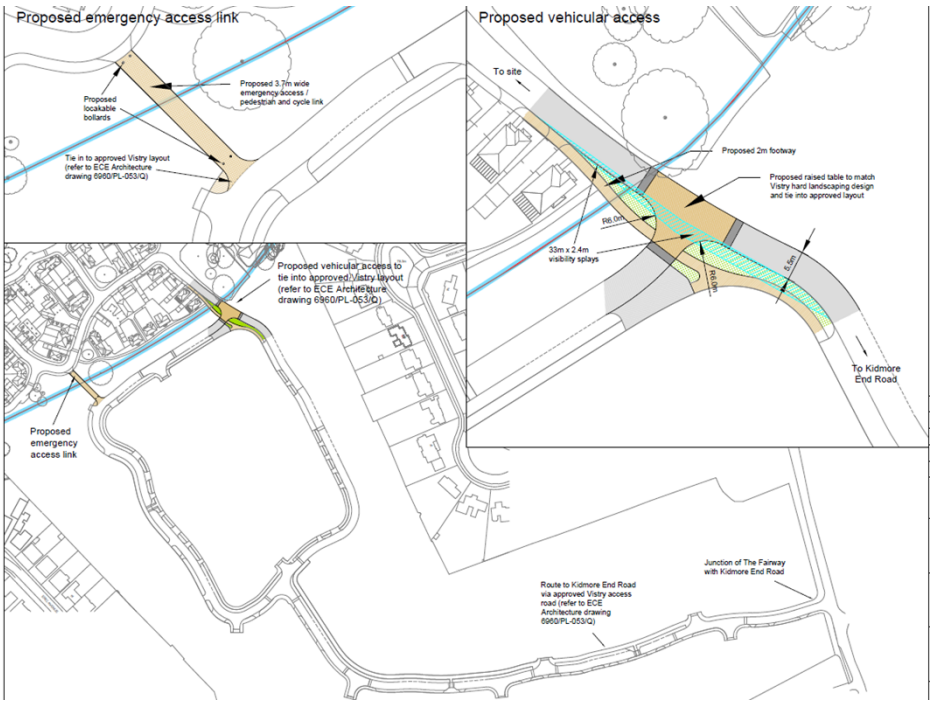


Figure 4 – More detailed plans of the proposed access connections to the proposed development from the development under construction on the part of the former golf course site within Reading Borough

3.7 In addition, the proposals also include a cycle and pedestrian pathway link from the western part of the proposed development connecting to Highdown Hill Road, which is part of the National Cycle Network (route 5). As shown in figures 5 and 6 below the majority of this connection lies within South Oxfordshire, apart from the last 1 metre. The proposed cycle and pedestrian link would require laying of a 3m wide x 17m long strip of hardstanding with a single fixed bollard at each end to prevent use by vehicles.



Figure 5 - Zoomed in view of the area outlined blue shown in figure 2 above showing proposed pedestrian and cycle link connections from the proposed development to Highdown Hill Road (in Reading Borough)

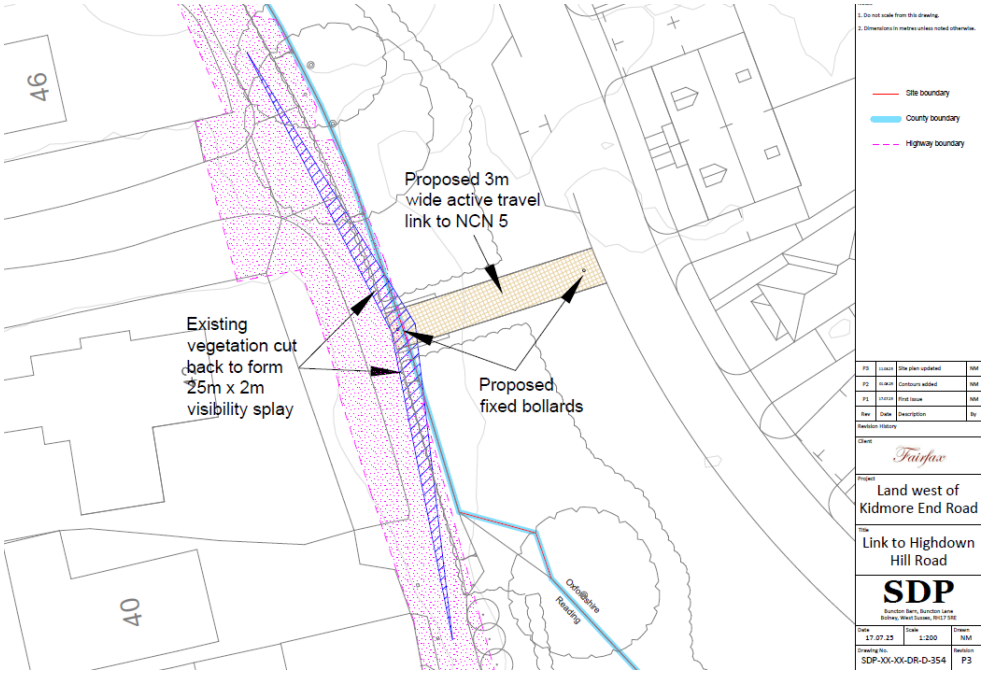


Figure 6 – More detailed plans of the proposed pedestrian cycle link to Highdown Hill Road (within Reading Borough)

3.8 The proposals also include formalisation of an existing pedestrian access in the eastern part of the site which currently connects (currently private land) to Kidmore End Road (see figures 7 and 8 below). It is proposed to re-surface this route with hardstanding at 2m in width to provide a direct pedestrian link into the proposed development from this part of Kidmore End Road. The eastern most 15m of the pathway extends onto part of the site within Reading Borough where the path would join Kidmore End Road.



Figure 7 - Zoomed in view of the area outlined green shown in figure 2 above showing proposed pedestrian footway access and connections from the proposed development to Highdown Hill Road (in Reading Borough)

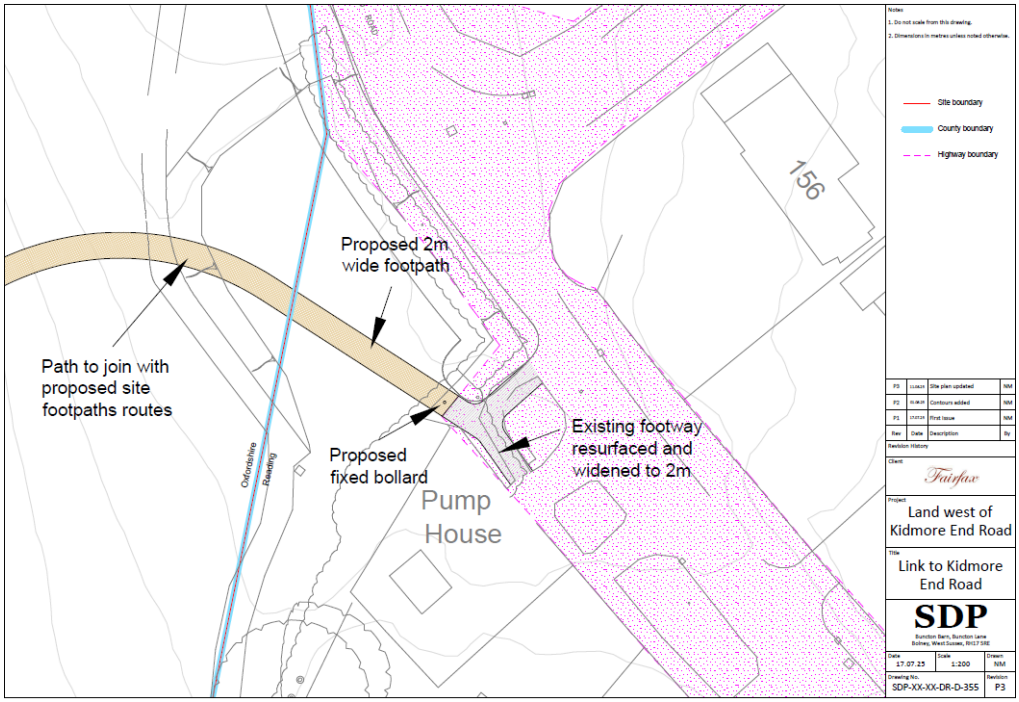


Figure 8 - More detailed plans of the proposed pedestrian connection to Kidmore End Road (within Reading Borough)

3.9 Other than the accesses to the site set out above all other parts of the proposed development are on land within South Oxfordshire.

3.10 <u>Submitted plans and documentation:</u>

Planning and Affordable Housing Statement Prepared by Boyer
Design and Access Statement by Paul Hewitt Architects
Air Quality Assessment by Paul Hewitt Architects
Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment by Ecology Co-op
Ecological Impact Assessment by Ecology Co-op
Landscape Maintenance & Management Specification by Fabrik

Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment by Fabrik
Landscape Statement by Fabrik
Illustrative Landscape Masterplan by Fabrik
Energy Statement by Pinnacle
Land Quality Desk Study by Aqua Terra
Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy by Aqua Terra
Transport Assessment Addendum by SDP
Framework Travel Plan by SPD
Archaeological Assessment by UCL
Geophysical Survey Report by Sumo
Tree Survey / Arboricultural Impact Assessment Sumo Arbotrack
Statement of Community Involvement by Fairthorn

Drawing ref. 2507-PL01 Rev B – Site Location Plan
Drawing ref. 2507-PL03 Rev A – Parameters Plan
Drawing ref. DR D-353 Rev P1 – Site Access Arrangements
Drawing ref. D3456-FAB-00-XX-DR-L-2001, Rev PL04 (illustrative purposes only)

4. Relevant Planning history

4.1. 211843OUT - Outline planning application, with matters reserved in respect of Appearance, for demolition of the existing clubhouse and the erection of a new residential scheme (c3 use to include affordable housing) and public open space at the former reading golf club – Granted. 31/03/2022.

4.2. 221312VAR - Outline planning application with matters reserved in respect of Appearance for demolition of clubhouse and erection of a new residential scheme (c3 use) including affordable housing and public open space at former reading golf club without complying with conditions 5 (Plans), 8&9 (Emissions) 10&11 (SuDS), 12 (Levels), 13 (Mix), 17 (AMS), 19 (Habitat Enhancement), 20 (CEMP), 22 (Biodiversity), 25&26 (Contamination), 29 (CMS), 34 (Cycle Parking), 35 (Refuse), 39 (Car Parking), 41 (Traffic Calming) & 44 (Archaeology) of outline permission 211843 for amendments including changes to layout, mix, parking, drainage, landscaping, open space and energy – Granted. 15/06/2023. Implemented.

4.3. 220930REM - Application for approval of reserved matters (appearance) submitted pursuant to outline planning application ref. 221312/VAR – Approved. 16/06/2023

5. Consultations

5.1 Officer comments in relation to the below are in *italics.*

5.2 RBC Transport – No objection, subject to securing a contribution of £50, 000 towards upgrading of the operating system and/or improvements to the pedestrian and cycle facilities at the junction of Peppard Road / Henley Street / Westfield Road / Prospect Street to mitigate for the additional transport movements resulting from the development within the Borough.

5.3 RBC Ecology Adviser – No objection, there are unlikely to be any ecological impacts from use of the existing access road for the development or connection to the new site within South Oxfordshire.

5.4 RBC Natural Environment – No objection, subject to an informative to advise the applicant that they would need to regularise the approved landscaping layout of the adjacent development that is under construction on the part of the golf course within Reading Borough (planning permission ref. PL/22/1312/VAR) in order to accommodate the proposed connections between the two developments. This could be achieved by re-discharging the landscaping condition of the planning permission for the development under construction.

5.5 Berkshire Archaeology – No objection to the access which would not impact upon archaeology. The archaeological mitigation works undertaken for the development under construction already mitigate for the access impacts of the proposed development.

5.6 RBC Environmental Protection – The air quality assessment submitted as part of the application demonstrates that the proposals would not result in air quality within Reading Borough exceeding recommended levels. No objection.

5.7 RBC Leisure – The proposed development would result in increased demand upon sport and leisure facilities within Reading Borough. Request a financial contribution, in line with Sport England's demand Calculator (in full), towards sport and leisure facilities within Reading Borough. The contribution to be paid in full to RBC prior to commencement of development and index linked from the date planning permission is granted.

5.8 RBC Education/Brighter Futures for Children – No objection.

5.9 NHS ICB - The application is within the catchment of two GP Surgeries at Emmer Green and Balmore Park both of which do not have capacity for additional patients that would result from the proposed development and additional dwellings. Object unless a financial contribution, in line with NHS ICB's multiplier formula is secured in full to go towards NHS ICB projects to increasing capacity at local GP Surgeries.

5.10 Thames Valley Police Designing out Crime Officer – Does not raise any concerns regarding the proposals in terms of designing our crime. Provides a number of observation regarding the layout of the dwellings and surrounding parts of the site *(but these relate to the parts of the development within South Oxfordshire).*

5.11 Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service – Identify some concerns with the indicative layouts of road around the dwellings *(this relates to parts of the development within South Oxfordshire but for completeness these comments were passed to SODC when RBC provided formal consultation comments on the planning application they determined*).

5.12 South Oxfordshire District Council Building Control – The works would be subject to a Building Regulations application and statutory consultations with the fire services as part of that process where compliance with Building Regulations would be secured.

5.13 Natural England – No objection, the development will not have significant adverse impacts on statutorily protected nature conservation site.

5.14 Forestry Commission – Set out their standing advice in relation to development proposals:

1. Ancient woodlands, ancient trees and veteran trees are irreplaceable habitats. Paragraph 193(c) of the NPPF sets out that development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats should be refused unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists. In considering the impacts of the development on Ancient Woodland, Ancient and Veteran trees, the planning authority should consider direct and indirect impacts resulting from both construction and operational phases. Impacts can be caused by activities outside of areas designated as ancient woodland (eg within buffer zones), or within open areas of ancient woodland, which can result in loss or deterioration of ancient woodland.

Please refer to Natural England and Forestry Commission joint Standing Advice for Ancient Woodland and Ancient and Veteran Trees, updated in January 2022. The Standing Advice can be a material consideration for planning decisions, and contains advice and guidance on assessing the effects of development, and how to avoid and mitigate impacts. It also includes an Assessment Guide which can help planners assess the impact of the proposed development on ancient woodland or ancient and veteran trees in line with the NPPF.

The Town and Country Planning (Consultation) (England) Direction 2024 (published January 2024) requires local planning authorities in England to consult the Secretary

of State before granting planning permission for certain types of development, including development that affects ancient woodland: The Town and Country Planning (Consultation) (England) Direction 2024 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

2. Existing trees should be retained wherever possible, and opportunities should be taken to incorporate trees into development. Trees and woodlands provide multiple benefits to society such as storing carbon, regulating temperatures, strengthening flood resilience and reducing noise and air pollution.[1] Paragraph 136 of the NPPF seeks to ensure new streets are tree lined, that opportunities should be taken to incorporate trees elsewhere in developments, and that existing trees are retained wherever possible. Appropriate measures should be in place to secure the long-term maintenance of newly planted trees. The Forestry Commission may be able to give further support in developing appropriate conditions in relation to woodland creation, management or mitigation.

3. Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG): As of the 12th of February 2024, major development (unless exempt) will have to deliver 10% net gain in biodiversity. Paragraph 187(d) of the NPPF also sets out that planning (policies and) decisions should minimise impacts on and provide net gains for biodiversity. Paragraph 187(d) encourages development design to integrate opportunities to improve biodiversity, especially where this can secure net gains for biodiversity. BNG offers opportunities for protecting (retaining) trees and woodlands, as well as new planting and enhancement of existing trees and woodlands, and the planning authority also should consider the wider range of benefits trees, hedgerows and woodlands can provide as part of delivering good practice biodiversity net gain requirements *in addition* to contributing to the BNG figure. Ancient woodlands (including PAWS) and ancient & veteran trees are already recognised as irreplaceable habitats and as such are exempt from the net gain requirement.

Public Representations

5.15 Site notices were displayed at the application site on 28th May 2025.

5.16 Given the cross-boundary nature of the proposals public comments received refer to the development as a whole, the majority of which is located on land within South Oxfordshire. As set out above Reading Borough Council was only required to consider whether or not to grant planning permission for the parts of the development within Reading Borough which relates solely to the access to the development. Therefore, comments relating to the parts of the development within South Oxfordshire are not relevant to this report. Where relevant matters are raised these are discussed in the appraisal section of this report.

5.17 The 170 x objections have been received and the issues raised are summarised below:

Principle of development and Infrastructure Issues

- Concern about impact on local services and infrastructure, schools, nurseries, dentists and doctors are oversubscribed
- The development is in South Oxfordshire but will use and impact facilities and infrastructure primarily within Reading Borough
- South Oxfordshire District Council should require the developer to provide a new school and doctors surgery and help pay for a new bridge across the Thames
- The area suffers from lower water pressure so can Thames Water supply enough water pressure to the development
- There are already enough unoccupied houses in and around Reading
- Would set a precedent for building on other golf course in South Oxfordshire
- This is about profit and greed and not the local community
- The site is not allocated for development in any RBC of SODC plan
- Would set a precedent for further building on the Berkshire/Oxfordshire boundary and result in coalescence of Emmer Green and Sonning Common

- The application on the golf course in Reading could not receive enough electricity for air source heat pumps so how will this development received enough
- RBC can already meet its housing targets within the Local Plan and further homes are not needed within neighbouring Boroughs.
- Applicants public consultation on the proposals was not sufficient

Landscape, Tree and Ecology Impacts

- Loss of woodland and trees
- Harm to wildlife with use the current site and nearby woodland
- Harm to landscape setting of the area and nearby Cucumber Wood Ancient Woodland
- SuDS proposed too close to the woodland
- Loss of open space

Character Impacts

- 237 dwellings have already been permitted on the golf course to which there were 4000 objections which were ignored
- Overdevelopment and urban sprawl
- How many dwellings will be affordable housing
- Loss of green space for existing residents
- Housing should be built on brownfield land
- Erosion of semi-rural character of the area

Pollution and Environmental Impacts

- Air pollution and traffic impacts from construction lorries
- Noise, light and traffic pollution from the new houses
- Adverse impact on everyone's mental and physical health
- The proposals do not incorporate low cost zero energy
- The proposals are worsening the climate emergency
- Flooding impacts on the on Highdown Hill Road and Brooklyn Drive have not been considered
- Concerns about rising crime and antis-social behaviour as a result of additional residents and inadequate investment in policing and youth services
- Archaeological impacts

Transport Impacts

- Roads surrounding the site are too narrow and dangerous and already too busy and cannot cope with additional traffic impacts of the development
- Roads are already busy at school times with Emmer Green Primary, The Hill Primary and Highdown Secondary School so close together this will worsen impacts
- A pedestrian cycle path is proposed from the development to connect with Highdown Hill Road which is a narrow single track road with no footpath and lacks lighting and would not be safe
- The junction by the White Horse and Black Horse is already dangerous with buses having problems turning into Grove Road and Peppard Road.
- Courtneay Drive is becoming busier as cars use this as a cut through route
- Infrastructure secured as part of the application on the part of the former golf course within Reading has not materialised
- Poor bus services

5.18 1 x letter of support has been received raising the following issues:

- The development would provide much needed new homes for young people in the area. Demand for exiting houses is so high meaning that prices are out of reach
- Primary Schools in the area are undersubscribed and at risk of closure

- Although the site is currently green space this is a former manicured golf course that was not accessible to the public

Representations from public groups:

5.19 Caversham and District Residents Association (CADRA)

CADRA objects to the proposed development at land west of Kidmore End Road, and will make an objection to the South Oxfordshire District Council planning application no. P25/S1431/O with additional information included.

INTRODUCTION
Although the land in question lies within South Oxfordshire, the only access is solely through constricted roads in Emmer Green. This means that residents will look to services including health and education in Reading and all of the burden will fall on Reading Borough Council and the residents of Emmer Green and Caversham.

ROADS AND TRAFFIC
The primary concern is the negative impact on local infrastructure, in particular the additional volume of traffic that will be generated. Due to the geographical position of the proposed development all traffic will have to use the single access and egress on Kidmore End Road through the newly constructed development on the Reading Borough Council land, known as the Emmer Green Drive.

This will place an increased burden on the local roads that are already extremely busy and, to date, have not benefited from any improvement works from the Emmer Green Drive development.

Reading Borough Council itself recognises that the transport and other infrastructure constraints in the northern part of the Borough have long been seen as a significant constraint to significant new development north of the River Thames. Reading is increasingly facing pressures as a result of new houses being built in the neighbouring villages, from which most traffic will regularly travel through North Reading. As the Council knows this has had a cumulative impact on the area, with no solution likely in the medium term.

HEALTH AND EDUCATION
Additionally local provision of sufficient Doctors surgeries remains a concern. This was raised at the time of the application for the development on the RBC land area but again to date no additional provision has been planned for and the Emmer Green Surgery has not been able to expand.

UTILITIES
CADRA were aware that the utility infrastructure providers were initially unable to service the Emmer Green Drive development without upgrade works. To what extent does this additional proposal place a further strain and impact service levels for the local community? Additional development is likely to impede the introduction of further heat pumps in the Reading development which have to date been prevented by lack of electrical capacity.

CONSTRUCTION
While recognising that a Construction Method Statement would be an issue for Reserved Matters, RBC Councillors and Officers will be aware of the many difficulties experienced in Emmer Green over construction traffic and connection of utilities. There are grave concerns that these would continue under the proposed development and be exacerbated by the complexities of coordination between different authorities.

BIODIVERSITY, ECOLOGY AND GREEN SPACE
While recognising that this is formally a matter for SODC, this is an important area of green space which is highly valued by local residents.

These issues have been considered in considerable detail and are well documented as part of the examination of the Kidmore End Parish Neighbourhood Plan.

CADRA recognise the proposal to protect Cucumber Wood and the “Dry Valley” to the north east and hence not be built on.

However, should the proposed development go ahead this may lead to the land to the north west becoming a future development. This raises a major concern as again this would just put further strain on the local infrastructure.

CONCLUSION
The proposed development would place considerable additional pressures on both Reading Borough Council and on local people. We urge Reading to oppose it in the strongest terms.

5.20 Caversham Globe
Caversham Globe objects to this application.

We are concerned at the loss of green space, wildlife habitat and biodiversity
We object to building on what is a green-field site which is not designated for building by either the Kidmore End Neighbourhood Plan or the Reading Borough Council Local Plan.

The Kidmore End local plan denotes this area as “a Locally Valued Landscape”, not as land suitable for building on. Reading’s Local Plan, in relation to protecting the natural environment, specifically states that“Planning permission will not be granted for any development that would detract from the character or appearance of a Major Landscape Feature” which includes “The North Reading dry valleys and Chilterns Escarpment”. The area in question is part of the Chiltern dry valleys and within the landscape setting of the Chilterns National Landscape (AONB) to the north.

We are also concerned about vehicle access to the proposed development, particularly access through Kidmore End Road – a narrow residential road, as well as additional pressure on already congested junctions, notably the Peppard Road/Henley Road/Prospect Street junction in Caversham.

The difficulty of servicing properties by the neighbouring local authority, which would have to be accessed through residential streets of Reading, is also of concern. Although these properties would be outside Reading, given their proximity they would inevitably add to pressure on services within Reading.

Our over-riding concern is at the loss of green space, wildlife habitat and biodiversity of what is a distinctive Chiltern dry valley, with high landscape and biodiversity value. This area should be protected, not built on.

We strongly object to this proposed development

6. Legal context

5.1 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 December 2024) - 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).

5.2 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).

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

NPPF (December 2024, incorporating changes February 2025)
Section 2 - Achieving sustainable development
Section 4 - Decision-making
Section 5 – Delivering a sufficient supply of homes
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

6.4 NPPG (2014 onwards)

6.5 Reading Borough Local Plan 2019, policies:
CC1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
CC2: Sustainable Design and Construction
CC3: Adaptation to Climate Change
CC6: Accessibility and the Intensity of Development
CC7: Design and the Public Realm
CC8: Safeguarding Amenity
CC9: Securing Infrastructure
EN2: Areas of Archaeological Significance
EN9: Provision of Open Space
EN10: Access to Open Space
EN12: Biodiversity and the Green Network
EN14: Trees, Hedges and Woodland
EN15: Air Quality
EN16: Pollution and Water Resources
EN17: Noise Generating Equipment
EN18: Flooding and Drainage
TR1: Achieving the Transport Strategy
TR3: Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters
TR4: Cycle Routes and Facilities
RL1: Network and Hierarchy of Centres

6.6 Relevant Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) are:
Planning Obligations Under s106 SPD (2015)

6.7 Other relevant guidance:
Reading Tree Strategy (2021)
Reading Biodiversity Action Plan (2021)

Local Plan Partial Update

6.8 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 update of the Local Plan was published on 6th November 2024.

5.9 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. 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 remain 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'.

5.10 The Local Plan Partial Update was submitted to the Secretary of State on 9th May 2025. Submission marks the beginning of a process of public examination led by an independent Inspector. Due to the stage of examination, the draft Local Plan can be afforded limited weight. Any incidences where policies relevant to these application are changing or relevance of any new policies proposed to be introduced by the draft Local Plan Partial Update will be discussed within the Appraisal section below.

6. Appraisal

7.1 The following are the main considerations for this application are:

1. **South Oxfordshire' Decision**
2. **Land Use Matters**
3. **Transport and Highway Matters**
4. **Design and Character**
5. **Natural Environment**
6. **Amenity Matters**
7. **Other Matters**

South Oxfordshire's Decision

7.2 The decision made by SODC to refuse planning permission for the parts of the development within South Oxfordshire is material planning consideration for this Council in determining what our decision would have been for this planning application relating to the parts of the development site falling within RBC's administrative area.

7.3 Notably without a planning permission for the parts of the development within South Oxfordshire the proposed accesses within Reading Borough would not serve a purpose. Notwithstanding this, this report needs to consider (should the appeal be allowed) if the limited parts of the proposed development that are within Reading Borough would be acceptable and comply with relevant policies of the RBC Local Plan. Given the applicant has appealed SODC's refusal of planning permission Officers recommend that if RBC was in a position to determine our application, then a condition would be attached to require that no part of the development commences unless planning permission for the rest of the development within South Oxfordshire, under SODC planning application ref. PL/25/S1431/O, has been granted by SODC (or the Planning Inspectorate) and that permission implemented. This condition would ensure that any planning permission granted by RBC could not be implemented unless the development within South Oxfordshire was commenced.

Land Use Matters

7.4 The proposed access roads and pathway are the only parts of the proposed development located within Reading Borough. The access road (and junction with Kidmore End Road) proposed to be used to provide vehicular access to the development has already been built as this serves the residential development of 223 dwellings that is already under construction under planning permission ref. PL/22/1312/VAR on the adjacent part of the former golf course site located within Reading Borough, with just a small extension to this road required to connect to the part of the proposed development within South Oxfordshire.

7.5 Given that the vehicular access road is already built and in use proving access to existing residential dwellings the principle of the road being used as a residential access is already

established. What will be considered in the following sections of this report is whether there are any technical or other reasons as to why the existing road cannot be used to connect to and provide access to the up to 70 dwellings proposed on the part of the site within South Oxfordshire, as well as any impacts this could have on the highway network and surrounding area within Reading Borough. Any other impacts of the parts of the proposed vehicle, cycle and pedestrian accesses to the development that are within Reading Borough in terms of how they would integrate with adjacent residential development that is already under construction, and the surrounding area will also be considered.

7.6 The change of use of the former golf club land and open space to provide up to 70 dwellings is not a matter for RBC given these parts of the development are located within South Oxfordshire. Having reviewed the SODC reasons for refusal of their planning application they identified that the development would be not be appropriate infill development and would result in unacceptable separation of the Kidmore End Settlement Area part of South Oxfordshire within which the site is located; also noting that the site is not allocated for development within either the South Oxfordshire Local Plan or the Kidmore End Neighbourhood Development Plan which are relevant policy documents for SODC.

Transport and Highway Matters

7.7 Policies TR1 (Achieving the Transport Strategy), TR3 (Access, Traffic and Highway related matters), TR4 (Cycle Routes and Facilities) and TR5 (Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging) seek to address access, traffic, highway and parking related matters for new development.

7.8 The application is supported by a Transport Assessment (TA) and Transport Assessment Addendum (August 2025) produced by SDP. All vehicular, cycle and pedestrian routes into and out of the development would be via the highway network within Reading Borough.

Site Accessibility

6.9 The Chartered Institute of Highways and Transportation (CIHT), provides guidance on acceptable walking distances for various purposes, including for commuting/school journeys, access to town centres, and general areas. Acceptable walking distances are typically between 800m and 2000m, depending on the context. It is important that users of, and visitors to, the development can make sustainable travel choices using non-car modes of Transport. A review of site accessibility and distances to local facilities and bus stops has been undertaken as part of the TA addendum. Emmer Green Local Centre is located within 1250m of the furthest home (around a 15 minute walk). The homes at the southern end of the site are around 1100m from the Local Centre. Local primary and secondary school are within 1100m away from the furthest homes, which would all fall within recommended walking distances.

6.10 CIHT and Active Travel England guidance also recommends that homes are located within 400m of a bus stop. The closest bus stops are located on Kidmore End Road / Courtenay Drive and would be approximately 890m from the furthest home within the proposed development, double the recommended walking distance.

6.11 Whilst Active Travel England (government body) are not a relevant consultee for the planning application given they only comment on applications for over 150 dwellings an Active Travel England Toolkit Assessment has also been undertaken by the applicant as part of the TA Addendum to evaluate the active travel merits of the development against Active Travel guidance. In summary, this concludes that in overall terms the development and site support travel by sustainable modes, although it is noted that some distances, especially relating to access to bus services, exceed the preferred maximum walking distances.

6.12 To mitigate for the longer than recommended walking distances to a bus stop the application proposes to provide a financial contribution towards improving local bus services to help encourage travel by bus. This contribution was agreed to be secured as part of the SODC planning application in line with Oxfordshire County Council's (who are highway authority for SODC) standard public transport services contribution of £1,364 per dwelling with future spending to be agreed in consultation with RBC. It should be noted a similar arrangement was secured and considered acceptable when planning permission ref. PL/22/1312/VAR was granted for 223 dwellings on the part of the golf course within Reading Borough. For that development, walking distances to bus stops were similar to those for the current proposals (800m) and a contribution of £200,000 was secured by RBC, with spending to be agreed in consultation with Oxfordshire County Council, to go towards encouraging travel by bus and was considered to mitigate for the longer than recommended proposed walking distances to the nearest bus stop.

6.13 It is noted that reason for refusal 3 of the SODC decision notice for the parts of the development within South Oxfordshire states that '*3. Having regard to the distance of the development from the nearest bus stop, this development is not considered to be in a sustainable location'*. This reason for refusal was put forward by members of SODC PAC in overturning the SODC officer recommendation to approve the planning application. It is noted that within the SDOC PAC report the officer concluded that the site was located within a sustainable location and reached the following conclusion in respect of walking distances to the nearest bus stops:

> *Bus stops are located on Kidmore End Road close to the access road that runs through the new housing development (The Fairway) on the part of the former golf course that is within Reading. The bus stops will be around 800m from the new homes. Whilst bus stops should ideally be within 400m, people are generally prepared to walk further to a bus stop that offers regular services to key destinations. There are regular services from the this stop into Reading Town Centre.*
>
> *In terms of bus connections, the 25 and 25a pink service runs from Reading town centre, along Kidmore End Road, through Sonning Common to Peppard Common. The frequency and hours of operation of this service was improved in September 2024 using a combination of Bus Service Improvement Plan and Section 106 funds from Oxfordshire County Council, and Section 106 funds from the existing golf club development in coordination with Reading Borough Council.*
>
> *As the development currently under construction on part of the golf course is contributing towards improvement of the service, it is appropriate for the proposed development to also contribute. This will extend the life of the enhanced service and provide maximum opportunity for long-term commercial viability.*
>
> *Oxfordshire County Council apply a standard public transport services contribution of £1,364 per dwelling and this will be used for maintenance and retention of bus services in the vicinity of the site. Oxfordshire County Council are currently working closely with Reading Borough Council on this and have a joint approach to ensuring Section 106 funds from the golf club development are utilised for maintenance and improvement of the local bus network.*

6.14 The above assessment is consistent with how the RBC application under planning permission ref. PL/22/1312/VAR for 223 dwellings on the part of the golf course with Reading Borough was considered and concluded to be acceptable in relation to distance to bus stops.

6.15 Officers consider that the contribution towards bus services that has been agreed between SODC and the applicant (with spending to be agreed in coordination with RBC) would assist in preserving and enhancing bus travel opportunities within the local area, should the Planning Inspectorate allow the appeal for the planning application for the parts

of the proposed development within South Oxfordshire. It should also be noted that the development for 223 dwellings currently under construction of the part of the former golf course within Reading Borough was designed to accommodate buses looping through the development to serve the new dwellings. Whilst this has not happened so far, it is possible that the additional dwellings may make such a loop more viable. If the loop did happen it would reduce the distance between the new site and bus stops considerably.

7.16 To facilitate and encourage active travel by foot or cycle, the development also proposes measures to enhance pedestrian and cycle permeability between areas east and west of the site with the provision of active travel links. On the east boundary of the proposed development a pedestrian and cycle connection is proposed on to Highdown Hill Road, which is part of the National Cycle Network (route 5). This would accord with Policy TR4 (Cycle Routes and Facilities) which expects new development to improve access for cyclists to, from and within developments. To the west boundary of the development a pedestrian connection is proposed on to Kidmore End Road, adjacent to the pumping station. This link formalises an existing informal route used to access the private land. Cycle and pedestrian permeability is also proposed to the south with two cycle/pedestrian connections proposed to link in with the adjacent residential development under construction on the part of the former golf course within Reading. Small sections of these pedestrian cycle links are located within Reading Borough where they connect with Kidmore End Road, Highdown Hill Road and The Fairway within the existing development taking place at the golf course. RBC Transport Officers confirm that technically the design of these pedestrian and cycle links is acceptable.

7.17 Notwithstanding that walking distances to bus stops exceed the recommended guidance, it is considered that the proposed mitigation towards bus services in the local area, together with the permeability and choice that the proposed development would provide for pedestrians and cyclists to move around the local area, as well as the convenient location of the development in relation to Emmer Green Local Centre and surrounding schools, is such that in overall terms the development demonstrates that it is in a sustainable location and is acceptable in terms of accessibility. This would accord with Policies CC6 (Accessibility and Intensity of Development) and TR1 (Achieving the Transport Strategy) which require new development to include measures to promote and improve sustainable transport and to ensure adequate levels of accessibility in relation to the level of development proposed.

7.18 The TA Addendum submitted with the application also considers the impacts of the development on the Cross-Thames Travel Route. This has been reviewed by RBC Transport Officers who consider that whilst the development will increase the number of trips travelling south via Peppard Road or Caversham Park Road towards the River Thames, the site location and the low number of trips in this direction would not justify or impact upon the ability for any new river crossing to be delivered in future.

Trip Generation

7.19 To determine the total number of person trips the proposed additional residential homes would generate the TA Addendum used the previously agreed trip rates for the residential development currently under construction as part of planning permission ref. PL/22/1312/VAR on the part of the golf course within Reading.

7.20 Table 6.3 presents the number of trips by each mode of travel modelled for a development of 70 homes, which is the maximum number of new dwellings proposed by the current planning application. This are shown in table 6.3 below:

Table 6.3 – Trips by Mode of Travel for 70 Homes

	AM Peak Hour			PM Peak Hour		
	Arrivals	Departures	Two-way	Arrivals	Departures	Two-way
Driving a car or van	5	23	28	27	11	38
Passenger in a car or van	1	4	5	2	1	3
On foot / Bicycle	4	19	23	5	2	8
Train	0	2	3	3	1	4
Bus, minibus, or coach	1	3	4	4	2	5
Motorcycle or moped	0	1	1	0	0	1
Taxi	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	**11**	**52**	**63**	**41**	**17**	**58**

7.21 The TA Addendum then cross references the modelled maximum number of projected trips for the proposed development against the current version of the TRICS database (version 7.11.4) to compare the expected trip rates for the proposed development using different methods (see table 6.7 below).

Table 6.7 – Trips by Mode of Travel using TRICS Total People trip rates for 70 Homes

	AM Peak Hour			PM Peak Hour		
	Arrivals	Departures	Two-way	Arrivals	Departures	Two-way
Driving a car or van	7	24	32	25	13	38
Passenger in a car or van	1	5	6	2	1	3
On foot / Bicycle	6	21	27	5	3	8
Train	1	2	3	3	1	4
Bus, minibus, or coach	1	3	4	3	2	5
Motorcycle or moped	0	1	1	0	0	1
Taxi	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	**16**	**56**	**72**	**38**	**21**	**59**

7.22 The assessment shows that the predicted total number of vehicle trips in the peak hours when using either approach (as shown in tables 6.3 and 6.7 above) are similar in number. The TA Addendum utilises the highest vehicle trips rates in the highway and junction capacity analysis to present a robust calculation of the vehicle trips from the proposed development. RBC Transport Officers have reviewed the trip generation assessment and consider that this has been carried out to an appropriate standard and methodology to inform the capacity analysis.

7.23 As part of the highway and junction capacity analysis the TA Addendum sets out that traffic surveys were undertaken in March 2025 at the following junctions:

- Kidmore End Road / Chalgrove Way priority junction
- Kidmore End Road / Grove Road priority junction
- Peppard Road / Kidmore End Road priority junction
- Peppard Road / Buckingham Drive mini-roundabout
- Peppard Road / Kiln Road priority junction
- Kiln Road / Caversham Park Road priority junction

7.24 Using the results of the traffic surveys capacity assessments have been undertaken at each of the junctions listed above to determine whether traffic resulting from the proposed development would have a significant impact on the operation of the junctions. At the request of RBC, the TA assesses the junctions of Peppard Road / Kiln Road and Kiln Road / Caversham Park Road separately which have been modelled together due to the

potential interaction between the two closely spaced junctions given the blocking which occurs sometimes already between these two junctions. This was the approach adopted in the Transport Assessment for the development currently under construction on the southern part of the former golf course within Reading Borough.

7.25 The junction capacity assessment for the previous planning application within Reading Borough found that these junctions exceeded their operating capacity and as such a junction improvement schemes were secured to be provided as part of the s106 agreement for that planning permission to mitigate the predicted increases in traffic by widening the junction entries. The junction capacity assessment submitted with the current application indicates that the proposed mitigation scheme at the Peppard Road / Kiln Road and Kiln Road / Caversham Park Road secured under the previous RBC application will ensure the junctions can accommodate the additional development traffic without significant detrimental effect. The developer for the adjacent ongoing development within Reading Borough has agreed and signed a s278 highway works agreement with RBC for the junction improvements as part of the ongoing development and is in the process of providing the various highway works secured as part of that planning permission.

7.26 The previous application within Reading Borough also determined that the signalised control junction at Peppard Road / Henley Street / Westfield Road / Prospect Street operates above the maximum theoretical operating capacity, and a contribution of £100, 000 was secured as part of the s106 agreement for that planning permission to upgrade the junction and mitigate for the impact of that development. This contribution has been paid to RBC.

7.27 At the request of RBC, an assessment of this junction was also undertaken as part of the TA Addendum for the current application which estimates that the proposed development would add 19 two-way vehicle trips in the AM peak hour and 20 two-way vehicle trips in the PM peak hour to this junction. The results show that taking into account the proposed development the junction is predicted to operate above the maximum operating capacity by the year 2030 resulting in a minor increase in queue lengths. This is shown in table 3.2 below:

Table 3.2 – Peppard Road / Kiln Road and Kiln Road / Caversham Park Road priority junctions

2025 without development	AM Peak Hour		PM Peak Hour	
	Queue	Deg. Sat %	Queue	Deg. Sat %
Peppard Road	16	89.2	13	84.8
Henley Road	5	49.9	6	44.6
Westfield Road	7	85.8	9	85.5
Prospect Street	17	86.6	16	85.1
2030 without development	**AM Peak Hour**		**PM Peak Hour**	
	Queue	Deg. Sat %	Queue	Deg. Sat %
Peppard Road	23	96.7	17	93.3
Henley Road	5	52.0	6	47.3
Westfield Road	9	92.8	13	96.0
Prospect Street	22	95.1	21	93.5
2030 with development	**AM Peak Hour**		**PM Peak Hour**	
	Queue	Deg. Sat %	Queue	Deg. Sat %
Peppard Road	26	98.9	18	94.6
Henley Road	5	51.5	6	47.3
Westfield Road	10	93.7	14	97.8
Prospect Street	23	95.7	22	94.7

7.28 The TA also identifies that the proposed development would increase traffic and pedestrian/cycle trips going through the junction in peak hours. Therefore, a contribution of £50,000 is considered to be justified, to be secured by way of s106 agreement, to mitigate the impact of the development upon this junction. The contribution would go towards upgrading of the operating system and/or improvements to the pedestrian and cycle facilities at the junction.

Servicing Requirements

7.29 Servicing and refuse collection for the development would take place via the main vehicular route from Kidmore End Road. Drawings have been submitted with the application to demonstrate that refuse vehicles meeting SODC specifications can safely enter the site, turn and drive out of the site in forward gear. Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service have raised queries regarding fire truck access within the site which would be a matter for SODC should the appeal be allowed for the part of the development within South Oxfordshire as part of a future reserved matters application for the detailed layout of the development.

7.30 A detailed construction method statement (CMS) will also be essential for the construction stage of the development, as a whole, to ensure that there are no adverse impacts on the highway network within Reading Borough. Construction traffic would access the site from Reading. The SODC committee report for the application within South Oxfordshire confirms that a CMS condition would have been attached to the planning permission for that part of the development if permission had been granted and RBC in providing consultation comments to SODC formally requested to be consulted on any future CMS. With the SODC application refused and the outcome of the appeal unknown it is reasonable to recommend that a CMS condition be applied to ensure that construction traffic does not harm the amenities or traffic flows within the locality in Caversham.

7.31 From an overall transport perspective the parts of the proposed development located within Reading Borough are considered to be necessary and acceptable from a technical standpoint to provide safe access to and from the development. The vehicular, pedestrian and cycle accesses to the development are considered to facilitate suitable levels of accessibility to Emmer Green Local Centre and facilities, notably providing a direct connection to National Cycle Route 5 along Highdown Hill Road. Whilst the location of the proposed dwellings within South Oxfordshire in relation to the nearest bus stops would exceed recommended walking distances mitigation is proposed towards improvement of bus services within the local area and there is potential for buses to use the adjacent development within Reading, which could significantly reduce walking distances to bus stops in the future. Similar walking distances were accepted under planning permission ref. PL/22/1312/VAR for the development of 223 dwellings that is currently under construction on the part of the former golf course site within Reading, so it would be inconsistent of this LPA to conclude otherwise in relation to a similar residential development on a directly adjacent part of the former golf course site. It is concluded that the number of dwellings proposed would result in minor impacts upon traffic levels on the roads surrounding and a financial contribution towards highways works has been justified to be secured by way of s106 agreement to mitigate for the identified impacts of the proposed development upon the highway network within the Borough.

7.32 Conditions to secure provision of the vehicular, cycle and pedestrian accesses to the development prior to occupation of the dwellings were proposed by SODC. It would not be reasonable or enforceable to apply these conditions in respect of the parts of the development within Reading given all the proposed dwellings would be located within South Oxfordshire.

7.33 Subject to the recommended conditions and section 106 obligation the parts of the proposed development located within Reading Borough are considered to be acceptable and to comply with Policies TR1, TR3, TR3, TR5 and CC6.

Natural Environment

7.34 Impacts of the proposed development upon the natural environment within Reading are limited given majority of the development is located within South Oxfordshire.

7.35 The proposed single vehicle access to the development would connect with the existing road under construction as part of the residential development located on the part of the golf course within Reading. The extension of this road northwards across the boundary into South Oxfordshire would necessitate removal of 4 trees and a small section of hedgerow proposed to be provided as part of the approved landscaping scheme of the development within Reading. These parts of the approved landscaping scheme have not yet been provided on site. Sections of the relevant plans showing the location of the proposed access in relation to the approved landscaping layout for the adjacent development already under construction are shown below in figures 9 and 10. As shown in figure 10 the approved landscaping layout for the development already under construction on the part of the former golf club site within Reading Borough already included a pedestrian link to the land to the north and current application site but the inclusion of the access road necessitates a change to the approved landscaping layout.



Figure 9 – Location of proposed vehicular access road

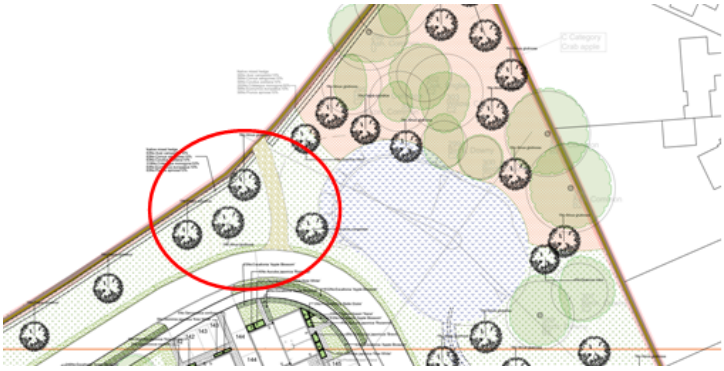


Figure 10 – Approved landscaping layout to adjacent development within Reading

7.36 Loss of these trees and section of hedgerow from the approved landscaping scheme would be a negative change in terms of landscaping and replacement tree planting secured for the existing development within Reading. Failure to provide the landscaping as approved would mean the development within Reading would conflict with the planning permission for that development. Therefore, to facilitate the proposed access to the development in South Oxfordshire the applicant would be required to amend their planning permission to adjust the landscaping scheme accordingly to ensure they are in compliance with the permission. This could be achieved by simply re-applying for approval of a slightly amended landscaping scheme under the relevant landscaping condition of that extant planning permission (ref. PL/22/1312/VAR). The RBC Natural

Environment Officer is satisfied that there is more than sufficient space within the development currently being constructed within Reading to provide equivalent replacement landscaping including tree planting and, given the Applicant for both development sites is the same, an informative would have been attached to any planning permission granted to advise the applicant of the need to regularise the approved landscaping layout for the adjacent development that is currently under construction. Subject to the above recommended informative being used the RBC Natural Environment Officer does not object to the parts of the proposed development within Reading Borough.

7.37 The separate pedestrian/cycle path connection between the two developments to the western part of the site is shown on the approved landscaping layout for the development already taking place in Reading and therefore would require no loss of landscaping.

7.38 In terms of the proposed pedestrian and cycle connection on to Highdown Hill Road the RBC Natural Environment Officer comments that this would necessitate significant cutting back of existing hedgerow along Highdown Hill Road to provide the necessary visibility splay to make the junction safe and that therefore replacement landscaping should be provided. This hedgerow is located within South Oxfordshire and the SODC officer acknowledged this requirement in the officer PAC report noting that this would be a matter to be addressed at the point when an application to discharge the landscaping reserved matter was received. With regard to the proposed pedestrian connection to Kidmore End Road the part of this pathway in Reading relates to an existing informal access that is to be regularised as part of the proposed development and there are no adverse tree or landscaping impacts as a result of this.

7.39 Incidences where the proposed development would result in loss of existing trees and where additional landscaping is proposed are all located within South Oxfordshire and as such are not matter for RBC to determine. RBC provided formal comments on these aspects in the consultation response sent to SODC prior to determination of their planning application.

7.40 In respect of ecology matters the RBC Ecology Adviser raises no objection to the parts of the proposed development within Reading, which given their minor nature are considered unlikely to result in any adverse ecological impacts beyond that considered and mitigated for under the extant planning permission for the development currently being constructed on the part of the golf course within Reading. As discussed above in relation to landscaping the applicant would be required to regularise any changes to the on-site BNG position for the current development taking place in Reading as a result of changes to landscaping scheme for that development but given the minor nature of the works in Reading such changes are likely to be marginal and an on-site net gain would still be achieved. Like for like replacement of the small amount of landscaping needed to be removed to provide the accesses between the two developments would likely mean that the BNG position would not change.

6.41 As confirmed by the SODC PAC report the proposed development as a whole is projected to result in a 40% net gain in biodiversity through both on-site and off-site measures agreed between the Applicant and SODC which would be secured to be provided by way of s106 between the applicant and SODC if the Planning Inspectorate determines to allow the appeal against SODC's refusal of planning permission for the parts of the development within South Oxfordshire.

6.42 The parts of the proposed development within Reading are not considered to result in any adverse impacts upon the Natural Environment. It is considered that the proposals demonstrate that impacts within Reading would not be detrimental to the Borough's Vegetation Cover and that there would be no net loss in biodiversity in accordance with Policies EN14 and EN12.

Design and Appearance

6.43 It is not considered that there would be significant impacts upon the character and appearance of the Borough as a result of the parts of the proposed development within Reading Borough. The proposed vehicle, pedestrian and cycle connections with the

existing development taking place on the part of the golf course within Reading would integrate with the approved layout of the development under construction and result in very modest changes to the landscape layout such that no adverse impact to the character and appearance of that development are identified. The proposed pedestrian and cycle junctions on to Highdown Hill Road and Kidmore End Road would not have a significant visual impact upon these roads with the pedestrian and cycle permeability provided by them considered to contribute towards good design in terms of ease of movement in accordance with Policy CC7 (Design and The Public Realm).

7.44 Detailed information and specifications as to the exact appearance and layout of the accesses would be required to be submitted for approval as part of future reserved matters planning applications if the appeal is allowed.

7.45 The proposed development would form an extension to the suburban area of Emmer Green which is part of the wider urban area of Reading. The location of the application site is surrounded by existing (or under construction) suburban residential housing to the east, west and southern boundaries which is all located within Reading Borough. From a pattern of development / urban extension perspective, officers consider that the indicative outline proposals would be in keeping with the character and layout of existing adjacent residential areas within Reading Borough. Matters relating to layout, scale, appearance and landscaping would be for SODC to consider at reserved matters stage if the appeal is allowed.

Amenity Matters

6.46 The application is accompanied by an Air Quality Assessment which considers the impact of the maximum number of 70 dwellings proposed upon Reading Borough as a result of the anticipated increased in vehicle movements on roads within Reading. The Air Quality Assessment has been reviewed by RBC Environmental Protection Officers who are satisfied that the assessment has been carried out to an appropriate standard and demonstrates that pollutant levels would be below limit values such that no significant additional adverse air quality implications upon Reading Borough are identified. This would accord with Policy EN15 (Air Quality) which requires that proposals do not have detrimental impacts upon air quality. As discussed in the Transport section of this report the additional vehicle movements associated with the development would be modest and it is not considered that use of existing roads or proposed roads to access the development would result in significant harmful impacts upon existing or proposed occupiers in terms of noise or light pollution or general disturbance beyond that reasonably expected to occur within a residential area.

7.47 If the Planning Inspectorate determines to allow the appeal for the parts of the proposed development within South Oxfordshire, then SODC recommend that a CMS would be secured as part of that permission for the substantive part of the development. However, it is also recommended that a CMS is secured by way of pre-commencement condition for the RBC application given construction vehicles accessing the site would do so via Reading, to ensure that movement of construction vehicles is managed so as not to adversely impact upon existing residents or the highway network.

Other Matters

6.48 This report does not discuss matters such as affordable housing, loss of open space or energy efficiency, as they are not relevant to the part of the development within Reading, which just relates to the site accesses. These and other matters were considered when SODC determined the planning application for the parts of the development within South Oxfordshire.

7.49 Berkshire Archaeology have confirmed that the proposed works to provide the accesses to the development would not adversely impact upon archaeology at the site and that suitable mitigation has already been carried out as part of the development currently under construction on the part of the former golf course within Reading. This would accord with Policy EN2 (Areas of Archaeological Significance).

6.50 RBC provided formal consultation comments to SODC prior to determination of their planning application for the parts of the development within South Oxfordshire. This outlined that RBC did not object to the parts of the development within South Oxfordshire subject to mitigation being secured as part of the SODC application towards addressing a number of impacts RBC officers had identified that the proposed development would have upon Reading Borough. This included the highways contributions discussed in this report as well as contributions towards impacts upon healthcare and leisure facilities within Reading, given that the location of the development is such that future residents would very likely utilise infrastructure and services within Reading rather than South Oxfordshire.

6.51 It is confirmed in the SODC officer PAC report that SODC and the applicant agree to secure the healthcare and leisure contributions sought by RBC, with RBC being party to a s106 agreement to achieve this. If the Planning Inspectorate determines to allow the appeal and grant planning permission for the parts of the development within South Oxfordshire, then these contributions could then be secured for RBC as part of a s106 agreement to be agreed as part of the appeal process. Given the parts of the development within Reading relate solely to access there is not considered to be justification to secure these contributions as part of the RBC application that is subject of this report given it is the additional dwellings within the South Oxfordshire part of the site that would generate the additional pressure on healthcare and leisure infrastructure.

6.52 However, as set out in the Transport section of this report given the accesses to the development are located within Reading it is considered that is would be reasonable to secure the highway mitigation contribution as part of a s106 agreement for the RBC application given it is the accesses from the site in Reading that would be fundamental to facilitating the additional vehicle, cycle and pedestrian movements within the Borough. Had the appeal against non-determination of the application subject of this report not been submitted officers would have sought to secure the highways contribution as part of this application. Given a joint appeal has been submitted in relation to both the SODC and RBC planning applications officers consider that the most likely outcome in the event that the Planning Inspectorate determines to grant planning permission for the development as a whole is that a joint s106 agreement would be agreed between all parties to secure relevant infrastructure contributions for both RBC and SODC.

7 Equality implications

7.1 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.

7.2 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.

8 Conclusion

8.1 Had an appeal for non-determination of the planning application not been submitted by the applicant then officers would have been recommending that the PAC grants planning permission for the parts of the development located within Reading Borough, subject to the s106 obligations and conditions outlined in the recommendation box at the top of this report. Given the non-determination appeal has been submitted this report instead seeks agreement from PAC to the proposed indicative recommendation upon which the

Council's case at the appeal will be based. This report will form the basis of the Council's Appeal Statement and accompanying documents.

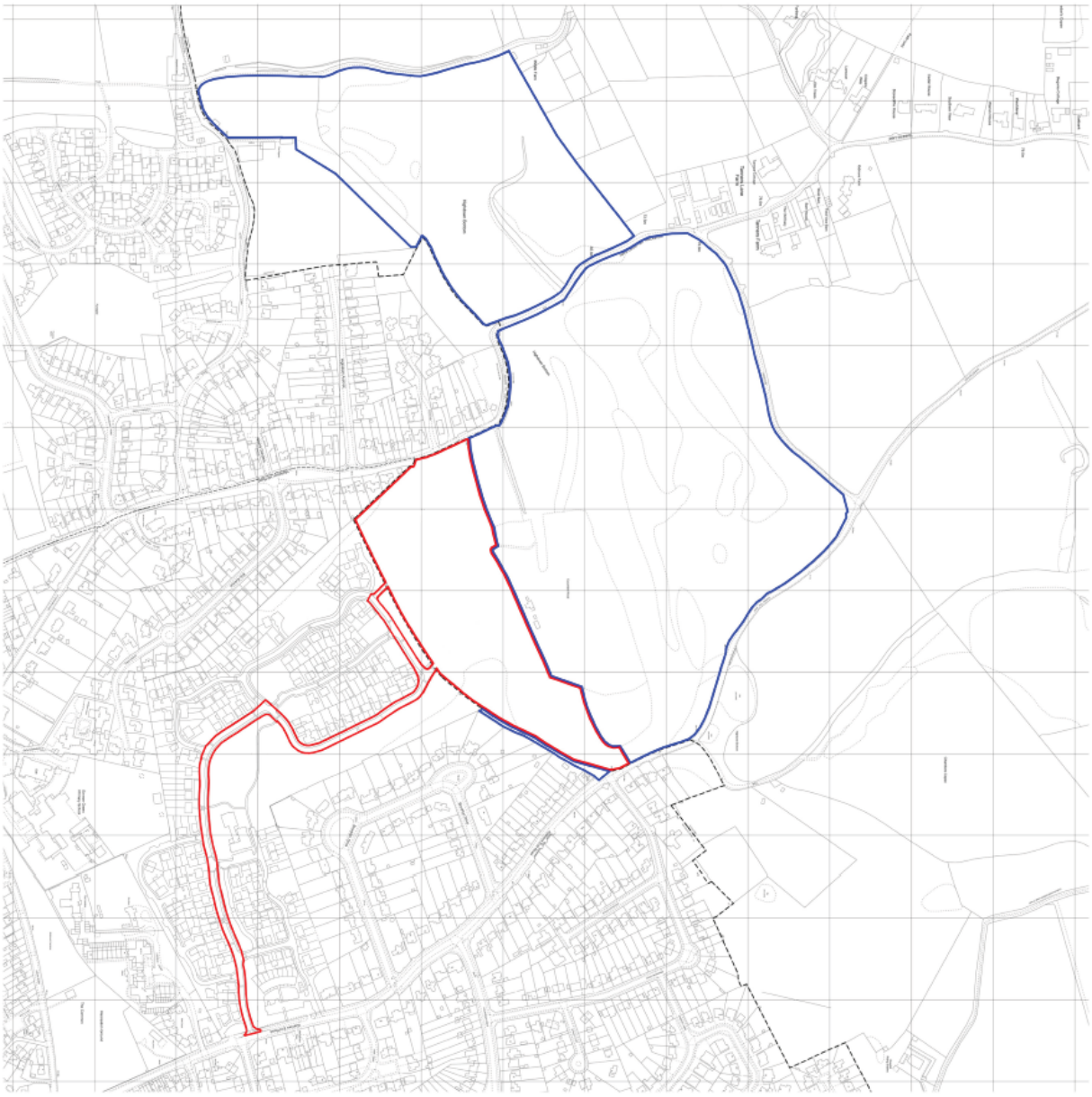
8.2 Whilst it is noted that SODC has refused planning permission for the substantive part of the development that is located within South Oxfordshire (with SODC PAC overturning the SODC officer recommendation to grant planning permission) this decision has also been appealed by the applicant.

8.3 As set out with the report above it is considered the parts of the development located within Reading Borough demonstrate compliance with the relevant policies of the RBC Local Plan 2019. Notwithstanding this, as a cross boundary application for a single development there is a clear risk of unacceptable impacts occurring if only one part of the development is implemented, which for Reading would involve creation of accesses to undeveloped land without a purpose and disturbance to the approved layout of an existing development without justification. Therefore, if a decision were still able to be taken on the application a condition (no. 5 above in the recommendation box at the top of this report) would have been recommended as part of any grant of planning permission to secure that no part of the development commences within Reading unless planning permission for the rest of the development within South Oxfordshire, under SODC planning application ref. PL/25/S1431/O, has been granted by SODC (or the Planning Inspectorate) and implemented. Given the Planning Inspectorate has advised that both the SODC and RBC planning application will now be determined by a joint appeal it seems unlikely that a split decision would occur but nonetheless officers would still recommend to the Planning Inspectorate that this conditions is applied in the event that such a split decision did occur as a result of the appeal.

Appendices and Plans

Appendix 1 – SODC Officer Committee Report

Plans

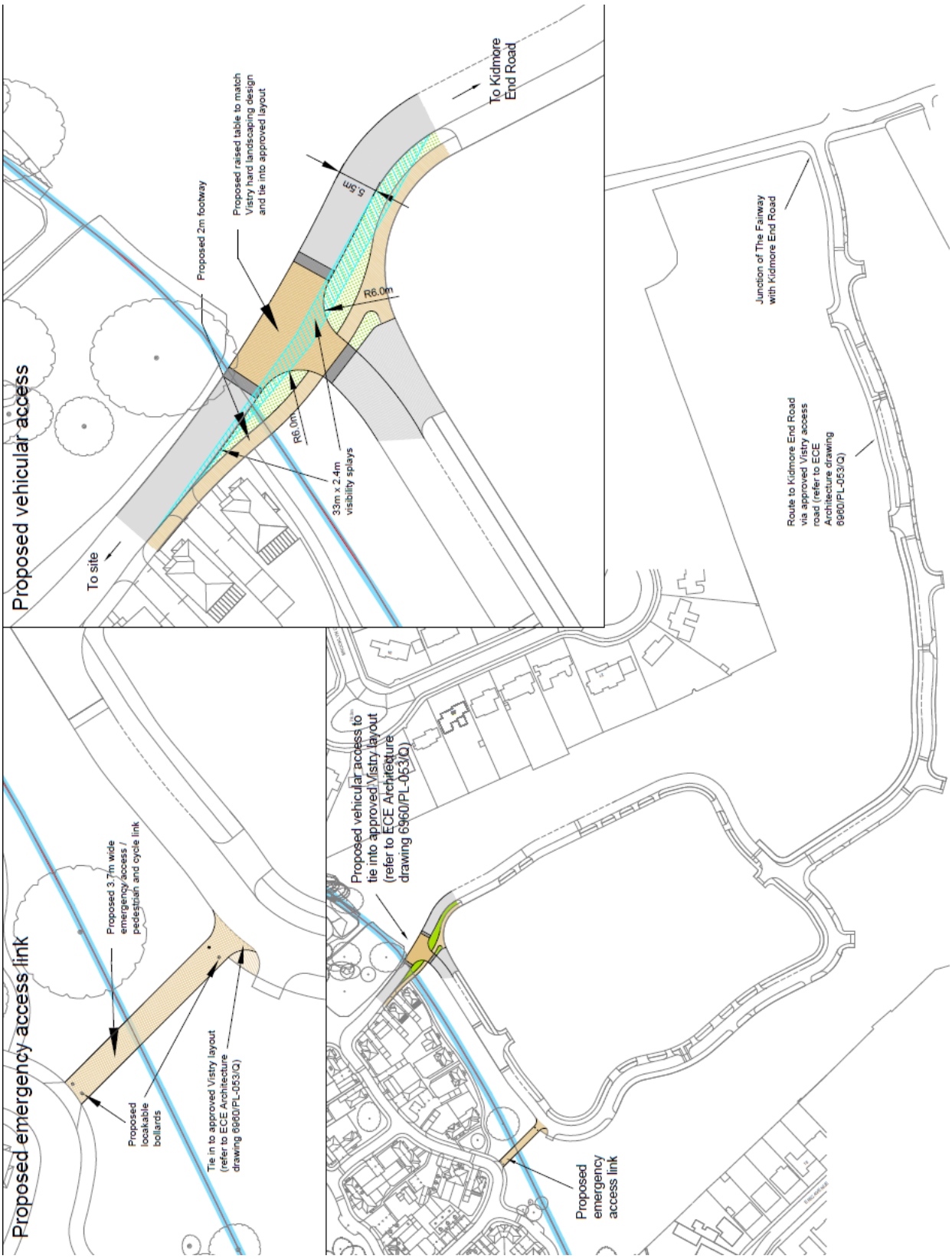


Location Plan

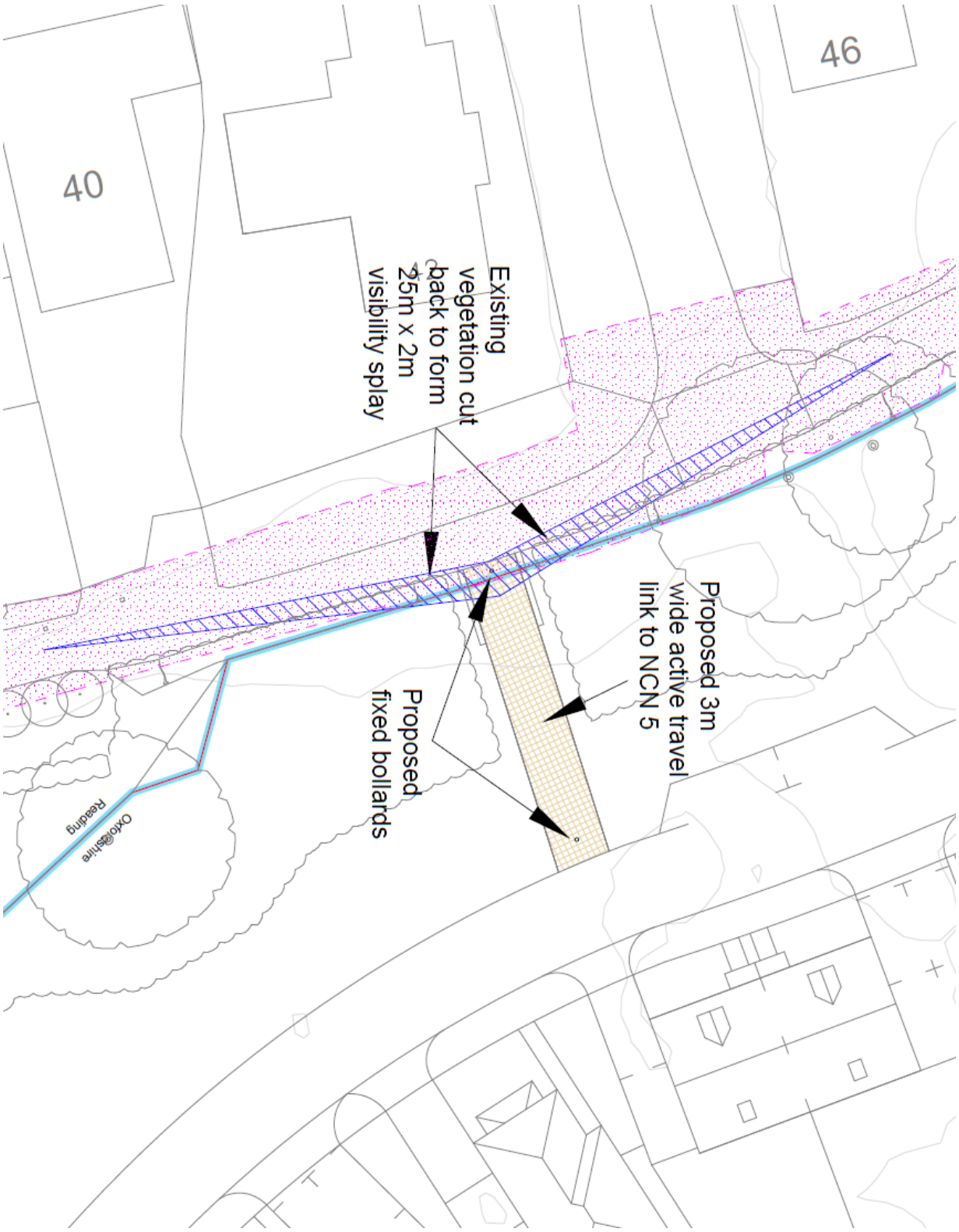


Illustrative Master Plan of Site Layout

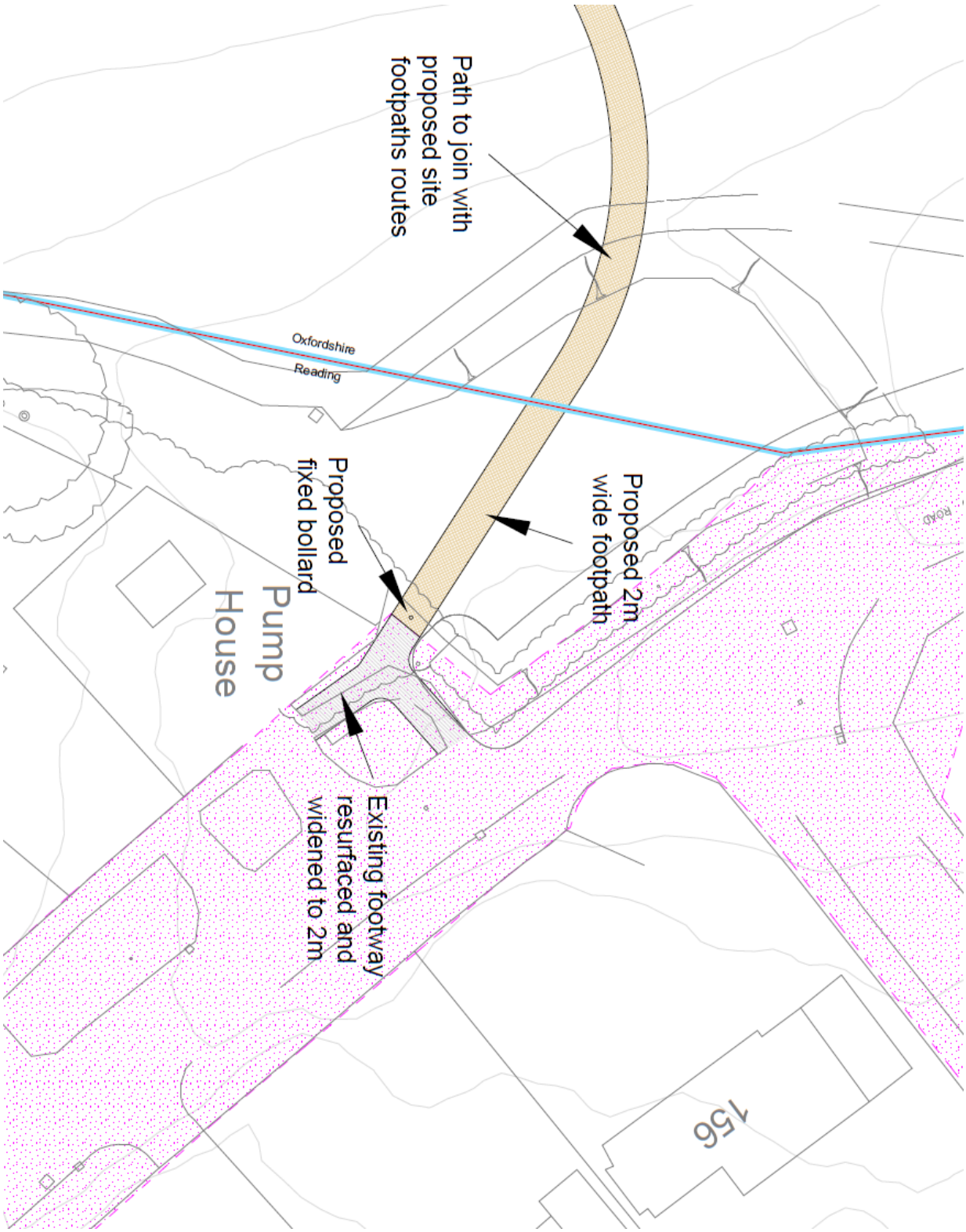
Proposed development parameters plan



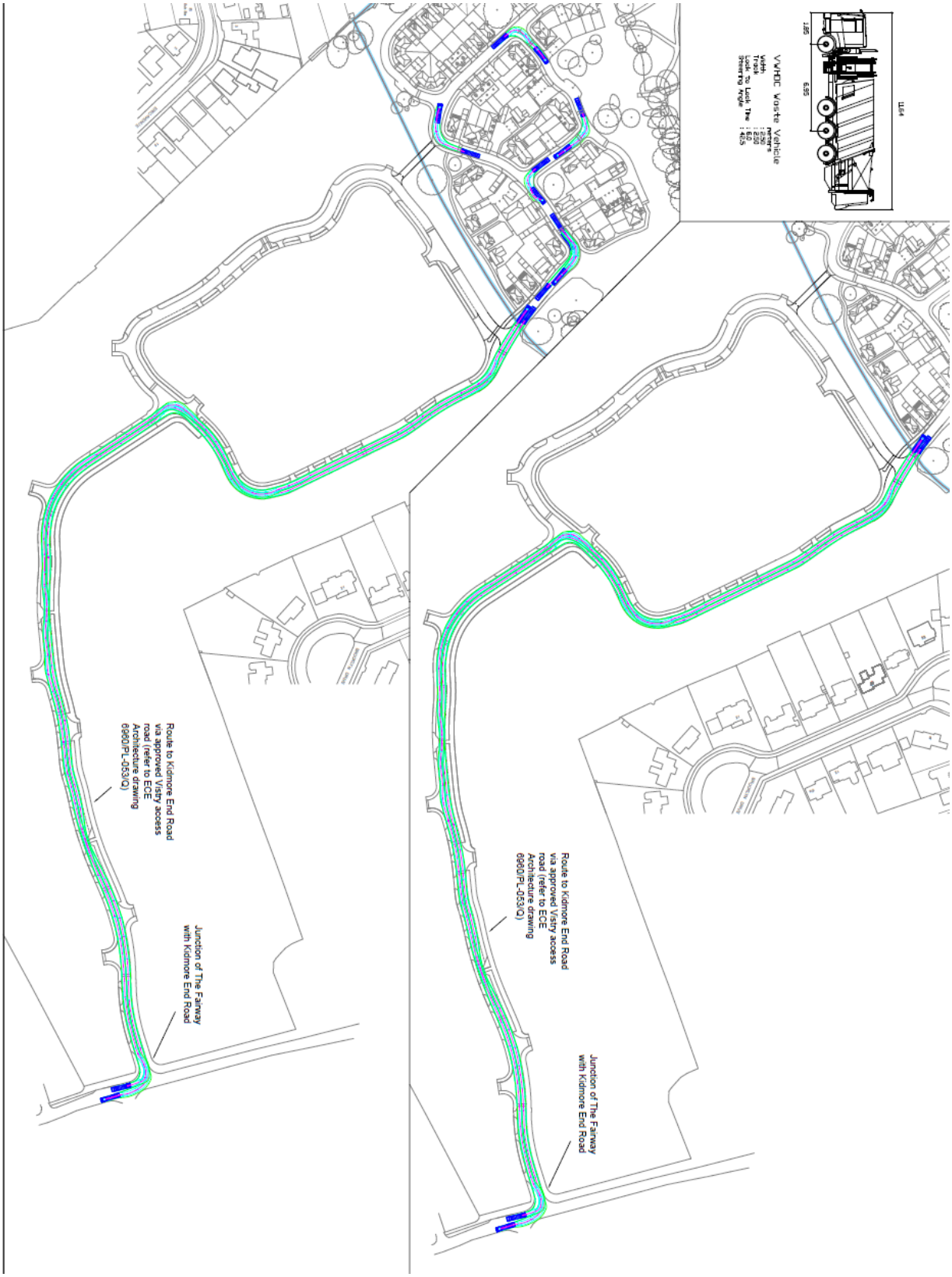
Proposed access roads layout



Proposed pedestrian and cycle connection to Highdown Hill Road



Proposed pedestrian connection to Kidmore End Road



Proposed refuse vehicle tracking plan

APPLICATION NO.	P25/S1431/O
SITE	Land West of Kidmore End Road Emmer Green Oxfordshire, RG4 8SG
PROPOSAL	Outline planning application for the development of up to 70 homes (including affordable housing), new vehicular access, associated parking and landscaping (all matters reserved except for access).
AMENDMENTS	As amended by plans and additional information submitted 18.08.2025, 25.09.2025, 04.11.2025 and 10.11.2025.
APPLICANT	Fairfax (Reading) Ltd and Reading Golf Club (SODC) Ltd
APPLICATION TYPE	OUTLINE
REGISTERED	7.5.2025
TARGET DECISION DATE	30.11.2025
PARISH	KIDMORE END
WARD MEMBERS	Peter Dragonetti
OFFICER	Emma Bowerman

1.0 INTRODUCTION AND PROPOSAL

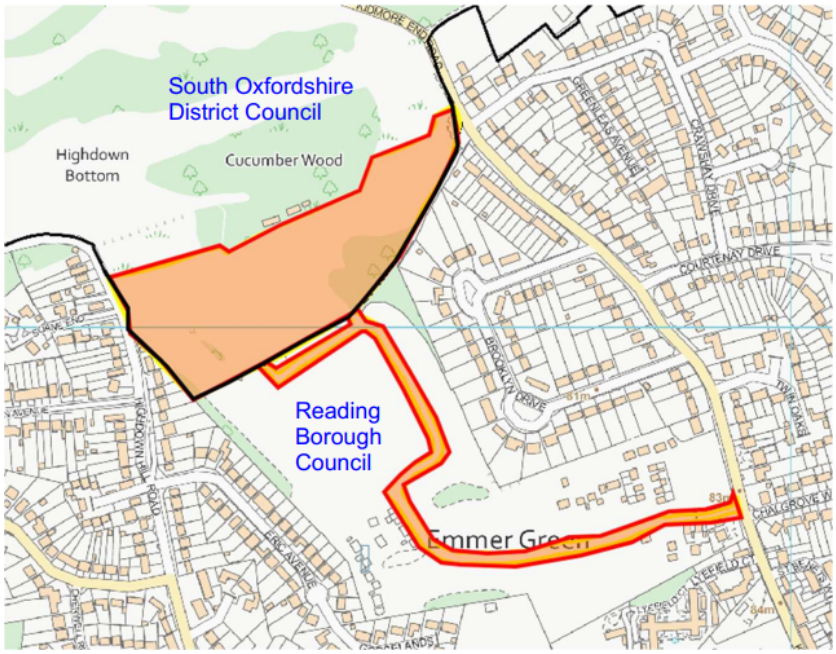
1.1 This report sets out the officer's recommendation that planning permission should be granted having regard to the development plan and other material planning considerations.

1.2 The application has been referred to planning committee because the officer's recommendation conflicts with the views of the parish council.

Site description, surroundings and designations

1.3 The 5.9 hectare application site is shown on the OS extract attached as **Appendix 1** and is reproduced on the GIS extract below. The site was formerly occupied by Reading Golf Club.

1.4 The site is located at the very south of South Oxfordshire district and extends into the administrative area of Reading Borough Council. The line on the GIS extract below shows the administrative boundary between the two council areas. The part of the site within South Oxfordshire is where the proposed homes would be located. The access into the site is within Reading.



1.5 Reading Golf Club ceased operations in 2020 and the part of the golf course within Reading subsequently received planning permission for 223 homes in 2022. These new homes are currently under construction.

1.6 The site is bounded by residential development where it adjoins land within Reading Borough Council. To the north of the site is an area of Ancient Woodland called Cucumber Wood. The wider area of land to the north also formed part of the golf course and is within the same ownership as the application site. This land is edged in blue on the site location plan at **Appendix 1**.

1.7 The part of the site within South Oxfordshire is predominantly grass with some individual trees and groups of trees scattered around the site. Several of these trees are protected by Tree Preservation Orders. To the east of the site, the land slopes down where it meets Kidmore End Road.

1.8 The site is not subject to any special landscape or heritage designations. The edge of the Chilterns National Landscape (formally Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) is around 900m to the north of the site. The site falls within Flood Zone 1, which has the least probability of flooding from rivers or the sea. There are small patches of the site that are at risk from surface water flooding where the site adjoins the administrative area of Reading.

1.9 The site is within the Kidmore End Neighbourhood Plan Area. The Kidmore End Neighbourhood Development Plan became part of the development plan in July 2022 and carries full weight in the determination of planning applications.

Proposal

1.10 The application seeks permission for a residential development of up to 70 homes together with associated access, car parking, open space and landscaping.

1.11 The application is submitted in outline with all matters reserved except for access. The matters of layout, scale, appearance and landscaping are not for determination at this stage and will be considered later under a 'reserved matters' application if outline planning permission is granted.

1.12 Vehicular access to the site will be provided through the new development to the south, with this access road joining the stretch of Kidmore End Road that falls within Reading Borough Council. Pedestrian access will be provided to the east, onto the part of Kidmore End Road that is within South Oxfordshire, and to the west onto Highdown Hill Road within Reading.

1.13 The development proposes that 40 percent of the new homes will be affordable. A play area is proposed towards the east of the site and attenuation basins will be provided towards the northern boundary.

1.14 The application also proposes that some of the land to the north of the site, which is edged in blue on the location plan (**Appendix 1)**, will be used for landscape enhancements and to secure additional biodiversity gain. As part of the application proposals, this land will be opened up to the public to provide access and recreation opportunities for new residents of the site and existing residents in the surrounding area.

1.15 The application is accompanied by Design and Access Statement and a whole suite of technical documents. These can be viewed on our website alongside all of the plans that accompany the application. The key application plan is the parameters plan, which shows the design boundaries of the scheme by specifying areas of built development, green infrastructure, access and movement corridors, and other key structure and placemaking components.

1.16 The parameters plan is attached as **Appendix 2** and is reproduced below for ease:



1.17 As shown on the parameters plan, the proposed housing will be contained to the west of the site. The area to the east, which slopes down to Kidmore End Road, will be retained as grassland. The extract above shows the layout of the development currently under construction on the part of the former golf course that is within Reading.

1.18 The applicant submitted some amended plans and additional information during the application process. The amendments addressed minor layout matters in respect of trees and relationship of the development with Cucumber Wood. The additional information included an archaeological evaluation and responses to consultation comments, including a Transport Statement addendum, updated Flood Risk Assessment, further information on bats, amended visibility splays and an addendum to the tree report.

Other relevant background information

1.19 Where an application site crosses the administrative boundary between two Local Planning Authority areas, identical planning applications are required to be submitted to each authority – in this case both South Oxfordshire District Council and Reading Borough Council. Each Local Planning Authority is responsible for determining whether planning permission should be granted for the parts of the proposed development within their administrative area.

1.20 The duplicate application to Reading Borough Council (ref PL/25/0961) is yet to be determined. Reading Borough Council has confirmed that the application will be reported to their Planning Applications Committee. The documents submitted for this application, and the representations received can be viewed on Reading Borough Council's website. Officers at Reading Borough council will consider their application against the relevant policies in the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

1.21 Given that this application has cross boundary impacts, we also consulted Reading Borough Council on this application.

2.0 SUMMARY OF CONSULTATIONS & REPRESENTATIONS

2.1 The application has been advertised by the council as:

- Major development
- Not in accordance with the development plan

2.2 The table below provides a summary of the key comments made by consultees and these are expanded on in the main body of the report where necessary. Full responses can be viewed on our website.

2.3 **Statutory consultees**

Kidmore End Parish Council	**First Consultation – Objection** • Location, scale and nature of the development not appropriate. • The site is not plan-led or allocated for development. • Conflict with the Kidmore End Neighbourhood Development Plan. • There is no evidenced need for housing in this location.

	• Outside of the settlement boundary of any village and within a designated valued landscape. • Greenfield site within the setting of the Chilterns National Landscape. Development represents major development within the setting of the National Landscape and there are no exceptional circumstances to justify development. • Would constitute encroachment of urban Reading constituting urban sprawl. • Development out of keeping with the settlement pattern of the Parish. Would create a different type of settlement that is not housing in a rural village. • Coalescence with Reading. The site provides a visual and spatial buffer between the built form of Reading and villages in South Oxfordshire. • The presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply and the Neighbourhood Plan must be upheld. • Harm to local character, visual amenity, landscape setting, biodiversity and community identity. • There is insufficient infrastructure for a development of this size. • Increase in traffic would reduce safety for all users on country roads and lanes. • Precedent for development in other areas that abut the boundary of Reading. • The adverse impacts significantly outweigh the limited benefits of the proposal. • If development is approved, it will undermine the neighbourhood planning process. **Second Consultation – Objection** • Amendments and additional information do not alter Parish Council's view expressed in first consultation. • The examples of the appeals decisions provided by the applicant are not relevant to the proposal. • The traffic survey was carried out when some schools had broken up.
Reading Borough Council	**First Consultation – Report and comments shared with South Oxfordshire District Council for consideration in their assessment and determination of the application.** Reading Borough Council advise that should South Oxfordshire District Council resolve to grant outline planning permission for the proposed development Reading Borough Council objects to the application unless: • Financial contributions are secured through the Section 106 process towards bus service improvements, highway

	upgrades, healthcare facilities, and sport and leisure facilities. • A revised visibility splay is submitted to and agreed by Reading Borough Council for the pedestrian/cycle way onto Highdown Hill Road. • An updated Arboricultural Method Statement is submitted assessing the impact on trees and hedgerows that will need to be removed to provide the visibility splay on Highdown Hill Road.
Local Highway Authority (Oxfordshire County Council)	**First Consultation – Objection** • Further information is required including details of pedestrian and cycle access onto Highdown Hill Road and Kidmore End Road. • Concerns about the distance to bus stops. • Trip generation should be considered by Reading Borough Council as the junctions that have been assessed are within their area. • Swept paths for refuse vehicles has not been provided. **Second Consultation – No objection** • The additional information requested has addressed many of the matters raised. • Recommend that bollards are removed from pedestrian/cycle access to Kidmore End Road and Highdown Hill Road as they would prevent wheelchairs, pushchairs and mobility scooters from using the route. • Remain concerned about the distance to bus stops as the greater the distance the less attractive public transport becomes. • Reading will need to consider highway matters within their administrative boundary. • Conditions are required in respect of access details, wheel washing, traffic management and travel plans. • A financial contribution towards public transport services should be secured under a legal agreement.
Lead Local Flood Authority (Oxfordshire County Council)	**First Consultation – Objection** • Some information is incorrect including Cv values • Additional information is required including winter storms simulation. **Second Consultation – Objection** • Some of the matters raised have been addressed but Cv values still need to be amended. **Third Consultation – No objection** • The additional evidence provided is sufficient to remove objection.

	• Conditions are required in respect of surface water drainage.

2.4 **Professional external consultees**

Sport England	**First Consultation – No objection** • Application does not fall within Sport England's statutory remit. • Consideration should be given to whether the proposal meets planning policies to protect social infrastructure.
Active Travel England	**First Consultation – No objection** • Standing advice should be used.
Archaeology (Oxfordshire County Council)	**First Consultation – Objection** • The desk-based assessment concludes that the site has a high potential to contain archaeological remains. • Further trenched evaluation should be conducted to understand the significance of any archaeological heritage assets that would be affected by the development. **Second Consultation – No objection** • The requested archaeological evaluation has been carried out and shows that significant archaeological finds do not survive on the site.
Education Authority (Oxfordshire County Council)	**First Consultation – No objection** • Subject to a financial contribution towards special school education capacity serving the development being secured in a legal agreement.
Waste Management (Oxfordshire County Council)	**First Consultation – No objection** • Subject to a financial contribution towards expansion and efficiency of Household Waste Recycling Centres being secured in a legal agreement.
Chilterns National Landscape Board	**First Consultation – No objection** • The valued landscape between the National Landscape and edge of the application site provides a sufficient buffer to the setting.
Thames Water Development Control	**First Consultation – Objection** • The development is within 20m of a Thames Water Sewage Pumping Station. Objection raised as the proximity of the development to the pumping station is likely to impact on the amenity of future occupiers. It

	has not been possible to determine the foul water and sewage infrastructure needs of the proposal. Occupations should therefore be prevented until the applicant: 1. Demonstrates foul water capacity exists or 2. Agrees a development and infrastructure plan or 3. Confirms that upgrades have been provided There is an inability of the existing water network infrastructure to accommodate the needs of the development. A condition is therefore necessary to require confirmation of upgrades or a phasing plan before any occupation. **Second Consultation – No objection** • Comments reflect response to first consultation with the exception of the objection on the basis that the development is within 20m of a Thames Water Sewage Pumping Station.
Designing Out Crime Officer	**First consultation – No objection** • Disappointed that crime prevention and community safety is not a key consideration at this time. • Detailed comments provided on matters of surveillance, exposed boundaries, defensible space, appropriate parking arrangements, lighting, permeability, and Secure by Design. • An addendum should be added to the Design and Access Statement to address issues of safety and security.

2.5 **South Oxfordshire District Council officer responses**

Landscape	**First Consultation – Comments** • The visual separation provided by the woodland to the north prevents the site performing a role in providing setting to the Chilterns National Landscape and also separates the site from the rest of the valued landscape area. • Whilst the development can be accommodated within the site without any significant landscape harm, some additional information is required in respect of the parameters plan. • The additional information required includes building heights, play areas and public open space, reducing the prominence of buildings on the northeastern edge, appearance of drainage features, providing sufficient space for tree planting, boundary treatments and lighting. **Second Consultation – Comments**

	• Concerns raised previously have not been addressed in respect of the parameters plan to demonstrate compliance with relevant policies. • Some of the issues raised can be addressed at reserved matters stage. **Third Consultation – Comments** • Some additional notes should be added to the parameters plan to provide further control over the development that will be bought forward at reserved matters stage.
Ecology	**First Consultation – Objection** • The bat surveys are out of date as information over three years is unlikely to remain valid. • The 2022 bat survey shows the use of the application site by a bat community of high conservation importance. • Further surveys are therefore required to ensure that a sufficient buffer is provided between the development and the woodland edge. Without this information is not possible to assess whether the level of development is acceptable. • No other objections but note that the development would have a permanent adverse residual effect on hazel dormouse due to cat predation. **Second Consultation – No objection** • Updated bat activity surveys have been provided and the layout amended to increase the separation between the built development and the woodland. • Evidence from the surveys indicate that the whole northern edge of the application site is periodically of importance for a nationally threatened species, although activity levels are generally fairly low. External lighting should therefore be controlled to avoid harm to bats. • Conditions are required in respect of lighting, a Habitat and Visitor Management Plan, a Construction Environmental Management Plan and enhancements for protected species. • The maintenance and monitoring of habitat enhancements for biodiversity net gain should be secured through a legal agreement.
Trees	**First Consultation – Objection** • The principle is acceptable in arboricultural terms, but some amendments are required including the retention of two trees that are subject to a Tree Protection Order. • Other suggested amendments include removal of an Ash, improving the relationship between some retained

	trees and the built development, and ensuring roots are protected. • Note that tree planting relies heavily on smaller short lived tree species. • Suggest that layout could be fixed at this stage to provide more certainty over the arboricultural matters. **Second Consultation – No objection** • The amended plans have satisfied each of the points raised in relation to retained trees as well as the size of the indicative tree planting. • Maintain the view that it would be preferable for layout to be fixed to prevent unwelcome changes that would result in arboricultural conflicts.
Urban Design	**First Consultation – Comments** • Advice provided on several design matters that should be considered carefully to ensure that the proposal is acceptable in design terms moving forward. • Matters raised include following a landscape-led approach, providing sufficient space for street trees, and enhancing permeability and connections. • Guidance provided on matters to incorporate into detailed design. **Second Consultation – Comments** • More room should be given over to street trees. • Elements of the layout could be improved.
Housing Development	**First consultation – No objection** • Subject to details of the size, tenure and layout of affordable housing to be secured through the provisions of a legal agreement.
Leisure	**First Consultation – Comments** • Following consultation with Golf England, we suggest that a supply and demand assessment is completed. • **Second Consultation - No comments received**
Drainage	**First Consultation – No objection** • Subject to conditions to secure a detailed sustainable drainage scheme and compliance report.
Environment-al Protection	**First Consultation – No objection** • Subject to conditions to secure a Construction Management Plan and details of any microgeneration equipment.

Contamin-ated Land	**First Consultation – Comments** • Query why a site investigation is recommended when the desk study concluded a low/very low contamination risk. **Second Consultation – No objection** • Applicant has clarified that there is no evidence to suggest that there are potential sources of contamination on site and a 'watching brief' would only be required in the unlikely event that unforeseen contamination is encountered during groundworks.
Air Quality	**First Consultation - No objection** • Subject to conditions to secure best practice measures outlined in the council's Air Quality Guidance for Developers.
Waste Management	**First Consultation - No objection** • Waste management plan and swept path analysis for bin lorries will be reviewed at reserved matters stage.

2.6 **Public / other responses**

Sonning Common Parish Council	**First Consultation - Objection** • Principle of development unacceptable. • Density out of keeping. • Access is intrusive and elongated. Refuse lorries need to go into Reading. • Threatens wooded habitat and degrades landscape. **Second Consultation – Objection** • Does not relate to any settlement in South Oxfordshire or any need of Reading Borough Council. • Contrary to South Oxfordshire Local Plan, Kidmore End Neighbourhood Plan and National Planning Policy Framework. • Incursion into countryside.
Matt Rodda MP for Central Reading	**First Consultation - Objection** • The existing local infrastructure cannot support significant additional development. Roads are congested and there is pressure on local services such as GP surgeries and schools. • Narrow residential roads in this area are not suitable for large numbers of additional vehicles. Proposal will increase pollution and negatively impact on road safety. • Development will set a precedent for suburban development on green space on the edge of Caversham and Emmer Green.

	• Our countryside is precious and should be protected. Whilst new homes should be built locally, brownfield land should be prioritised.
Caversham and District Residents' Association	**First Consultation - Objection** • Erosion of a green space and a very significant negative environmental impact. • Site is a valued green space and important habitat for wildlife. • Support Kidmore End Parish Council's comments. The development will destroy part of the valued landscape to the south of the parish. • Development contrary to Reading's Local Plan to preserve the edge of the Chilterns National Landscape. It would adversely impact on landscape character and the connections to the National Landscape. • Proposed landscaping will not mitigate impacts of tree losses. • Development will result in demonstrable harm to the local character, visual amenity, and landscape setting of the area. • The development will place a significantly increased burden on local roads that are already extremely busy. Junctions are already at capacity. • There have been no improvements to the local road network as a result of the development under construction on the southern section of the former golf course. • The nearest bus stop is 700m away and would not encourage use of public transport. • Increase in traffic on narrow roads in South Oxfordshire would reduce safety for all road users. • Cumulative impact on roads from development in Reading and surrounding villages. • Concern over capacity of doctors' surgeries and whether there is sufficient space at schools. • The development will place strain on the local utility networks and negatively impact on service levels for the local community. Concerns raised over electricity network, wastewater network, sewage treatment facilities and the water supply network. **Second Consultation – Objection** • Objections already submitted are still relevant. • Welcome retention of additional trees but it will have little impact on the overall numbers lost. • Leaving critical matters to detailed design stage risks both ecology and trees.

	• Question the methodology used in the Transport Assessment addendum. Surveys were undertaken in early July when A-Level and GCSE students would have finished and are not representative of traffic during normal term time. • Traffic surveys do not reflect growth once development under construction is fully occupied. • Assumption of 10% target reduction in car journeys highly speculative. • There is a deficit of space at both Caversham Balmore Surgery and Emmer Green Surgery.
Caversham Globe (Go Local On a Better Environment)	**First Consultation – Objection** • Greenfield site not designated for development. • Contrary to Reading Borough Council's Local Plan. • Oxfordshire parishes found that this land has strong landscape links with the Chilterns National Landscape. • Concerned about impact on ancient woodland. • Vehicular access and servicing are further issues. • Dangerous precedent for further development. • Loss of green space, wildlife habitat and biodiversity.
Local Residents	**First Consultation – 144 in objection** • Speculative development contrary to planning policies including Kidmore End Neighbourhood Development Plan. • Adverse impact on local services. Schools, GP surgeries, dentist and hospitals cannot support further development. • Developer should provide a school, doctors surgery and contribute towards a bridge over the River Thames. • Thames Water may not be able to cope with additional pressure of new homes in terms of water supply and foul water drainage. • Potential that electricity supply may not be sufficient. • Future residents will not pay council tax to Reading but will use facilities in Reading. • Future residents will seek employment in Reading. • Impact of first phase of golf club development not yet known. • Additional congestion of roads. Increase in air pollution. The local roads are narrow country lanes. • Highway safety concerns. Local junctions already at capacity. Highdown Hill Road has no footpath and so additional pedestrians and cyclists would be at danger. • Highdown Hill Road link will result in loss of trees and hedges. • There is no need for new housing in this location. • It will join South Oxfordshire to Reading.

	• It will create a new settlement, • Overdevelopment. Urban sprawl. • Loss of green amenity space. Local residents go for walks on the site. • Adverse impact on local residents mental and physical health. • Developers previously said that the site would be a green legacy left to residents. • Development too dense and out of keeping with surrounding development. • Adverse landscape impact (Valued Landscape) and damage to character of National Landscape. • Loss of trees unacceptable. • Would reduce separation to Chalkhouse Green. • Adverse impact on Ancient Woodland which supports a wide range of flora and fauna. Drainage too close to woodland. • A green corridor should be provided. • Light pollution. • Adverse impact on wildlife and biodiversity. • Disturbance from construction traffic, noise and dust/dirt. • No reason to build so close to neighbouring properties. • The development on the Reading part of the golf course should have never been approved. • South Oxfordshire servicing the properties (bin collection) would be problematic. • Fire risks during construction. • Potential flooding issues. Removing trees will increase likelihood of surface water runoff. • Precedent for further development on the remaining golf course and the edge of Reading. One response makes recommendations about sustainability, safety and design measures that could be incorporated into the development. One response comments that a dis-used golf course is a good candidate for redevelopment to meet the need for further homes in the community. **Second Consultation – 39 in objection** • Minor amendments to the scheme do not address the fundamental issue of housing on the site. • Local services and facilities cannot accommodate more people. • Thames Water sewage system over stretched. • Adverse impacts significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits. • Benefits do not override Neighbourhood Plan. • The site should be part of the Chilterns National Landscape.

	• Adverse impact on wildlife, biodiversity and trees. • Derelict and abandoned homes should be used. • Further increase in traffic unsustainable. • There should be no further development north of the river until a third bridge over the River Thames is built. • The path to Highdown Hill Road would not be safe. • Homes should be positioned further away from existing neighbours. Overlooking from new homes. • Important buffer between Reading and wider landscape. • Not a sensible expansion of Emmer Green. • Development will result in new village on edge of Reading. • Potential air pollution from asbestos during construction. • There is already a hosepipe ban so further homes will not alleviate demand for water. • Future residents would be reliant on private car journeys. • The playground should not be positioned close to the woodland. • Public consultation was not sufficient.

3.0 **RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

	Application Number	Description of development	Decision and date
3.1	P22/S3394/PEJ	Development of the Site for up to 100 dwellings, associated landscaping, open space and access.	Advice provided (17/11/2022)

4.0 **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

4.1 The proposal is beneath the advisory thresholds set in Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (as amended). This is because the proposal does not exceed 150 homes, the site area is under 5ha and is not within a 'sensitive area'. It is therefore not considered EIA development.

5.0 **POLICY & GUIDANCE**

Development Plan

5.1 The development plan is the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035, which was adopted in 2020, and any "made" Neighbourhood Plans within the relevant geographical area. Kidmore End Neighbourhood Development Plan was made (adopted) in September 2022 and therefore also forms part of the development plan.

South Oxfordshire Local Plan (SOLP) 2035 policies

5.2
- STRAT1 - The Overall Strategy
- STRAT2 - South Oxfordshire Housing and Employment Requirements

- STRAT5 - Residential Densities
- H1 - Delivering New Homes
- H9 - Affordable Housing
- H11 - Housing Mix
- ENV1 - Landscape and Countryside
- ENV2 - Biodiversity - Designated sites, Priority Habitats and Species
- ENV3 - Biodiversity
- ENV5 - Green Infrastructure in New Developments
- ENV9 - Archaeology and Scheduled Monuments
- ENV11 - Pollution - Impact from existing and/ or Previous Land uses on new Development and the Natural Environment (Potential receptors of Pollution)
- ENV12 - Pollution - Impact of Development on Human Health, the Natural Environment and/or Local Amenity (Potential Sources of Pollution)
- EP1 - Air Quality
- EP3 - Waste collection and Recycling
- EP4 - Flood Risk
- INF1 - Infrastructure Provision
- INF4 - Water Resources
- DES1 - Delivering High Quality Development
- DES2 - Enhancing Local Character
- DES3 - Design and Access Statements
- DES5 - Outdoor Amenity Space
- DES6 - Residential Amenity
- DES7 - Efficient Use of Resources
- DES8 - Promoting Sustainable Design
- DES10 - Carbon Reduction
- TRANS2 - Promoting Sustainable Transport and Accessibility
- TRANS4 - Transport Assessments, Transport Statements and Travel Plans
- TRANS5 - Consideration of Development Proposals
- CF4 - Existing Open Space, Sport and Recreation Facilities)
- CF5 - Open Space, Sport and Recreation in New Residential Development

Kidmore End Neighbourhood Development Plan (KENDP) 2011-2035 policies

5.3

- LCI – Infill
- LCSS – Separation of Settlements
- LCQL – Quiet Lanes
- LCDPG – General Design principles
- HDP – Housing Allocation
- LPLV – Local Valued Landscapes
- LTSRU – Safety for All Road Users
- LTPFBT – Preservation of Footpaths, Bridleways and Tracks
- LTSAP – Safe Access and Parking

Emerging Joint Local Plan 2041

5.4 The Council has prepared a Joint Local Plan for South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse, which, once adopted, will replace the existing local plans. The Joint Local Plan was submitted to the Secretary of State in December 2024 for independent examination. In line with paragraph 49 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), decision-makers may give weight to relevant policies in emerging plans depending on several factors: the stage of preparation, the extent of unresolved objections, and the degree of consistency with the NPPF.

5.5 The starting point for decision taking remains with the policies in the current adopted plan. The Joint Local Plan is at an advanced stage of preparation and carries some weight. Where unresolved objections have been received on policies, limited weight should be applied, but where there are no unresolved objections, moderate weight can be applied. Full weight should only be applied, where relevant, following the outcome of the independent examination and adoption of the Joint Local Plan.

5.6 The council received an Inspectors' letter dated 26 Sept 2025 recommending that the Council has not met the Duty to Cooperate in Section 33A of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, which cannot be remedied during the examination of the plan. The council is assessing the position, and no formal decisions have yet been made on the next steps. This is a material consideration in applying weight to the plan.

Supplementary Planning Guidance/ other relevant documents

5.7
- South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils' Joint Design Guide 2022 (JDG)
- Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document 2023
- South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse Landscape Character Assessment 2024
- South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse 2024 Local Landscape Designation Review
- Oxfordshire's Leisure Facilities Assessment and Strategy
- South Oxfordshire District Council Air Quality Developer's Guidance
- Oxfordshire Local Transport and Connectivity Plan

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)

5.8
- Section 2 - Achieving sustainable development
- Section 4 – Decision-making
- Section 5 – Delivering a sufficient supply of homes
- 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 climate change, flooding and coastal change
- Section 15 - Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

Other Relevant Legislation

Human Rights Act 1998

5.9 The provisions of the Human Rights Act 1998 have been considered in the processing of the application and the preparation of this report. The recommendation of approval has been taken within the scope of normal planning policy and will not detrimentally impinge on the human rights of the applicant or any other person. If planning permission is granted, the decision will have been made in a legitimate and balanced way in respect of human rights.

Equality Act 2010

5.10 In determining this planning application, officers have had regard to the council's equality obligations including its obligations under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. The proposal will not cause detrimental harms to any person with protected characteristics and if planning permission is granted, the decision will have been made in a legitimate and balanced way in respect of equality.

Procedural Fairness Test

5.11 The proposal has been subject to statutory consultation with neighbours, internal and external consultees and advertised by site notice and press notice. Representations on the application have been received and taken into account in recommending the application for approval.

6.0 **PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

6.1 **The main planning considerations are:**

- **Principle of development**
  - **Assessment against relevant policies**
  - **Other material considerations (housing land supply)**
  - **Locational accessibility**
  - **Loss of sports facilities**

- **Matters of detail / technical issues:**
  - **Access, trip generation and sustainable travel**
  - **Housing mix**
  - **Landscape and character**
  - **Ecology and trees**
  - **Residential amenity**
  - **Environmental sustainability and low carbon development**
  - **Flood risk and drainage**
  - **Other planning matters**

- **Infrastructure requirements:**
  - **Infrastructure to be secured under a legal agreement**
  - **Contributions pooled under the Community Infrastructure Levy**

The principle of the development

Assessment against relevant policies

6.2 Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires

applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The development plan consists of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan (SOLP) and the Kidmore End Neighbourhood Development Plan (KENDP).

6.3 The overarching strategy for development in the district is set out in SOLP policy STRAT1 (The Overall Strategy). This seeks to focus major new development in Science Vale, and to provide strategic allocations at specific locations. The strategy supports the role of villages by allowing for limited amounts of housing to help secure the provision and retention of services.

6.4 The housing requirements are expanded on in SOLP policy STRAT2 (Housing and Employment Requirements) which sets out a total housing requirement of 23,550 homes over the plan period. This policy outlines that these requirements will be delivered in accordance with the spatial strategy for the district set out in policy STRAT1 (Overall Strategy), and outlines that the locations and trajectory for housing development is identified in policy H1 (Delivering New Homes).

6.5 Policy H1 (Delivering New Homes) of the SOLP expands on the spatial strategy in respect of proposals for new homes. This policy specifies that residential development '*will be permitted at sites allocated or carried over by this plan and on sites that are allocated by Neighbourhood Development Plans*.' The site is not allocated in the SOLP or the KENDP and is not a site that has been carried over from an earlier plan.

6.6 SOLP policy H1 (Delivering New Homes) lists several exceptions where sites not allocated/carried over in the development plan will be permitted. This list includes rural exception sites, infill housing and brownfield development, amongst other types of development. The proposals do not fall within any of the exceptions listed.

6.7 The KENDP accords with the approach in the SOLP. Policy LCI (Infill) of the KENDP states that proposals for development outside of the built-up areas of Kidmore End, Gallowstree Common and Tokers Green will only be supported if they are appropriate to a countryside location and consistent with the SOLP.

6.8 The proposal will extend the neighbouring town of Reading and does not fall within the strategy for growth in the SOLP and the KENDP. The proposal is therefore contrary to the policies in the SOLP and KENDP referred to above. This is a direct and substantial conflict with the development plan.

Other material considerations (housing land supply)

6.9 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) advises that planning applications should be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The NPPF is a material consideration that must be taken into account in the determination of planning applications. At paragraph 78, the NPPF includes a requirement for councils to maintain a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites against their housing requirement.

6.10 The NPPF explains at footnote 8 the circumstances in which the policies which are most important for determining applications are 'out-of-date.' For applications involving the provision of housing, this includes situations where the local planning authority cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites.

6.11 The council released a Housing Land Supply Statement in January 2025 and this outlined that the council can demonstrate a 4.5 years supply of housing land. Since then, in April 2025 the council defended an appeal at Bayswater Farm (P24/S2074/O) and accepted the removal of some dwellings, reducing the supply to 4.37 years. The Inspector who allowed this appeal indicated that the council's supply of housing land may be below 4.07 years.

6.12 Given that the council cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of housing land, the housing policies referred to in the section above are 'out-of-date.' This means that the level of weight that should be applied to these policies is reduced.

6.13 Given the council's five-year supply position, paragraph 11d) of the NPPF is engaged. This means that:

> *'d) where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting planning permission unless:*
> *i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for refusing the development proposed; or*
> *ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole, having particular regard to the key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making efficient use of land, securing well designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination.'*

6.14 In respect of the first criteria of paragraph 11d), footnote 7 of the NPPF outlines the policies that protect areas or assets of particular importance. These include Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Green Belt, National Landscape, designated heritage assets and areas at risk of flooding. There are no policies that are relevant in this case that protect areas or assets of particular importance.

6.15 With regards to the second criteria of paragraph 11d), this requires an assessment of whether any adverse impacts of granting the development would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits. This is commonly referred to as the 'tilted balance.' In undertaking this balancing exercise, paragraph 11d ii) highlights the particular importance of specific policies, including those that seek to direct development to sustainable locations and secure affordable housing.

6.16 To promote localism, paragraph 14 of the NPPF provides added protection to

areas covered by a neighbourhood plan. It states that

> *'In situations where the presumption (at paragraph 11d) applies to applications involving the provision of housing, the adverse impacts of allowing development that conflicts with a neighbourhood plan is likely to significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, provided the following apply:*
> *a) the neighbourhood plan became part of the development plan five years or less before the date on which the decision is made; and*
> *b) the neighbourhood plan contains policies and allocations to meet its identified housing requirement.'*

6.17 The KENDP was 'made' in September 2022 so is less than five years old. The strategy outlined in the SOLP does not define a requirement for the settlements within the Kidmore Neighbourhood Plan Area to contribute towards delivering additional housing to meet the overall housing requirement of South Oxfordshire.

6.18 The settlements within the Neighbourhood Plan Area are expected to contribute towards housing growth through infill and windfall only. With a defined housing requirement of zero, there is nothing to be met, and no housing allocations are required. Notwithstanding this, the KENDP does contain one housing allocation (policy HAD) for four dwellings on the edge of the built-up area of Kidmore End. The KENDP therefore contains policies and allocations to meet its identified housing requirement.

6.19 As such, paragraph 14 of the NPPF is engaged and the adverse impacts of allowing development that conflicts with the KENDP is likely to significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits. In other words, a conflict with the KENDP is a matter of considerable importance. However, it must be emphasised that this is the *likely* outcome of the balance rather than a prescribed one. Contextual circumstances may be such that a conflict with a neighbourhood plan would not be decisive.

6.20 There is no specific guidance in the NPPF or Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) as to the instances where the benefits of a development would outweigh any neighbourhood plan conflict. This is a matter of planning judgement for the decision maker. The impacts of the development are considered in the relevant part of the report, and an overall weighing of the harm against the benefits is carried out in the Planning Balance section.

Locational Accessibility

6.21 The spatial strategy in the development plan seeks to provide a sustainable pattern of growth and reflects paragraph 110 of the NPPF which specifies that '*Significant development should be focused on locations which are or can be made sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes. This can help to reduce congestion and emissions, and improve air quality and public health.'*

6.22 Locating significant housing developments in areas with services and facilities, or in locations where there are genuine alternatives to the private car, is key to achieving sustainable patterns of development. As outlined in paragraph 98 of the NPPF, to provide the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, planning decisions should '*ensure an integrated approach to considering the location of housing, economic uses and community facilities and services*.'

6.23 The application site is not well located in terms of access to facilities within South Oxfordshire. However, it is located on the edge of a neighbouring town which has a much wider offer in terms of services and facilities than any of the settlements within South Oxfordshire.

6.24 In terms of what is available close to the site, Emmer Green Local Centre contains several units that provide for day-to-day needs, including a convenience store, pharmacy and cafe. The furthest home would be around 1,250m from the Local Centre, which amounts to a walk of around 12 to 19 minutes, depending on pace.

6.25 Other nearby facilities within Reading include Emmer Green Surgery and Emmer Green Playing Fields. Both are around 1,000m from the furthest homes on site. There is also a place of worship and a public house within a similar distance.

6.26 Bus stops are located on Kidmore End Road close to the access road that runs through the new housing development (The Fairway) on the part of the former golf course that is within Reading. The bus stops will be around 800m from the new homes. Whilst bus stops should ideally be within 400m, people are generally prepared to walk further to a bus stop that offers regular services to key destinations. There are regular services from the this stop into Reading Town Centre.

6.27 The nearest schools within Oxfordshire are Kidmore End Primary and Maiden Erlegh Chiltern Edge for secondary. There is sufficient capacity in these schools to accommodate children from the new development and Maiden Erlegh Chiltern Edge is accessible from the site by bus. Future residents can also apply for schools within Reading and, if those schools have space, can make a decision on which school to attend based on the offers received.

6.28 Overall, this is a development that offers genuine opportunities for future residents to walk, cycle and utilise public transport. With the exception of access to primary education services within Oxfordshire, the site is in a location where future residents will have a choice of how to travel to local services and facilities, including employment opportunities, without relying on a private car. This is a site that accords with the NPPF policies that seek to direct development to sustainable locations.

Loss of sports facilities

6.29 The application site was formally occupied by Reading Golf Club and operations ceased in 2020. The golf club extended across the administrative

border covering land in both South Oxfordshire and Reading. In 2022, planning permission was granted for 223 new homes on the Reading part of the golf course. In addition to the loss of numerous holes, this development resulted in the loss of the club house, main access to the golf course and the main parking area.

6.30 The loss of the golf course was considered by Reading Borough Council under the 2022 planning application for 223 new homes. The officer report for the 2022 application explained that there was an oversupply of golf courses in the Reading area and that the function of the facility at Reading Golf Club was being provided at The Caversham Golf Club.

6.31 At the time when the Reading application was assessed, the applicant also owned The Caversham Golf Course, which is within South Oxfordshire. To mitigate the loss of Reading Golf Club, the applicant provided improvements to The Caversham Golf Course, including investment into a new academy course, a new practice range and various other improvements.

6.32 Sports England considered the Reading planning application and raised no objection to the loss of the golf course. The improvements to The Caversham Golf Club seemed to form an inherent part of Sport England's support for the development and they considered that the application fell within their objective of 'enhance.' Golf England also highlighted the importance of the planned enhancements at The Caversham Golf Club.

6.33 The loss of Reading Golf Club as a whole has therefore already been assessed against the requirements in paragraph 104 of the NPPF, which requires existing sports facilities to not be built upon unless specific criteria apply, including that the facility is surplus to requirements or that equivalent or better provision will be provided elsewhere.

6.34 It is noted that, having consulted with Golf England, the council's leisure officer recommended that a supply and demand assessment be completed, to see how the golfing landscape has changed in the past four years and assess whether there is a need for shorter form golf/entry level golf in the area. In response to this request, the applicant provided some additional information explaining that part of the former golf course is currently used for 'disc' golf and that the development will not impact on this use. Golf England did not comment on this additional information.

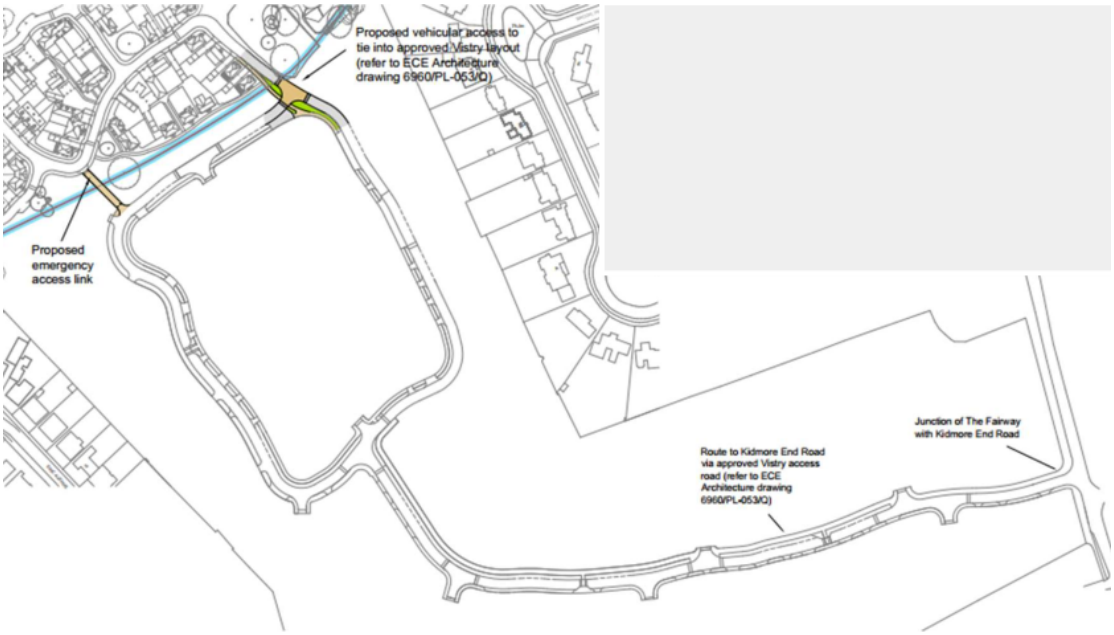
6.35 Given that the Reading planning application resulted in the loss of the main facilities required for a golf club, including the vehicular access, parking area, and club house, it is not necessary to consider the loss of the golf course for a second time. The former golf course is gone, and its loss was found to be acceptable because of the surplus at the time the application was considered and due to the investment made to improve Caversham Golf Course.

6.36 It is noted that Reading Golf Club is not listed as a facility in South Oxfordshire's Leisure Facilities Assessment and Strategy and so it is not a facility that the strategy seeks to protect. Given these factors, it would not be

reasonable to require a supply and demand assessment. There is no conflict with paragraph 104 of the NPPF, or SOLP policy CF4 (Existing Open Space, Sport and Recreation Facilities).

Matters of detail / technical issues
Access, trip generation and sustainable travel
Access

6.37 Whilst the application is for outline planning permission, details of access are not proposed as a reserved matter, so access details are required to be considered in full at this stage. A plan showing the access arrangement is attached as **Appendix 3** and reproduced below for ease:



6.38 Vehicular access to the proposed development will be from The Fairway which forms part of the residential development that is currently under construction on part of the former golf course within Reading. A secondary emergency vehicular access is proposed towards the southwest corner of the site, which will also link onto the new development that is under construction.

6.39 The Fairway is within the administration boundary of Reading Borough Council. The highways officer from Oxfordshire County Council has commented that the access arrangements are a matter for Reading Borough Council to assess. Reading Borough Council has raised no objections to the vehicular access arrangements in their consultation response.

Trip generation

6.40 As part of the highway capacity analysis traffic surveys were undertaken at several junctions within Reading. Using the results of the surveys, junction capacity assessments have been undertaken at each of the junctions to determine whether traffic resulting from the proposed development will have a significant impact on the operation of the junctions. Given that the additional traffic impact will mainly affect junctions within Reading, the highways officer at Oxfordshire County Council has refrained from commenting on highway impact.

6.41 The consultation response from Reading Borough Council highlights the impact that the development will have on the junction at Peppard Road / Henley Street / Westfield Road / Prospect Street. The Transport Assessment estimates that the proposed development will add 19 two-way vehicle trips in the AM peak hour and 20 two-way vehicle trips in the PM peak hour to this junction. The results show that taking into account the proposed development, the junction is predicted to operate above the maximum operating capacity by the year 2030 resulting in a minor increase in queue lengths.

6.42 To mitigate the impact on this junction Reading Borough Council has suggested that a financial contribution is sought which would go towards upgrading of the operating system and/or improvements to the pedestrian and cycle facilities at the junction. Subject to a contribution of £150,000 being secured, Reading Borough Council do not object to the proposal on the basis of the additional traffic that will result from the development.

Sustainable travel

6.43 The application proposes pedestrian and cycle access from the site onto Highdown Hill Road to the west and Kidmore End Road to the east. These will encourage active travel by foot or cycle and help to improve pedestrian and cycle permeability between areas to the east and west of the site.

6.44 In respect of the pedestrian/cycle link to Highdown Hill Road to the east, this will facilitate a direct link to the National Cycle Network (Route 5). The highways officer at Reading Borough Council has commented that the visibility splays shown on the plans for this link are not adequate and that these should be updated to demonstrate that the junction of the cycle/footway within the road is safe. An amended plan has since been submitted showing updated splays and is attached as **Appendix 4**.

6.45 Although within the administrative boundary of Reading, the highways officer at Oxfordshire County Council has commented that there are no pedestrian facilities on Highdown Hill Road and has raised concern that this will result in a highway safety issue with pedestrians forced to walk in the carriageway. This issue has not been raised by Reading Borough Council, who will benefit from local knowledge in terms of the characteristics of the local road network. Subject to appropriate visibility splays being provided, Reading Borough Council has not raised any highway safety concerns in respect of this link.

6.46 The pedestrian/cycle link to the east will connect to Kidmore End Road adjacent to the existing pumping station. A plan is attached as **Appendix 5**. This link formalises an existing informal route used to access the site. The county council highways officer recommended that the bollard that is shown on the plans is omitted as it would prevent wheelchairs, pushchairs and mobility scooters from using the route. This amendment has been secured. Reading Borough Council has commented that this link is acceptable.

6.47 In terms of bus connections, the 25 and 25a pink service runs from Reading town centre, along Kidmore End Road, through Sonning Common to Peppard

Common. The frequency and hours of operation of this service was improved in September 2024 using a combination of Bus Service Improvement Plan and Section 106 funds from Oxfordshire County Council, and Section 106 funds from the existing golf club development via Reading Borough Council.

6.48 As the development currently under construction on part of the golf course is contributing towards improvement of the service, it is appropriate for the proposed development to also contribute. This will extend the life of the enhanced service and provide maximum opportunity for long-term commercial viability.

6.49 Oxfordshire County Council apply a standard public transport services contribution of £1,364 per dwelling and this will be used for maintenance and retention of bus services in the vicinity of the site. Oxfordshire County Council are currently working closely with Reading Borough Council on this and have a joint approach to ensuring Section 106 funds from the golf club development are utilised for maintenance and improvement of the local bus network.

6.50 Conditions are required to secure a Residential Travel Plan Statement and a Residential Travel Information Pack. These measures will help encourage residents to use alternatives to single occupancy car journeys and ensure all residents are aware of the travel choices available to them from the outset.

6.51 To conclude on transport matters, at Paragraph 116, the NPPF advises that '*Development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network, following mitigation, would be severe, taking into account all reasonable future scenarios'.* The relevant officers for the Highways Authority across both council areas have not objected to the development and as such, there are no reasons to prevent or refuse the application on highway safety grounds.

6.52 The proposed development complies with the relevant development plan policies that consider highway and transport matters and seek to promote sustainable growth and support positive travel habits amongst new residents. This includes SOLP policies TRANS2 (Promoting Sustainable Transport and Accessibility), TRANS4 (Transport Assessments, Transport Statements and Travel Plans) and TRANS5 (Consideration of Development Proposals) and KENDP policies LTSRU (Safety For All Road Users) and LTPFBT (Preservation of Footpaths, Bridleways and Tracks).

Housing mix

Affordable Housing

6.53 Policy H9 (Affordable Housing) of the SOLP sets out a requirement to provide 40 percent affordable housing and outlines the required standards that affordable homes should meet. For a site of 70 units, this would equate to 28 affordable homes.

6.54 The council's affordable housing team have suggested the following tenure split for a scheme of 28 affordable homes:

Tenure mix	*Percentage %*	*Number of units*
First Homes	25%	7
Social rent	35%	10
Affordable rent	25%	7
Home ownership	15%	4

The applicant has confirmed that they will deliver the affordable homes in accordance with the specifications of the affordable housing team in terms of tenure split and bedroom numbers.

6.55 The affordable homes should be indistinguishable in appearance to the market homes and in clusters of no more than eight homes. All affordable housing should be designed to meet the Nationally Described Space Standards. The homes will be allocated in accordance with South Oxfordshire District Council's Allocations Policy.

6.56 Subject to the affordable units being secured through the provisions of a Section 106 legal agreement, the development will meet the requirements of those in housing need. The proposal therefore complies with SOLP policy H9 (Affordable Housing).

6.57 As required by policy H11 (Housing Mix) of the SOLP, all affordable housing should meet the standards of Part M (4) Category 2: accessible and adaptable dwellings (or any replacement standards). And at least five percent of the affordable homes should be designed to the standards of Part M (4) Category 3: wheelchair accessible dwellings.

Market Housing

6.58 In relation to market housing, policy H11 (Housing Mix) of the SOLP requires new developments to provide a mix of dwelling types and sizes to meet the needs of current and future households. An appropriate mix to meet the needs of the district can be secured under the reserved matters through a condition requiring the mix to be informed by the most up-to-date housing needs assessment.

6.59 As required by policy H11 (Housing Mix) of the SOLP at least 15 percent of the market housing should meet the standards of Part M (4) Category 2: accessible and adaptable dwellings (or any replacement standards). A further requirement of this policy is that the one and two bed market homes should be designed to meet the Nationally Described Space Standards.

Landscape and character

Existing Landscape

6.60 The site is on generally level and elevated ground, other than the north-eastern part where the ground falls into a dry valley. To the east, there are visual links with the Crawshay Drive area of housing, on the opposite valley side and to the rural landscape. There are also filtered and upper floor views from housing to the west of the site.

6.61 The site is visually separated from the rural area to the north by mature woodland, and visually related to the area to the south, which is being developed. It does not extend further north than existing development to the west and east.

6.62 The Chilterns National Landscape lies just under 1km to the north of the site at its closest point. The visual separation provided by the woodland prevents the site performing a role in providing setting to the Chilterns National Landscape.

Landscape designations and policies

6.63 Within the South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse Landscape Character Assessment 2024 the site is within Landscape Character Area 4A: Chiltern Wooded Chalk Plateau and Valleys. The landscape strategy and guideline for this area include:

Conserve and enhance the area's distinctive wooded character.

Maintain the highly rural character of the landscape, which provides separation between individual settlements, helping to retain their individual identities and the distinctive Chilterns settlement pattern.

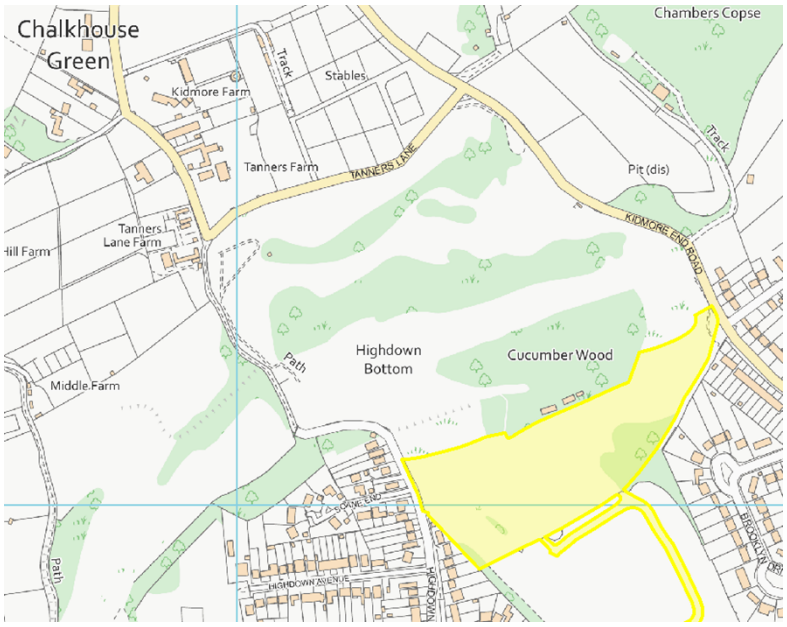
6.64 The site is in an area identified as a Valued Landscape and Candidate Chilterns Dipslope Local Landscape Designation in the South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse 2024 Local Landscape Designation Review. Guidance to plan (enhance, restore, create) landscape character includes:

- *Encourage landowners to develop a woodland management strategy to conserve existing woodlands (including ancient woodland) and extend woodland where appropriate. Ensure any new woodland planting is respectful of local character and ecological conditions and maximises opportunities to link with other habitats.*
- *Preserve the openness between areas of settlement, avoiding coalescence or perceived coalescence along the minor road network.*
- *Consider the impact of any new development on views from the Chilterns National Landscape to the north.*
- *Consider the impact of lighting on dark skies, both locally and on views from the Chilterns National Landscape and lower Thames valley.*

6.65 The site is identified as falling within a Local Valued landscape in the KENDP. Policy LPLV (Local Valued Landscape) outlines that development proposals should protect and where practicable enhance the physical and visual attributes of the character, quality and appearance of this valued landscape.

6.66 KENDP policy LCSS (Separation of Settlements) is also relevant. This outlines that development proposals should demonstrate that the character of any particular settlement is retained, and that a physical and visual septation is maintained between different settlements. The policy outlines where new development should maintain separation between settlements and this includes between Chalkhouse Green and Reading.

6.67 Chalkhouse Green is a small linear settlement around 400m to the north of the site, as indicated on the plan below:



Assessment

6.68 The existing woodland visually separates the site from the Chilterns National Landscape and from the rest of the valued landscape area. Given this visual barrier, and that the new homes will not extend any further north than the existing development either side, the proposed development will relate to the existing settlement character of Emmer Green rather than the smaller rural settlements to the north.

6.69 The application proposals include significant woodland planting to extend the woodland at the north of the site (Cucumber Wood). As explained in the relevant sections below, the land to the north is within the same ownership and the applicant intends to open this area to public access and provide additional benefits including recreation opportunities and increased biodiversity net gain. The woodland buffer would therefore increase as a result of the proposed development.

6.70 The submitted Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment states that the site is predominantly well contained and that with mitigation, the proposed development can be accommodated sensitively. An assessment of views from the surrounding area shows that the only significant publicly available view is from Crawshay Drive (to the east). The submitted photomontage shows that development would be visible and elevated in these views, albeit set back with the green hillside in front kept open.

6.71 The council's landscape officer is of the view that development can be accommodated on the site without significant landscape harm and has therefore raised no objection to the principle of the development. The landscape officer does however raise some concerns in respect of the layout of the development.

6.72 The council's landscape officer recommends that notes are added to the parameter plans to ensure that the heights of the buildings are not visible above the woodland, that the houses are not dominant in views from Crawshaw Drive (to the east), that street trees are located in the public realm, and that sufficient space is available for large canopied trees. The scale of the proposal and landscaping are matters to be considered at reserved matters stage and as such, the council can make a judgement on whether these matters are appropriate at the detailed design stage.

6.73 At outline stage, it must be established that the quantum of development can reasonably be accommodated on the application site. In this case, the applicant has demonstrated that up to 70 homes could be accommodated on site without detracting from the valued qualities of the Chiltern Wooded Chalk Plateau and Valleys.

6.74 The development will protect the visual attributes of the character, quality and appearance of the valued landscape and will protect features that contribute to the quality of South Oxfordshire's landscape. Overall, the proposed development will only have limited conflict with the development plan policies concerned with landscape protection. This includes policy ENV1 of the SOLP and policy LPLV (Local Valued Landscapes) of the KENDP.

6.75 As a result of the development, part of the edge of Reading will be extended closer to Chalkhouse Green. As such, there is some conflict with KENDP policy LCSS (Separation of Settlements), as although the proposal will not impact on the visual separation between Chalkhouse Green and Reading, it will have some impact on the physical separation of these two settlements.

6.76 It is noted that the proposed development will not extend as close to Chalkhouse Green as the existing built development in Reading to the east and west of the site, and so the development will not reduce the overall gap between Reading and Chalkhouse Green. The proposal will also not change the character of Chalkhouse Green.

6.77 The conflict with KENDP policy LCSS (Separation of Settlements), and limited conflict with other landscape policies, should be weighed up in the planning balance.

Ecology and trees

Designated sites, habitats and species

6.78 The council's ecologist assessed the submitted Ecological Impact Assessment and, with the exception of the potential impact on bats, raises no objections to the proposals in respect of the impact on sites, habitats and species. The ecologist noted that the development will result in a permanent adverse residual effect on hazel dormouse due to cat predation. This will need to be weighed up in the planning balance.

6.79 The submitted Ecological Impact Assessment also outlined that impacts are possible during construction on a variety of other protected species, offsite

ancient woodland and calcareous grassland, and onsite native woodland. Offsite habitats and Local Wildlife Sites could also be affected via recreational pressure during occupation. The Ecological Impact Assessment proposes proportionate mitigation for these impacts, which can be secured via condition.

6.80 In respect of bats, the bat activity surveys in the Ecological Impact Assessment show use of the application site by a bat community of significantly higher conservation importance, with multiple records of scarce or rare species. In particular, the static detectors included over 90 records of barbastelle, a nationally threatened species listed on Annex 2 of the Habitats Directive and listed as a Priority Species. In order to determine whether a wider buffer to the woodland is required, the council's ecologist requested that expanded bat activity surveys were provided so that the impacts on bats could be assessed fully.

6.81 The applicant provided updated bat activity surveys and updated the parameter plans to reduce the impact on bats. The amended plans increased the separation between built development and the woodland in the north-west part of the application site and rearranged the road layout to remove a minor street in this area.

6.82 Having reviewed this additional information, the council's ecologist is satisfied that a 10m dark buffer can be retained along the edges of the bat foraging habitat. A suitable lighting strategy demonstrating this dark buffer can be secured via a condition, with details to be submitted concurrent to a reserved matters application to ensure that the layout of the development secures the appropriate dark buffer.

6.83 Subject to conditions that are necessary to protect and manage habitats and species, the proposed development complies with the relevant development plan policies that are concerned with ecology. This includes SOLP policy ENV2 (Biodiversity – Designated Sites, Priority Habitats and Species).

Biodiversity net gain

6.84 Biodiversity net gain is a legislative framework for the creation and improvement of biodiversity, which requires development to have a positive impact ('net gain') on biodiversity. The proposals are liable to provide a statutory biodiversity net gain (within the meaning of Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990) of 10 percent.

6.85 The proposed development includes significant on-site enhancement and further habitat creation offsite on land owned by the applicant. The council's ecologist is satisfied that a net gain of 10 percent can be achieved. The gain may be much greater, with the applicant indicating that there will likely be an increase of 8.97 habitat units, which will amount to a 40 percent net gain.

6.86 In line with Schedule 7a of the Town and Country Planning Act, the significant onsite enhancements need to be secured for 30 years using a legal agreement. Although it is acknowledged that the extent and specification of the habitats

proposed will likely vary with detailed design, the legal agreement provides the underlying framework for delivering, managing and monitoring the habitats. Subject to the completion of a legal agreement, the proposal complies with policy ENV3 (Biodiversity) of the SOLP.

Trees

6.87 The application site contains several trees that are protected by Tree Preservation Orders. On review of the initial submission, the councils tree officer requested some amendments to ensure that trees which are protected, and of high amenity value, can be retained.

6.88 Following the submission of amended plans, the council's tree officer is satisfied that the indicative layout demonstrates that key trees can be retained and that there is sufficient space for tree planting to offset the tree removals. Following comments made by Reading Borough Council about the potential impact on vegetation that could result from the pedestrian/cycle link to Highdown Hill Road, the applicant provided an addendum to the Tree Report. Having reviewed this additional information, the council's forestry officer is satisfied that pedestrian/cycle link will have an acceptable impact in terms of vegetation removal on Highdown Hill Road.

6.89 As such, the development complies with the relevant part of SOLP policy ENV1 (Landscape), which requires development to protect features that contribute to the nature and quality of South Oxfordshire's landscape, including trees.

Residential amenity

Neighbouring properties

6.90 Policy DES6 (Residential Amenity) of the SOLP requires development proposals to demonstrate that they will not result in significant adverse impacts on the amenity of neighbouring uses. Given the separation that could be achieved between the new development and existing homes around the site, a layout could be secured at reserved matters stage which will not have an adverse impact on the amenity of neighbouring occupiers in terms of light, outlook and privacy.

6.91 The construction phase of the proposed development will create noise that will be likely to disturb neighbouring occupiers. The impact of this can be managed by conditions, including a restriction on construction hours. The impact will also be temporary and is not a reason to withhold planning permission.

Future occupiers

6.92 At reserved matters stage, the new homes will need to be designed to achieve the separation distances in the Joint Design Guide. This includes a minimum distance of 21m in a back-to-back relationship and 12m in a side to rear relationship. Given the size of the site, a detailed layout could be achieved that meets these standards. Up to 70 homes could be accommodated on the site in a manner that will provide appropriate internal living conditions for future occupiers of the site.

6.93 A future application for reserved matters will also need to provide private amenity areas to the size requirements in the Joint Design Guide. Based on the indicative information provided, a detailed design could be provided in accordance with the Design Guide standards and SOLP policy DES5 (Outdoor Amenity Space). The indicative layout shows that shared amenity space and play areas can be accommodated in accordance with SOLP policy CF5 (Open Space, Sport and Recreation in New Residential Developments).

6.94 In addition to the on-site recreation facilities, the application also proposes to utilise the area to the north of the application site to provide new recreational opportunities through the creation of footpaths through this land and the provision of publicly accessible open space. This will provide an opportunity for both existing and new residents to formally access this land and will provide a circular route to encourage active lifestyles.

6.95 Access to this land will be secured through the provisions of a Section 106 legal agreement. The legal agreement will also secure a Landscape and Management Plan for this area which will set out the detail of how this area will be laid out and managed in the long term.

6.96 An initial concept plan has been prepared to show how this area could be landscaped and the walking route laid out. This is attached as **Appendix 6** and copied below for ease:



6.97 It is noted that some existing residents currently access the application site and adjoining land for dog walking and other recreational activities. The application site and adjoining site are private and there are no rights of access onto the land. The provisions of the Section 106 legal agreement will formalise access to this area and keep it open to the public for the future.

6.98 Thames Water initially raised an objection to the application on the basis that the proposed development is within 20m of a pumping station and the potential

impact that this could have on the amenity of future residents. The amended submission explained that the actual homes will be significantly in excess of the 20m buffer and Thames Water did not raise the issue in their second set of comments.

Environmental sustainability and low carbon development

6.99 Policy DES8 (Promoting Sustainable Design) of the SOLP requires all new development to seek to minimise the carbon and energy impacts of their design and construction. It also requires developments to be designed to improve resilience to the anticipated effects of climate change.

6.100 Policy DES10 (Carbon Reduction) requires new residential development to achieve at least a 40% reduction in carbon emissions compared to a 2013 Building Regulations compliant base. This reduction is to be secured through renewable energy and other low carbon technologies and/or energy efficiency measures. The requirement will increase to at least 50% in March 2026, and 100% in March 2030 (zero carbon), and are subject to further review. To demonstrate a commitment to meet these standards, policy DES10 (Carbon Reduction) includes a requirement for an Energy Statement to be submitted to detail how proposals will comply with this policy.

6.101 The application is accompanied by an Energy and Sustainability Statement, and this provides details of measures that could be incorporated into a reserved matters application. Given the size of the site and the type of development proposed, it is possible that the requirements of DES8 (Promoting Sustainable Design) and DES10 (Carbon Reduction) could be factored in at detailed design stage and this can be secured through a suitably worded planning condition.

6.102 A condition is also necessary to ensure that the new homes will be designed to a water efficiency standard of 110 litres/head/day, in accordance with SOLP policy INF4 (Water Resources).

Flood risk and drainage

6.103 The application site is within Flood Zone 1 (least probability of flooding). Some very small parts of the site are at risk of surface water flooding, but these areas are minor, are away from the area to be developed, and will not have any material planning impacts.

6.104 The council's drainage engineer has considered the submitted Flood Risk Assessment and accompanying information. He has raised no objection to the development subject to conditions to secure appropriate surface and foul water drainage schemes.

6.105 Following initial investigations, Thames Water has been unable to determine the foul water infrastructure needs of the development. Thames Water has therefore requested a condition to provide confirmation of capacity, a phasing plan or confirmation that foul water upgrades have been provided.

6.106 Thames Water has also identified an inability of the existing water network infrastructure to accommodate the needs of the development. Conditions are therefore necessary to require confirmation of upgrades or a phasing plan.

6.107 Subject to appropriate conditions, the development accords with SOLP policy EP4 (Flood Risk).

Other planning matters

Heritage assets

6.108 There are no above ground heritage assets within or near to the application site. With regards to below ground assets, an archaeological evaluation has been carried out and this shows that significant archaeological remains do not survive on this site.

Environmental health matters

6.109 The council's contaminated land officer has considered the submitted information and has confirmed that there are no further requirements in respect of contaminated land.

6.110 With regards to environmental protection matters, the relevant officer has recommended a condition requiring a Construction Management Plan to mitigate the impact of construction on neighbouring occupiers. The officer has also asked for a noise report for any microgeneration plant that falls outside of the Microgeneration Certification Scheme.

6.111 In respect of air quality, the council's air quality officer has recommended that the development incorporates best practice measures from the council's Air Quality Guidance for Developers. The requirements are for electric vehicle charging, sustainable travel packs and cycle storage.

Waste Management

6.112 South Oxfordshire District Council will collect household waste from the development. The applicant has demonstrated that a 11.6m refuse vehicle is able to safely enter and exit of the site in forward gear. As part of the reserved matters application, the applicant will be required to demonstrate that the refuse vehicle can turn within the site.

Infrastructure requirements

Infrastructure to be secured under a legal agreement

6.113 Where necessary to mitigate the impact of the development, on-site and off-site infrastructure can be secured through a legal agreement under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended). Planning obligations need to meet the CIL Regulation 122 tests and be (i) necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms; (ii) directly related to the development; and (iii) fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.

6.114 South Oxfordshire District Council, Oxfordshire County Council and Reading Borough Council will all be party to the Section 106 legal agreement. This is because the development will have impacts on services and operations that are

the responsibility of all three council areas and mitigation is required to address those impacts.

6.115 In terms of the functions that South Oxfordshire District Council is responsible for, on-site affordable housing will be secured through the provisions of the Section 106 legal agreement in accordance with the specifications outlined in the relevant section above. The legal agreement will also secure the delivery and management of a policy compliant level of on-site public open space and play comprising a minimum of 0.32 hectares. This will include a children's locally equipped area containing at least five different fixed items of play equipment, seating, fencing and safety surfacing. The open space and play will be required to be provided prior to the occupation of 50 percent of the market homes and will be transferred to a management company.

6.116 With regards to off-site functions that fall within South Oxfordshire's remit, the Section 106 agreement will secure the management and monitoring of habits to provide a biodiversity net gain on the land adjoining the application site. The agreement will also include a mechanism to secure the management of this off-site area including the creation of footpaths. The S106 will also include an obligation for this land to be publicly accessible and provided in accordance with details including a layout that shall be agreed and be broadly in accordance with the concept plan (Appendix 6).

6.117 Under the current fee schedule, the following financial contributions will also be secured towards functions that are operated by the District Council:

- A financial contribution towards street naming and numbering at a rate of £268 per 10 houses.
- A financial contribution towards the provision of recycling and refuse bins at a rate of £212 per property.

6.118 The proposed development is expected to increase demand for schools in the area. In respect of education, Oxfordshire County Council will secure a financial contribution of £59,019 towards special school education capacity serving the site. The county council are working with the academy trust responsible for Bishopswood School on a major capacity proposal for expansion and the contribution will go towards this project.

6.119 In respect of primary and secondary education, there is sufficient capacity at schools in South Oxfordshire to accommodate the increase in demand. Kidmore End Primary has a capacity of 210, and only 153 pupils, and Maiden Erlegh Secondary has a capacity of 748, but with 421 pupils on roll. As acknowledged above, future residents may be able to attend schools in Reading, if those schools have capacity and residents are offered a space.

6.120 Oxfordshire County Council are also responsible for household waste and recycling centres. A financial contribution of £7,245 will be secured through the Section 106 agreement towards the expansion and efficiency of household waste and recycling centres.

6.121 In respect of transport mitigation, Oxfordshire District Council will secure a contribution of £95,480 towards the improvement of bus services in the area. As highway works to serve the development fall within the administrative boundary of Reading, these works will be delivered directly by the developer through a S278 agreement with Reading Borough Council.

6.122 All the planning obligations outlined above have been assessed and meet the CIL tests. The legal agreement will also secure fees payable to the councils for the purposes of monitoring the agreement.

6.123 All financial contributions will be indexed linked so that contributions remain at current value when costs were prepared. It is noted that some of the figures above may vary depending on the details of the final development secured under reserved matters in terms of the number of homes and bedroom sizes.

6.124 Reading Borough Council has requested contributions to mitigate the impact of the development on healthcare, sport and leisure facilities within Reading. With regards to highways impacts, a financial contribution is requested towards upgrading of the operating system (traffic signals) and/or improvements to the pedestrian and cycle facilities at the junction of Peppard Road / Henley Road / Westfield Road / Prospect Street. Reading Borough Council has also requested that the future spending of the bus service contribution secured by Oxfordshire County Council is agreed in consultation with them.

6.125 Given that the new housing is effectively an extension to Reading, future residents will inevitably use facilities within Reading and travel through it. It is therefore reasonable that contributions are secured to mitigate the impact of the development on the services and facilities within Reading.

6.126 Reading Borough Council has made the following requests in respect of matters to be secured as part of the S106 legal agreement:

- That South Oxfordshire District Council secures a financial contribution in line with their adopted formula towards bus service improvements in the locality and agrees that any future spending of this contribution is agreed in consultation with Reading Borough Council.

- That Reading Borough Council is party to the section 106 agreement and that a financial contribution of £150,000 is secured towards upgrading of the operating system (traffic signals) and/or improvements to the pedestrian and cycle facilities at the junction of Peppard Road / Henley Road / Westfield Road/ Prospect Street.

- That South Oxfordshire District Council secures a financial contribution, in accordance with NHS ICB's multiplier formula (in full) to go towards increasing healthcare capacity within Reading Borough.

- That Reading Borough Council is party to a section 106 agreement linked to the planning permission to secure a financial contribution, in

line with Sport England's demand Calculator (in full), towards sport and leisure facilities within Reading Borough**.**

6.127 It is noted that our CIL Spending Strategy does not allow for spending outside of South Oxfordshire. As such, collecting Section 106 contributions towards the facilities in Reading is the only way in which the impact on services in Reading can be mitigated. Without the mitigation to services and facilities in Reading, by means of financial contributions to increase capacity, the development is not acceptable.

6.128 The applicant has confirmed agreement to the healthcare and sport/leisure contributions requested by Reading Borough Council, and also to the bus service contribution that will come to South Oxfordshire District Council to be spent in consultation with Reading Borough Council. Negotiations are on-going in respect of the £150,000 request to highway improvements, and an update will be provided at the committee meeting.

Contributions pooled under the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

6.129 The council has an adopted a Community Infrastructure Levy, with a charging schedule that was revised in 2023. The 'chargeable development' includes all new buildings and development delivering 100 sqm or more of additional gross internal floor space. New floorspace is currently charged at a rate of £247.82 per sqm. An exemption is available for affordable housing.

6.130 The money collected from CIL is pooled together to fund a wide range of infrastructure to support growth, including transport, community, leisure, and health facilities. Under the CIL Regulations, as Kidmore End has a Neighbourhood Development Plan, Kidmore End Parish Council will receive 25% of the CIL collected from this development to spend on local infrastructure projects.

7.0 CONCLUSION

7.1 The proposed development for up to 70 new homes conflicts with the development plan in that the scheme relates to a site that has not been allocated for development. The development will result in the enlargement of the neighbouring town of Reading into the South Oxfordshire countryside.

7.2 The proposed development is contrary to the development plan policies that are concerned with the location of housing growth including SOLP policies STRAT1 (The Overall Strategy), STRAT2 (Housing and Employment Requirements) and H1 (Delivering New Homes). There is also conflict with KENDP Policy LCI (Infill).

7.3 The weight to be given to this conflict is reduced given that the council cannot currently demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites, and policies for the supply of housing are therefore considered by the NPPF to be out-of-date. In this case, the application of policies in the NPPF that protect areas or assets of particular importance do not provide a strong reason for refusing the development. The 'tilted balance' in NPPF paragraph 11.d) ii. therefore applies.

7.4 This means that where the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date (due to the lack of a five-year land supply) planning permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the NPPF taken as a whole, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination.

7.5 As a made neighbourhood plan is in place, NPPF paragraph 14 is also relevant. Paragraph 14 advises that in situations where the presumption (at paragraph 11d) applies to applications involving the provision of housing, the adverse impact of allowing development that conflicts with the neighbourhood plan is likely to significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, provided the neighbourhood plan is less than 5 years old and it contains policies and allocations to meet its identified housing requirement in full.

7.6 KENDP is less than five years old. Within the Neighbourhood Plan Area there is no defined requirement to contribute towards delivering additional housing (beyond windfall and infill development) to meet the overall housing requirement of South Oxfordshire. Notwithstanding this, KENDP does allocate four dwellings. The requirements of paragraph 14 of the NPPF are therefore met.

7.7 It is noted that although the housing policies in the development plan are out-of-date, weight should still be applied to the spatial distribution strategy in the SOLP. The spatial strategy seeks to ensure that development is located where there are services and facilities to reduce the need to travel and maximise the use of public transport. Achieving a sustainable pattern of development throughout the district is still an important material consideration.

7.8 In this case, even though the development is not consistent with our spatial strategy, the proposal is in a location where there is good access to services and facilities. Reading is a higher order settlement than any of the settlements in South Oxfordshire and the development will have good access to services and facilities within Reading, including employment opportunities.

7.9 Furthermore, there will only be limited conflict with the element of SOLP policy STRAT1 (The Overall Strategy), which seeks to protect and enhance the countryside. This is because of the unique characteristics of the site. The proposed development will not project as far north as the existing built development of Reading to the east and west of the site. It will effectively round off this part of Reading instead of the built form projecting further into the countryside.

7.10 One of the key features that sets this site aside from others on the edge of Reading is that the site has a stronger visual relationship with the built-up area of Reading than the rural character of South Oxfordshire. The existing woodland provides visual separation to the wider countryside beyond the site,

and this woodland area will be enhanced as part of the application proposals. The approval of this scheme will not set a precedent for further development on the edge of Reading and any future planning applications will be assessed on their merits.

7.11 In terms of carrying out the balancing exercise required under NPPF paragraphs 11d and 14, the NPPF notes that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. To assess whether a proposal constitutes sustainable development it must satisfy the three dimensions of sustainable development, which include the economic, social and environmental planning roles. It makes it clear these three roles are mutually dependent and should not be taken in isolation.

7.12 With regards to the social dimension, the proposal will support the delivery of housing, and in particular much needed affordable housing, at a time when the council cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites. The location of this housing, where future residents will have a choice of how to travel to local services and facilities further bolsters the benefit of the provision of housing on this site. The delivery of housing in a sustainable location is a material consideration that has significant positive weight in the planning balance.

7.13 The proposals on the land adjoining the application site will provide significant benefits in excess of planning policy standards. This includes the recreational opportunities for new and existing residents that would result from this land being open to the public, with the provision of both open space and a circular walking route. In addition to this social benefit, the proposals on the adjoining land will also have environmental benefits in terms of landscape enhancements and biodiversity gain well in excess of requirements. Together, these benefits can be attributed significant positive weight.

7.14 In terms of other environmental considerations, the development will result in some landscape harm. This harm will be limited given that the site is more closely aligned to Reading than the rural landscape beyond. Given the visual screening provided by the woodland, the site does not form part of the setting of the Chilterns National Landscape.

7.15 There is some conflict with the policies in the development plan that are concerned with landscape matters and the protection of the countryside. This includes conflict with policy ENV1 of the SOLP and policies LPLV (Local Valued Landscapes) and LCSS (Separation of Settlements) of the KENDP. The overall landscape impact will be limited but the development will reduce the physical gap between the existing edge of this part of Reading and Chalkhouse Green. Overall, moderate negative weight should be applied to this harm.

7.16 With regards to other environmental harms, the proposal will result in a permanent adverse residual effect on hazel dormouse due to cat predation. This harm should be attributed limited weight in the planning balance.

7.17 In respect of the economic dimension, the Government has made clear its view that house building plays an important role in promoting economic growth. In economic terms, the proposal will provide construction jobs and local investment during construction, as well as longer term expenditure in the local economy. These benefits are given moderate weight in the planning balance.

7.18 In carrying out the overall balancing exercise, paragraph 14 of the NPPF requires the decision maker to have particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes. As indicated above, the development will deliver much needed affordable homes in a sustainable location. The proposal will make effective use of this former golf site in terms of the density of the development, and a place that is well designed can be secured through reserved matters.

7.19 Based on the above assessment, it is your officer's opinion that in the context of the site-specific considerations, on this occasion the benefits provided by the proposed development will not be outweighed by the harm caused by the conflict with the strategy for housing in the development plan, the reduction in the physical gap between this part of Reading and Chalkhouse Green, and the limited harm to the landscape.

7.20 Accordingly, this is a rare occasion where the adverse impacts of conflicting with a neighbourhood plan are not likely to significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits. In this case, the benefits of the scheme outweigh the harm, which indicates that planning permission should be granted.

8.0 **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that authority to grant planning permission for P25/S1431/O is delegated to the Head of Planning subject to:

i) The prior completion of a Section 106 agreement to secure the affordable housing, financial contributions and other obligations stated above, and

ii) The following conditions:

<u>Time limits/plans</u>

1. **Reserved Matters to be approved prior to commencement**
2. **Time limit for submission of reserved matters**
3. **Time limit for commencement**
4. **Approved plans**

<u>To be submitted with reserved matters</u>

5. **Levels**
6. **Lighting strategy and mitigation plan for bats**
7. **Arboricultural Method Statement**
8. **Energy Statement**
9. **Waste Management Plan**
10. **Market Mix**

11. Accessibility and space standards

Pre-commencement

12. Habitat and Visitor Management Plan
13. Construction Environmental Management Plan for Biodiversity
14. Features to be provided for protected and priority species
15. Landscape Management Plan
16. Construction Traffic Management Plan
17. Construction Method Statement
18. Sustainable drainage scheme
19. Foul drainage scheme

Prior to occupation

20. Access onto The Fairway
21. Pedestrian/cycle accesses
22. Travel Plan and Information Pack
23. Electric Vehicle Charging
24. Details of play space
25. Sustainable drainage compliance report
26. Thames Water foul capacity upgrades
27. Thames Water sewage treatment works capacity
28. Thames Water water network infrastructure upgrades
29. Verification of carbon reduction measures
30. Cycle parking

Compliance

31. Landscape implementation
32. Water efficiency standard
33. Fast fibre broadband

In accordance with The Town and Country Planning (Pre-commencement Conditions) Regulations 2018, Section 100ZA (6) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990(a) the applicant is required to confirm agreement to all pre-commencement conditions. These have been agreed by the agent in writing in accordance with the requirements of this legislation. All the conditions are set out in full in **Appendix 7**.

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04 February 2026

Reading Borough Council
Working better with you

Title	**PLANNING APPLICATION REPORT**
Ward	Southcote
Planning Application Reference:	PL/25/0835 Approval of reserved matters
Site Address:	Dellwood Community Hospital, 22 Liebenrood Road, Reading, RG30 2DX
Proposed Development	Application for approval of reserved matters (landscaping) submitted pursuant to outline planning permission ref. PL/21/1728
Applicant	Mrs Anna Ciesielska
Report author	Matt Burns
Deadline:	8 week date: 05/09/2025 Extension of time date: 10/02/2026
Recommendations	Delegate to the Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection Services (ADPTPPS) to **GRANT** Reserved Matters approval, subject to the following conditions.
Conditions	1. In accordance with the approved Plans 2. Implementation and maintenance of landscaping in accordance with landscape management and maintenance documents 3. Pre-commencement, barring demolition, submission and approval of full SuDS details 4. Pre-occupation implementation of SuDS
Informatives	1. The original outline planning permission PL/21/1728/OUT still stands and all conditions still apply. This approval and that permission should be read together.

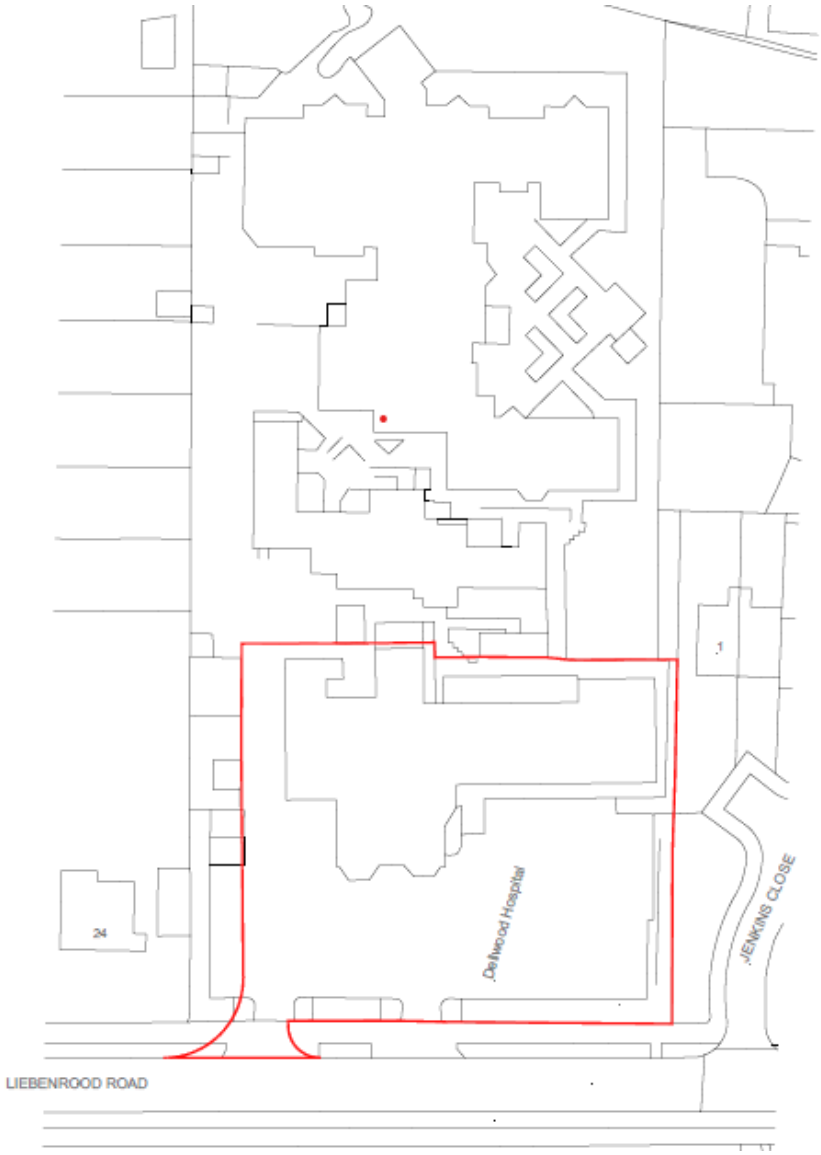
1. Executive summary

1.1 This reserved matters application seeks approval of landscaping details at the former Dellwood Community Hospital site, following grant of outline permission ref. PL/21/1728/OUT in July 2022 for a 56-bed care home (C2 use). The landscaping proposals include planting of 13 new trees**,** hedgerows, amenity grass areas, and shrub beds, alongside minimal hard landscaping for access and parking. Boundary treatments will comprise a low brick wall with railings and timber fencing, with mammal gaps to support biodiversity. The proposals include a SuDS strategy which will integrate permeable paving and tree pits to reduce runoff and enhance sustainability, and an appropriate landscape management and maintenance plan has been provided.

1.2 The proposals are considered to comply with relevant Local Plan policies in respect of design, biodiversity, climate change and tree coverage and no objections have been raised by consultees or any public comments received. The officer recommendation is to approve the landscaping Reserved Matters details subject to conditions.

2. Introduction and site description

2.1. This reserved matters application site relates to the former Dellwood Community Hospital on the east side of Liebenrood Road. To the front of the building is the hospital car park accessed from Liebenrood Road with the current building set back 20m from the road frontage. To the rear (east) of the building, the remainder of the site is The Duchess of Kent Hospice. To the west of the site on the opposite side of Liebenrood Road is Prospect Park which is Grade II listed on the English Heritage Register of Historic Parks and Gardens. To the north of the site are residential properties along Liebenrood Road whilst to the south is Jenkins Close, a residential cul de sac.



Site Location Plan

2.2 The existing Hospital building is a two and a half storey Victorian building built in the late 1890's. The building incorporates a number of different terracotta details, red-faced brickwork, and overlapping geometric patterned clay wall tiles in the two large feature front gable roof projections that face Liebenrood Road. The building's windows comprise large stone cills and string courses and there are two large, two-storey feature bay windows to the front elevation. The building was converted into a Community Hospital and Maternity Home in 1920.

2.3 The hospital was the scene of a catastrophic fire on Easter Sunday in April 1954 where 13 babies sadly died. Nurse Freda Holland was awarded the George Cross for her efforts in saving the lives of some of the babies at the hospital. Understandably the building

retains a strong link to the Reading community given its shared history and the fact that a substantial number of people were born there may still live locally.

2.4 A large unsympathetic two storey side and single storey side extensions were added to the building in the 1970's and the building continued in a health-related use as a GP surgery for the elderly up until 2005 when it was closed by the (then) NHS Clinical Commissioning Group who declared the site surplus to requirements. The site has been vacant ever since and the hospital relocated to nearby Prospect Park Hospital. The Applicant has since acquired the site from NHS Property Services. Whilst the interior of the building has been subject to significant remodelling over the years the exterior of the building remains substantially intact.

2.5 The building is considered to be a non-designated heritage asset as a result of its external appearance (described above) and historic community association, with long history of use as a local medical/maternity facility and given it is likely a substantial proportion of the local community were born in the building. Paragraph 038 of the Historic Environment section of the National Planning Practice Guide (NPPG) sets out that non-designated heritage assets are buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas or landscapes identified by plan-making bodies as having a degree of heritage significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, but which do not meet the criteria for designated heritage assets.



Front elevation of the existing building



View of the existing hospital building from Liebenrood Road

2.6 Outline Planning Permission ref. PL/21/1278/OUT was granted (subject to conditions) at the site on 1st July 2022 for partial demolition, conversion and extension of the existing building to form a care home (C2 use class) with ancillary accommodation, amended access arrangements, car parking and associated works. Planning permission was granted following consideration of the application at Planning Applications Committee on 1st June 2022. The committee report (and updated report) for the application from June PAC are attached as Appendix 1 and 2 to this report. The outline planning permission granted considered matters relating to Access, Appearance, Layout and Scale in Detail with Landscaping being the only matter reserved for consideration at a later date.

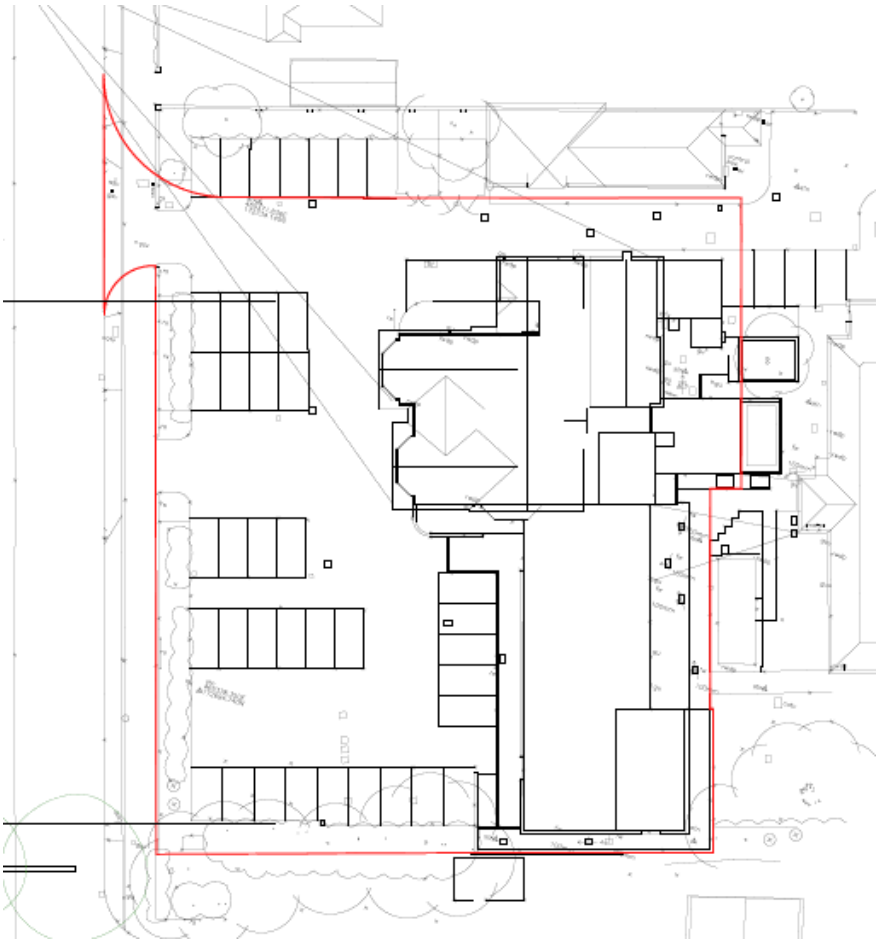
2.7 More specifically the development given outline planning permission included:

- Partial demolition, conversion and extension of the existing building to form a 56-bed care home (C2 use class) and ancillary accommodation, amended access arrangements, car parking and associated works. The care home would be capable of providing care to residents of all dependency levels, including those with higher dependency, who require nursing care or dementia care within a specialist unit designed to cater for their needs.

- Retention of the original Victorian portion of the existing building and demolition of the large 1970's single storey side extension to the southern elevation of the building and two storey side extension to the north elevation.

- Addition of an 'L-shaped' three storey extension to the southern elevation which would extend 23m towards the southern boundary of the site with Jenkins Close and then project forwards 27m towards Liebenrood Road. A 6.2m wide and 17.5m deep three storey side element to the north (side) and east rear elevation. The approved extensions reflect the architectural style and materials of the Victorian building to be retained with roof gables, use of red brick, hanging tiles, sash windows, chimneys and red tile roofs.

- Access to the site to be retained from Liebenrood Road with a 13-space car park to the front of the site. A further 5 under-croft parking spaces to be located to the rear of the site accessed via the existing accessway along the north boundary of the site.



Existing Site Plan



Approved Site Plan and Indicative Landscaping



Visual of approved development

2.8 This Reserved Matters planning application is subject to determination by Planning Applications Committee because it relates to a Major category development.

3. The Proposal

3.1. The application seeks approval of matters relating to landscaping for the development following the approval of outline planning permission ref. 21/1728/OUT.

3.2. Condition 3 of the outline planning permission outlines the landscaping details to be agreed as part of the reserved matters and states the following:

> *3. No development shall commence on site until details of the following matter (in respect of which approval is expressly reserved) have been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Local Planning Authority. The landscaping of the site, to include:*
>
> *i. Proposed finished ground and floor levels or contours, means of enclosure and boundary treatments (including mammal gaps where appropriate), car parking layouts, other vehicle and pedestrian access and circulation areas;*
>
> *ii. Hard surfacing materials and minor artefacts and other ancillary structures (e.g. furniture, play equipment, refuse or other storage units, signs, lighting, external services, etc);*
>
> *iii. Soft landscaping details shall include planting plan, specification (including cultivation and other operations associated with plant and grass establishment), schedules of plants, noting species, planting sizes and proposed numbers/densities where appropriate, and implementation timetable;*
>
> *iv. a landscape management plan, including long term design objectives, management responsibilities, timescales for implementation and maintenance programme and schedules for all landscape areas;*
>
> *v. routes and details of proposed and existing functional services above and below ground including foul and surface water drainage, soakaways and SUDs details, power, communications cables and water and gas supply pipelines, including access points, tree pit specifications*

3.3 Details relating to the above have been submitted by the Applicant as part of this Reserved Matters application. Indicative landscaping principles were approved when outline planning permission was granted and condition 4 of the outline planning permission requires that the detailed information required under condition 3 accords with these basic principles.

3.4 The approved basic landscape principles of the proposals include provision of soft landscaping, including tree planting to the site frontage with Liebenrood Road and also to the southern site boundary with Jenkins Close. A central landscaped area is to be created, separating the retained building with the new southern wing extension providing

communal outdoor space for residents. Additional areas of landscaping are also to be provided to the south of the building adjacent to Jenkins Close including new tree planting to replace those lost through the development. All external footpaths within the development are to be suitable for wheelchairs and walking frames with frequent areas to stop and rest.

3.5. Submitted plans and documentation:

- Landscape Maintenance Schedule Dellwood
- Drawing ref. ADL413 Rev D – Landscaping

Received by the Local Planning Authority on 4th December 2025

- Storm Water Outflow rates document ref. 20007/A
- HR Wallingford Greenfield runoff rate estimate for sites ref. 1424431313
- Micro Drainage Calculation document ref. File 20007.SIM dated 26 November 2025 11:43
- Micro Drainage Calculation document ref. File 2007.SIM dated 26 November 2025 11:22
- Drawing ref. 20007/DS/01 rev P3 – Below ground drainage layout
- Drawing ref. 19016/F02/S07/Rev/A – Proposed levels and services plan

Received by the Local Planning Authority on 27th November 2025

- Drawing ref. 19016/F02/S06/Rev/A – Proposed surface boundary treatments
- Drawing ref. 19016/F02/S08/Rev/ - Soil volume plan

Received by the Local Planning Authority on 24th November 2025

- Drawing ref. 6123-E-200 rev T2 – Proposed external sidewide services sheet 01
- Drawing ref. 6123-E-101 rev T2 – Existing external sidewide services sheet 02
- Drawing ref. 6123-E-201 rev T2 – Proposed external sidewide services sheet 02
- Drawing ref. 6123-E-100 rev T2 – Existing external sidewide services sheet 01
- Drawing ref. 6123-E-400 rev T3 – Proposed mortuary block electrical services layout
- Acceber Design Limited Landscape Management and Maintenance Pla
- Drawing ref. 21-OAN-2915 sheets 1, 2 and 3 – Utility and Topographical Survey

Received by the Local Planning Authority on 6th June 2025

4. Planning history

4.1 969022 – Residential development for 9 dwellings (social housing) – Granted

4.2 980225 - Replace existing external fire escape and form new internal fire escape stair. Fire precautions work to existing building – Granted

4.3 990236 - Single storey extension to the rear of the building to create a quiet sitting area for patients and relatives – Granted

4.4 111209 – Proposed siting of a new portacabin for 5 years – Granted

4.5 120438 – Single storey front and side extensions – Granted

4.6 191257 – Retain and amend the existing site access to provide an entrance of 8m in width to facilitate vehicular movements both accessing and exiting the site – Granted

4.7 201275 - Outline application considering access, appearance, layout and scale involving demolition of existing hospital building (Class C2) and erection of a three-storey elderly care home facility (Class C2) including ancillary office / administration facilities, amenity space and associated car parking (landscaping reserved for future consideration) - Granted

5. Consultations

Planning Natural Environment

5.1. No objection, subject to a condition to secure submission and approval of full details of integration of the proposed sustainable drainage scheme (SuDS) with the proposed soft landscaping.

Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA)

5.2 No objection, subject to a condition to secure submission and approval of the full design of the proposed drainage (SuDS) scheme.

Ecology Consultations

5.3 No objection

Public Notification

5.4 A site notice was displayed at the application site on 17th June 2025.

5.5 No letters of representation have been received.

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

6.2 The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) states that the reserved matters relating to the 'Landscaping' of a development are:

- The treatment of land (other than buildings) for the purpose of enhancing or protecting the amenities of the site and the area in which it is situated and includes: (a) screening by fences, walls or other means; (b) the planting of trees, hedges, shrubs or grass; (c) the formation of banks, terraces or other earthworks; (d) the laying out or provision of gardens, courts, squares, water features, sculpture or public art; and (e) the provision of other amenity features (Paragraph: 006 Reference ID: 14-006-20140306).

National Policy

6.3 National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024). The following chapters are the most relevant (others apply to a lesser extent):

2. Achieving sustainable development
4. Decision-making
8. Promoting healthy and safe communities
12. Achieving well-designed places
14. Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change
15. Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
16. Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

Local Policy

6.4 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
EN1: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment
EN9: Provision of Open Space
EN12: Biodiversity and the Green Network
EN14: Trees, Hedges and Woodland
EN18: Flooding and Drainage
H6: Accommodation for Vulnerable People

6.5 Other relevant documents include:

- Reading Borough Council Tree Strategy (March 2021)
- Reading Biodiversity Action Plan (March 2021)

7 Appraisal

7.1 The principle of the development on the site is established by the grant of outline planning permission ref. PL/21/1728. The purpose of this application is to seek approval of those Reserved Matters where details were not provided at outline stage which in this case just relates to the matter of the Landscaping for the development. Therefore, it is only the matter of Landscaping which is subject to consideration in this report.

7.2 The submission and proposals under parts i. to v. of the reserved matters landscaping condition (condition no.3) of the outline planning permission are discussed below.

7.3 **Part iii.** of the condition requires submission and approval of ***soft landscaping details for the development including planting plans, specifications (including cultivation and other operations associated with plant and grass establishment), schedules of plants, species, sizes and proposed numbers/densities where appropriate, and implementation timetable***.

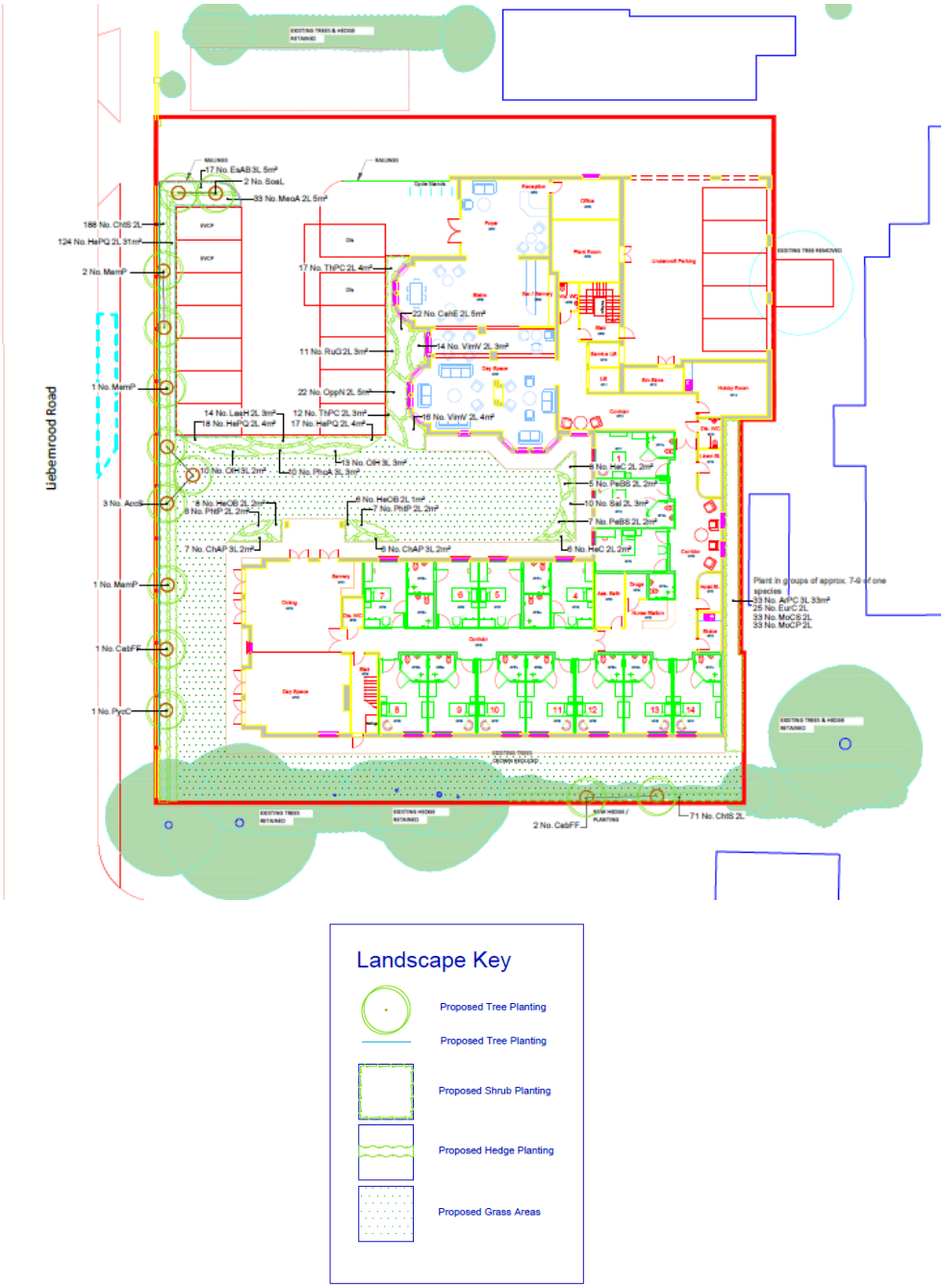
7.5 External areas of the existing site are located to the front of the building between it and Liebenrood Road and are dominated by the hard surfacing car park, albeit there are 18 existing trees/hedgerows on or directly adjacent to the site boundary and one notable group of shrubs. None of the trees are subject of TPOs and nor is the site located within a Conservation Area; however the site is located within an area of strong green character including Prospect Park.

7.6 A Tree Survey and Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) was submitted with the original outline planning application. This identified that the highest quality trees within proximity of the site are two Lime trees located just outside the southern site boundary on the grassed verge of Jenkins Close which the Tree Survey classified as category 'B' (trees of moderate quality). These are considered to be a significant feature within the wider Liebenrood Road landscape in keeping with the Limes on the eastern boundary of Prospect Park and are to be retained as part of the proposed development. All other trees on the site are classified as C category trees (trees of low quality) or U category trees (trees of poor condition) and the outline planning permission that was granted required five of these trees, a hedgerow and a group of shrubs to be removed to accommodate the proposed development. In consideration of the outline planning application, the RBC Natural Environment Officer's advice was that whilst the tree/shrubs identified for removal did not have arboricultural value in their own right they do collectively add to the positive canopy coverage and green character of the area; but their removal was accepted because it was considered there was scope as part of the proposed development layout to significantly increase and enhance the tree and soft landscaping coverage of the site.

7.7 The approved development layout, whilst incorporating a significant extension to the side and front of the existing building, also significantly reduces the size of the hardstanding car park area to the front of the site. As such, areas of amenity grass with shrub planting beds and hedgerows are to be provided within the southern portion of the site and areas around the edges of the building providing communal amenity spill-out areas for future residents. The approved layout also includes provision of additional tree planting to the

site frontage with Liebenrood Road to west and to the southern boundary adjacent to Jenkins Close. The soft landscaping proposals submitted as part of this Reserved Matters application accord with the layout and general landscape approved under the outline planning permission.

7.8 More specifically, the Reserved Matters proposals include planting of a total of 13 new native trees which would result in an overall net gain of 8 trees on the site. Eleven of the new trees would be located to the site frontage with Liebenrood Road and 2 to the south boundary with Jenkins Close. The tree species proposed are a mixture of Acer, Hornbeam, Crab Apple, Callery Pear and Whitebeam and the RBC Natural Environment Officer and Ecology Adviser have reviewed the proposals and advise that the tree species and their proposed location are acceptable. The species chosen would provide a pleasant and varied setting to the development, particularly when viewed from the front to Liebenrood Road integrating with the green character of Prospect Park opposite the site, whilst also having wildlife value. Details of tree pits, soil volumes and tree sizes for the proposed trees have also been provided, and the RBC Natural Environment Officer advises that these are also acceptable and appropriate to allow the trees to grow and become established.



Proposed soft landscaping plan and key

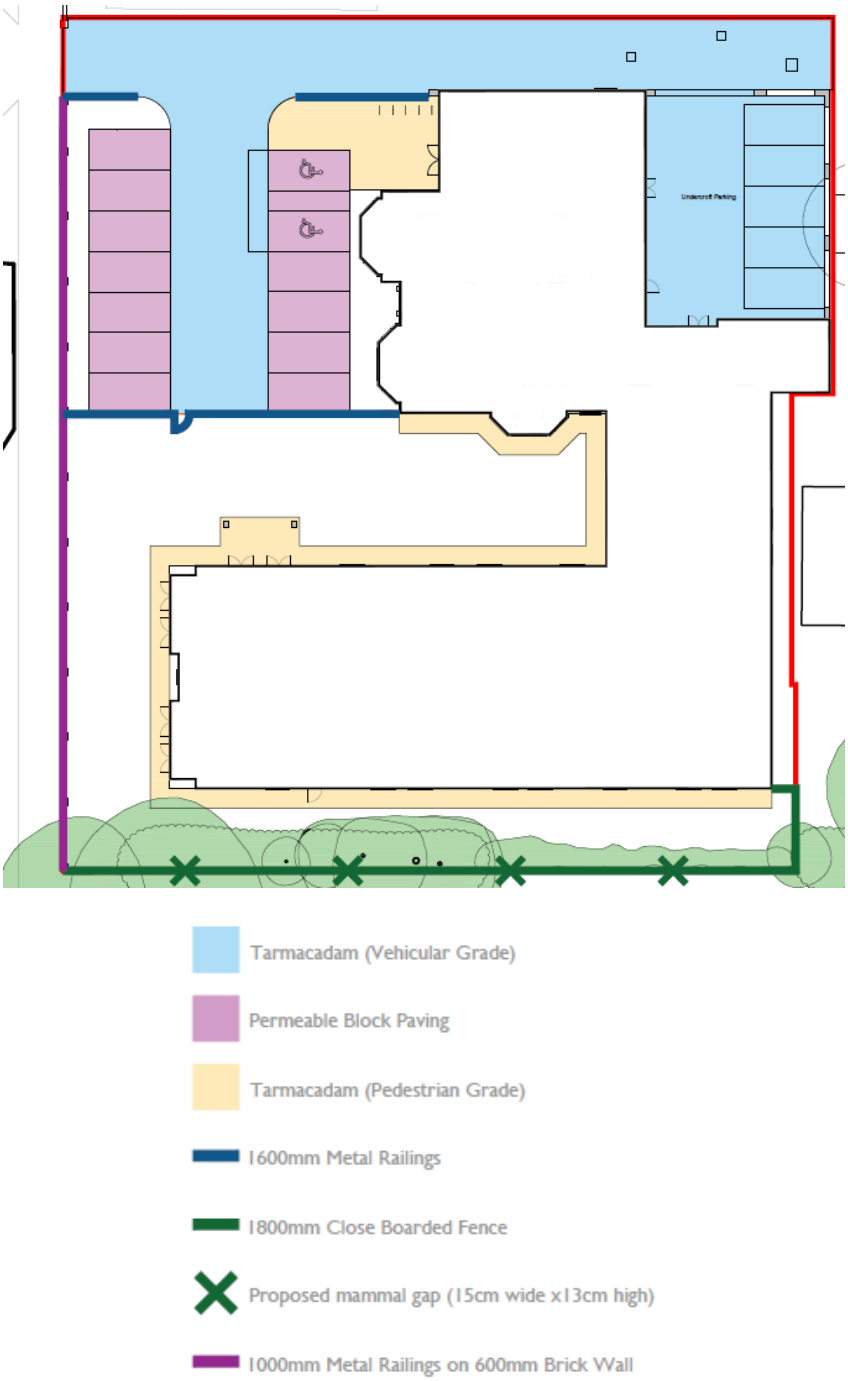
7.9 The proposed soft landscaping to the Liebenrood Road frontage would also be reinforced by a proposed continuous hedgerow spanning the full length of the frontage up until the vehicle access point at the northern end of the frontage. The hedge species proposed is Choisya ternata Sundance (also known as Golden Mexican Orange Blossom) which whilst not a native species is considered to be acceptable by the RBC Natural Environment Officer and Ecology Adviser given its strong wildlife benefits in terms of attracting bees and butterflies as a result of its fragrant flowers and its evergreen foliage providing year-round shelter for birds.

7.10 Elsewhere within the development, the proposed outdoor amenity areas to the central and southern portions of the development and around the edges of the building would be seeded with standard grass turf. Planting beds containing 21 species of shrub and herbaceous plants are also proposed across the development, notably around the edges of the amenity grass areas and providing a soft buffer along the southern edge of the remaining car park spaces in the north part of the site. The RBC Natural Environment Officer and Ecology Adviser consider the turf and planting bed species and locations to be acceptable and appropriate to allow for successful establishments of the soft landscaping.

7.11 The soft landscaping proposals for the development submitted under **part iii.** of condition 3 are considered to be acceptable and would result in a significant greening of the site when compared to the existing situation. The tree, hedge, shrub and amenity grass landscaping within the site would provide a pleasant green environment for future occupiers of the development and the increased landscaping, particularly tree planting would contribute positively to the character and appearance of the site, setting of the retained parts of the non-designated heritage asset former hospital building and surrounding area, notably when viewed from Liebenrood Road. The proposals would accord with Policy CC7 (Design and the Public Realm) which requires that development maintains and enhances the character of the area and Policy EN14 (Trees, Hedges and Woodland) and the Reading Tree Strategy (2021) which seeks to extend the Borough's vegetation and tree canopy coverage. The soft landscaping proposals are also considered to provide welcome benefits for wildlife in accordance with Policy EN12 (Biodiversity and The Green Network) and are appropriate to the site's location directly opposite Prospect Park a significant area of amenity park and woodland and area of biodiversity interest. The increased in vegetation and tree canopy coverage on the site would also present benefits in terms of climate change and addressing the Council's climate change emergency in accordance with Policy CC3 (Adaptation to Climate Change).

7.12 **Part i.** of the condition requires submission and approval of ***finished ground levels, contours, means of enclosure and boundary treatments (including mammal gaps where appropriate), car parking layouts, other vehicle and pedestrian access and circulation areas,*** whilst **Part ii.** of the condition requires submission and approval of ***details of hard surfacing materials, minor artefacts and other ancillary structures***

7.13 The proposed hard landscaped parts of the development are primarily focused on the northern half of the site where the vehicular access from Liebenrood Road and small car park area is proposed to be located. In terms of hard surfacing materials, the proposed hard landscaping plan submitted proposes to retain the existing vehicular grade tarmacadam access road, whilst the car park surface would be formed from block paviours. A narrow pedestrian grade tarmacadam footway is also proposed around the perimeter of the building providing a pedestrian route around the site between the building and surrounding spill out communal amenity areas. Ground level details provided show that ground levels would remain as existing and are generally flat. From a visual and layout perspective the proposed hard surfacing materials are considered to be acceptable. The different materials would help delineate between the different functions of parts of the site and it is considered that hard landscaping areas have been kept to a minimum just providing necessary areas for access, parking and site circulation. The layout of the car park and vehicular access shown reflects that which was approved and considered acceptable by the RBC Transport Officer when outline planning permission was granted.



Proposed hard landscaping plans and key

7.14 With regard to boundary treatment, it is proposed to retain and extend the existing low level 0.6m high brick wall which runs along the site frontage with Liebenrood Road. The current site layout provides separate vehicle access and exit points onto to Liebenrood Road but as approved under the outline planning permission, the proposed development would close and stop up the existing exit point and utilise the existing site entrance for vehicle both accessing and exiting the site. The boundary treatment proposals therefore would extend the low-level brick wall across the stopped up vehicular exit to match the existing wall and it is also proposed to install 1m high black metal railings on top of the brick wall providing a total height of the site frontage boundary of 1.6m. The proposed soft landscaping and tree planting discussed above would be positioned directly behind the brick wall and railings. The proposed front boundary treatment of low-level brick wall and black metal railings is considered appropriate for the site reflecting the scale of surrounding boundary treatments and ensuring the views of the original building are retained from Liebenrood Road and visibility of the proposed soft landscaping.

7.15 Short sections of black metal railings,of 1.6m in height are also proposed internally within the site enclosing the small car park area and securing this from the southern communal

amenity area part of the site and access road to the north. The lower level and visual permeability of the railings in this location is considered to be acceptable and would retain views of the existing building from Liebenrood Road which contributes positively to the character of the surrounding area. A 1.8m high closed-board timber fence is proposed to secure the southern boundary of the site with Jenkins Close which would be set amongst the existing trees and hedgerow to be retained along this boundary. There would be limited visibility of this fencing given the existing dense hedgerow and tree cover along the boundary such that no adverse visual impacts are identified. The RBC Natural Environment Officer is satisfied that the fence can be installed in this location without significant harm to retained vegetation and that measures to secure this would form part of the detailed arboricultural method statement that is required to be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority prior to commencement of the development under condition 14 of the outline planning permission. The submitted plans confirm that the closed-board fencing would incorporate four mammal gaps that would allow small animals to continue to traverse the southern boundary of the site which is welcomed by the RBC Ecology Adviser in terms of supporting on-site biodiversity in accordance with Policy EN12.

7.16 The proposed hard landscaping elements of the development under **parts i and ii** of the condition are considered to be acceptable and comply with Policy CC7 in terms of maintaining and enhancing the character of the surrounding area. Submission and approval of full specifications and samples of materials to be used for all external parts of the development prior to the commencement of the development would be secured under condition 6 of the outline planning permission.

7.17 **Part iv**. of the condition requires submission and approval of a ***landscape management plan, including management responsibilities, timescales for implementation and maintenance programme and schedules for all landscape areas.***

7.18 A landscape management plan has been submitted with the application. This confirms that landscaping works proposed will be completed prior to practical completion of the development by the development contractor, on behalf of the applicant/developer. Following practical completion, all landscaping would be maintained by the care home operator. Any landscaping which fails within the first 12 month period following practical completion is to be replaced on a like-for-like basis by the contractor, and thereafter for a five year period, the replacement landscaping shall align with the approved landscaping proposals would be managed by the care home operator.

7.19 A maintenance programme has also been submitted which includes standard good practice requirements to allow for successful establishment of the proposed landscaping. The landscape management plan and maintenance schedule have been reviewed by the RBC Natural Environment Officer who considers the proposed arrangements to be acceptable and to satisfy the requirements of **part iv** of the reserved matters landscaping condition.

7.20 **Part v.** of the condition requires submission and approval of ***routes and details of proposed and existing functional services above and below ground including foul and surface water drainage, soakaways and SUDs details, power, communications cables and water and gas supply pipelines, including access points, tree pit specifications***

7.21 Plans showing the existing and proposed layout of underground services on the site and serving the development have been submitted and the RBC Natural Environment Officer's advice is there would not be no conflicts with the location of proposed soft landscaping or tree pits and underground services that would be detrimental to planting of the landscaping or its establishment.

7.22 Details of the SuDS strategy for the proposed development have also been submitted. The proposed scheme includes the provision of permeable paving and underground 'attenuation crates' within the hardstanding car park area with run-off discharging to the Thames Water sewer on Liebenrood Road. Drainage calculations submitted with the application have been reviewed by the RBC Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) Officer

who confirms that the SuDS strategy proposed would as a result of the increase in soft landscaping and permeable surfaces on the site, result in an overall reduction in the run-off discharge rate when compared to the existing situation at the site, and that the scheme therefore satisfies the requirements of Policy EN18 (Flooding and Sustainable Drainage Systems).

7.23 In addition to betterment of the run-off discharge rate, Policy EN18 also requires that wherever possible, the SuDS should link into the on-site green infrastructure. In this respect it is proposed the that the tree pits would connect to the SuDS to aid with watering whilst also reducing the amount of surface water leaving the site. The RBC LLFA and Natural Environment Officer welcome integration of the SuDS with the on-site soft landscaping. Full details of how the SuDS would connect to the tree pits has not yet been provided and therefore a condition is recommended and considered reasonable to secure submission and approval of these details prior to commencement of the development.

7.24 The landscaping proposals are considered to be acceptable in respect of the location and function of existing and proposed services on the site and to satisfy the requirements of **part v** of the landscaping reserved matters condition.

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 Landscaping Reserved Matter details submitted for the development are considered to be acceptable and to align with the landscaping principles shown in the outline planning permission. Subject to the conditions set out in the recommendation box at the top of this report, officers advise that the details submitted would satisfy the requirements of condition 3 of the outline planning permission which requires the nature of the landscaping details to be approved for the development.

9.2 The proposed landscaping would complement the proposed use of the site as a care home, assist in preserving the character and appearance of the retained parts of the existing building, a non-designated asset, and would enhance the contribution of the site to the character of the surrounding area in accordance with Policies CC7 (Design and the Public Realm), EN1 (Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment) and EN6 (New Development in a Historic Context). The proposed soft landscaping elements, including the net gain in on-site tree planting would accord with Policy EN14 (Trees, Hedges and Woodlands) and the Reading Tree Strategy (2021) in contributing to extending the Borough's vegetation cover whilst the wildlife friendly nature of the landscaping proposed would provide on-site biodiversity benefits in accordance with Policy EN12 (Biodiversity and The Green Network). The landscaping management and maintenance details submitted would ensure successful establishment of the landscaping whilst the proposed SuDS strategy would reduce the surface water run-off discharge rate at the site and integrate with the proposed soft landscaping elements in accordance with Policy EN18 (Flooding and Drainage).

9.3 The officer recommendation is to approve the landscaping reserved matter details subject to the conditions set out in the recommendation box at the top of this report.

Appendices

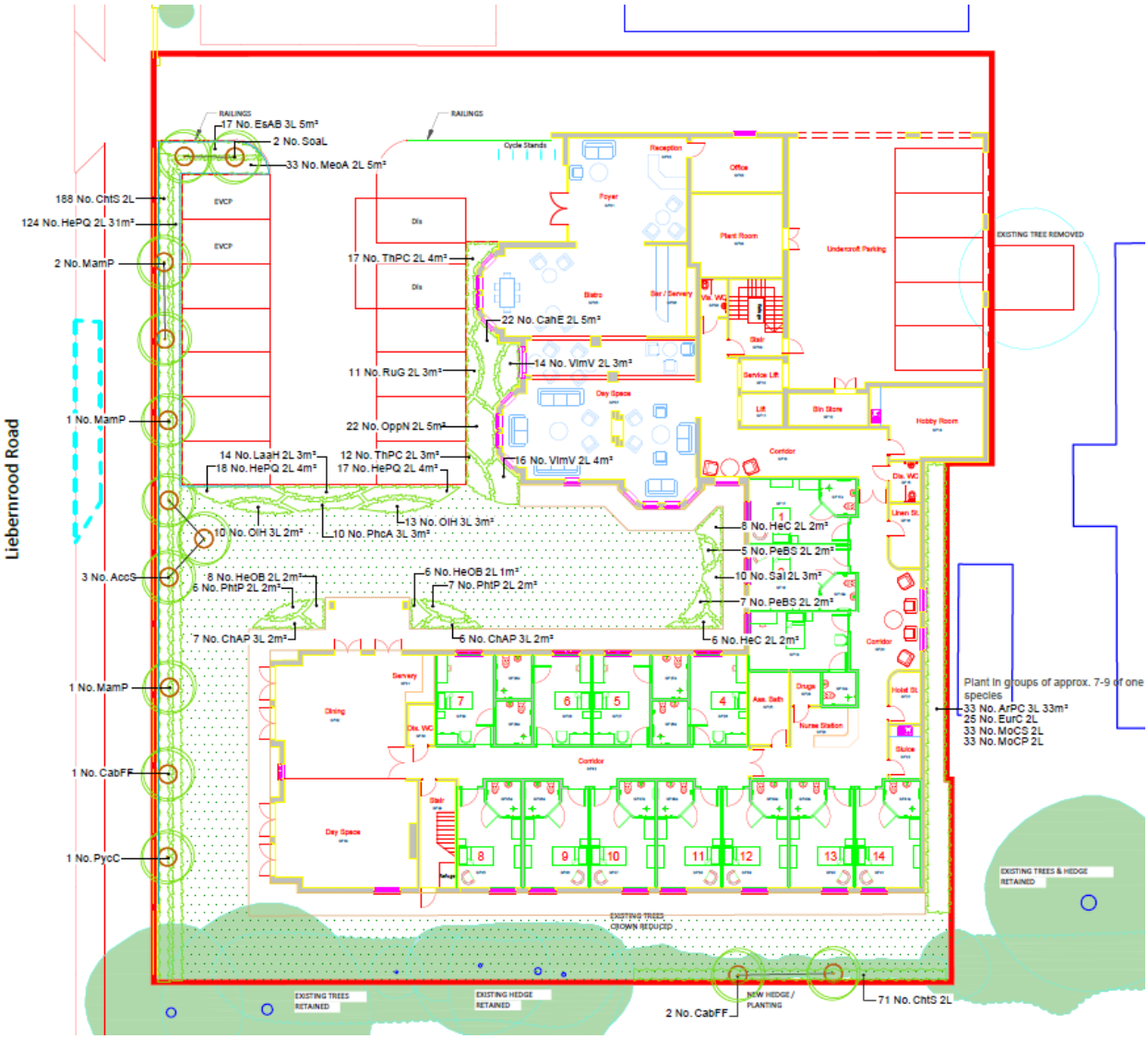
Appendix 1 – June 2022 PAC report for related outline planning permission ref. PL/21/1728/OUT

Appendix 2 – June 2022 PAC update report for related outline planning permission ref. PL/21/1728/OUT

Plans



Proposed site plan (as approved under outline planning permission PL/21/1728



Landscape Key

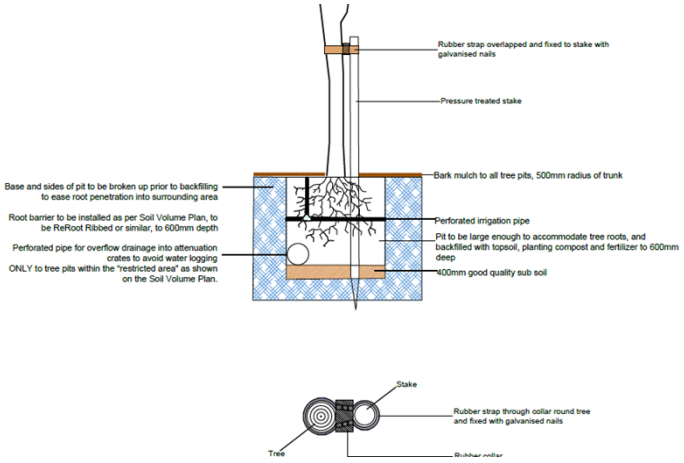
Proposed Tree Planting

Proposed Tree Planting

Proposed Shrub Planting

Proposed Hedge Planting

Proposed Grass Areas



Proposed Soft Landscaping Plan

Landscape Schedule

Trees

Abbreviation	Species	Girth	Specification	Number
AccS	Acer campestre 'Streetwise'	12-14cm	BR :Clear Stem 175-200	3No.
CabFF	Carpinus betulus 'Frans Fontaine'	12-14cm	BR :Clear Stem 175-200	3No.
MamP	Malus moerlandsii 'Profusion'	12-14cm	BR :Clear Stem 175-200	4No.
PycC	Pyrus calleryana 'Chanticleer'	12-14cm	BR :Clear Stem 175-200	1No.
SoaL	Sorbus aria 'Lutescens'	12-14cm	BR	2No.
				Total :13No.

Hedges

Abbreviation	Species	Height	Pot Size	Density	Number	Length
ChtS	Choisya ternata Sundance ®	30-40cm	2L	4/m	259No.	64.4m
					Total :259No.	Total :64.4m

Shrubs

Abbreviation	Species	Height	Pot Size	Density	Number	Area
ChAP	Choisya 'Aztec Pearl'	30-40cm	3L	3/m²	13No.	3.93m²
EsAB	Escallonia 'Apple Blossom'	30-40cm	3L	3/m²	17No.	5.36m²
HeC	Hebe cupressoides	20-30cm	2L	3/m²	14No.	4.09m²
HeOB	Hebe 'Oratio Beauty'	20-30cm	2L	4/m²	14No.	3.27m²
HePQ	Hebe 'Purple Queen'	20-30cm	2L	4/m²	159No.	39.51m²
LaaH	Lavandula angustifolia 'Hidcote'	20-30cm	2L	4/m²	14No.	3.38m²
OlH	Olearia haastii	30-40cm	3L	4/m²	23No.	5.47m²
PeBS	Perovskia 'Blue Spire'	20-30cm	2L	3/m²	12No.	3.58m²
PhcA	Philadelphus coronarius 'Aureus'	30-40cm	3L	3/m²	10No.	3.32m²
PhtP	Phormium tenax 'Purpureum'	30-40cm	2L	3/m²	13No.	4.04m²
Sal	Santolina Incana	20-30cm	2L	3/m²	10No.	3.2m²
VimV	Vinca major 'Variegata'	20-30cm	2L	4/m²	30No.	7.1m²
					Total :329No.	Total :86.25m²

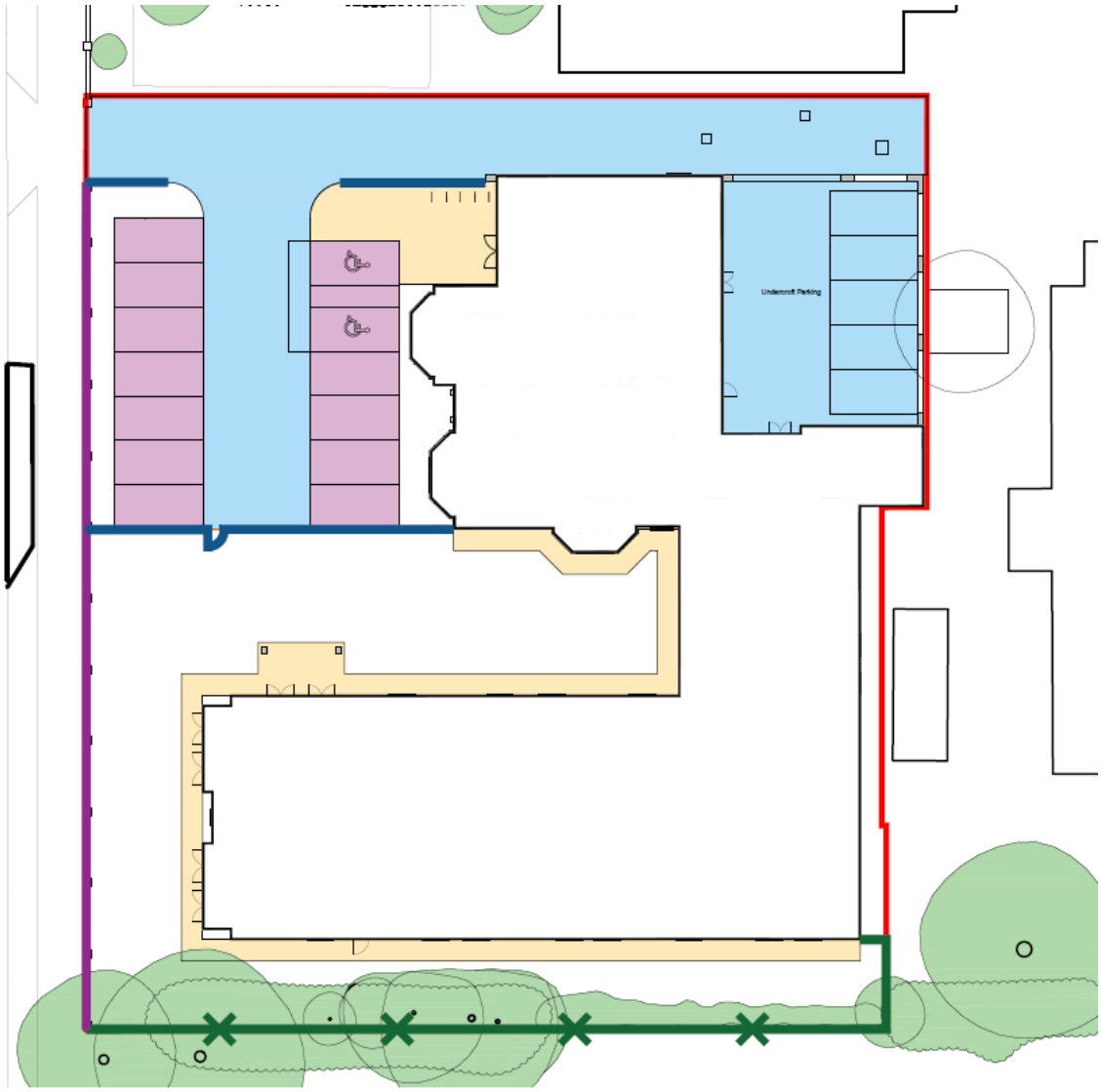
Herbaceous

Abbreviation	Species	Spread	Pot Size	Density	Number	Area
ArPC	Artemisia 'Powis Castle'		3L	4/m²	33No.	8.13m²
CahE	Carex hachijoensis 'Evergold'		2L	4/m²	22No.	5.43m²
EurC	Eupatorium rugosum 'Chocolate'		2L	3/m²	25No.	8.13m²
MeoA	Melissa officinalis 'Aurea'		2L	6/m²	33No.	5.39m²
MoCP	Monarda 'Croftway Pink'	20-30cm	2L	4/m²	33No.	8.13m²
MoCS	Monarda 'Cambridge Scarlet'	15-20cm	2L	4/m²	33No.	8.13m²
OppN	Ophiopogon planiscapus 'Nigrescens'		2L	4/m²	22No.	5.28m²
RuG	Rudbeckia 'Goldsturm'	20-30cm	2L	4/m²	11No.	2.61m²
ThPC	Thymus Pink Chinz	20-30cm	2L	4/m²	29No.	7.02m²
					Total :241No.	Total :58.25m²

Grass Areas

Seed Mix Name	Area
Turf	397.22m²
	Total :397.22m²

Proposed planting specifications



Tarmacadam (Vehicular Grade)

Permeable Block Paving

Tarmacadam (Pedestrian Grade)

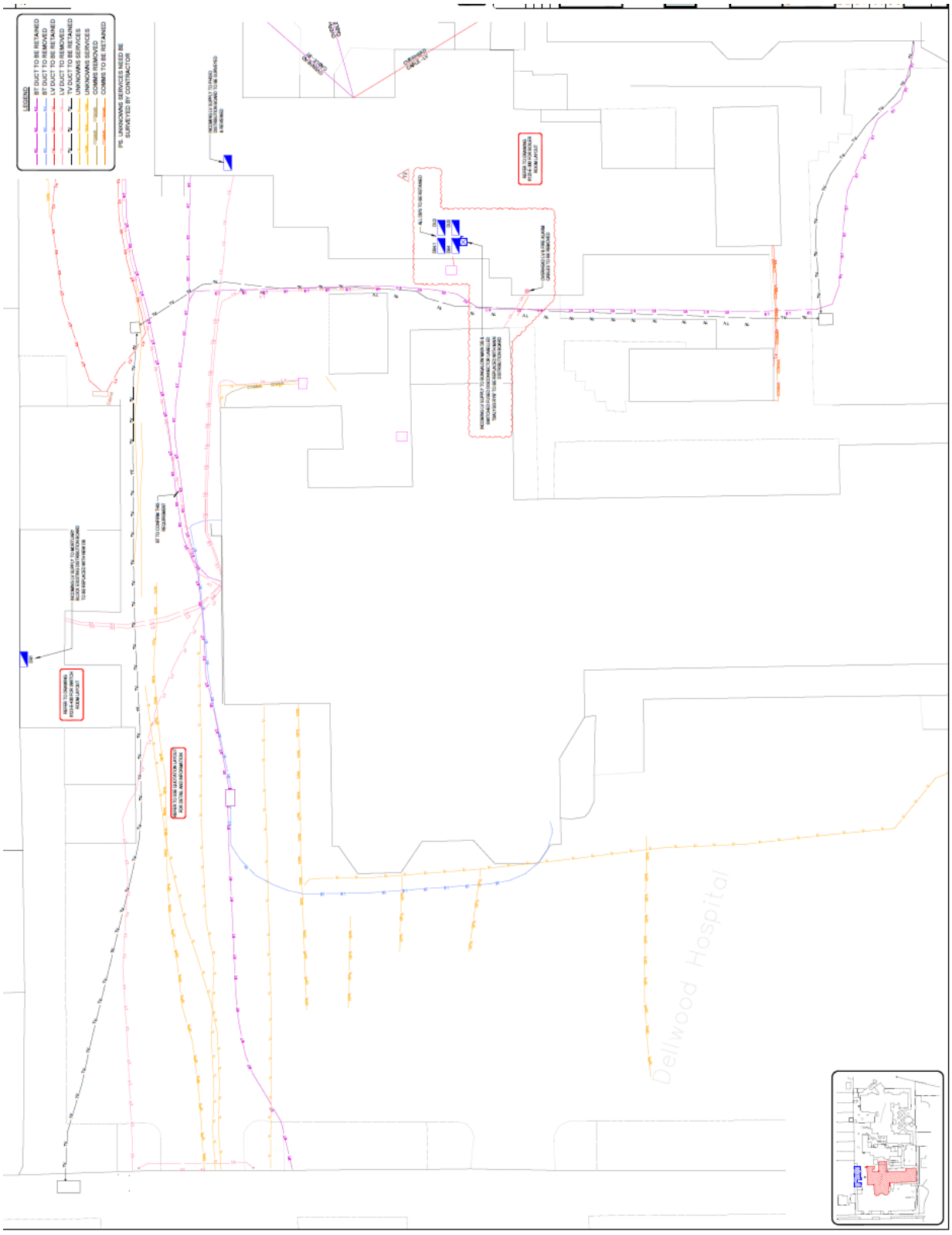
1600mm Metal Railings

1800mm Close Boarded Fence

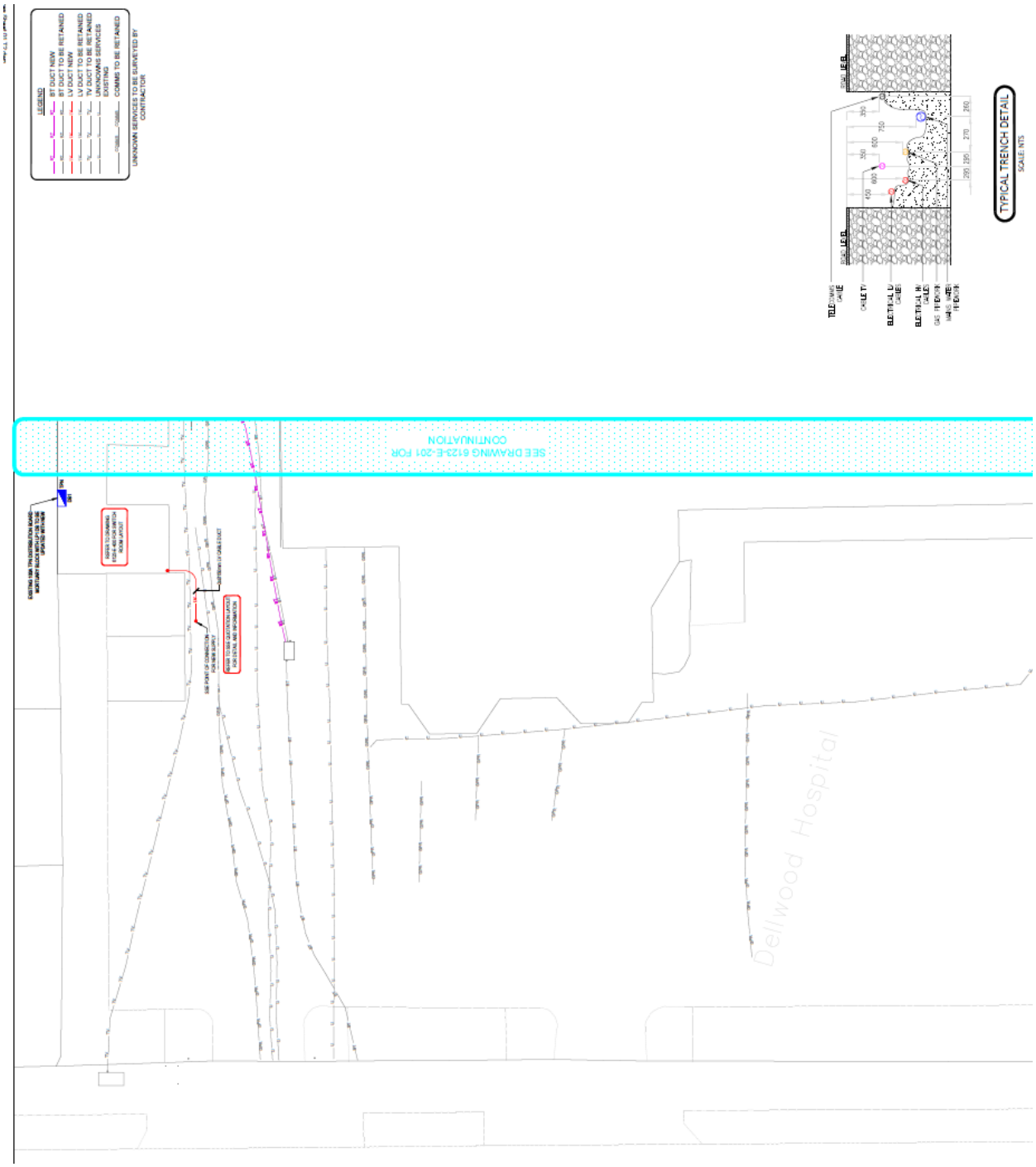
Proposed mammal gap (15cm wide x13cm high)

1000mm Metal Railings on 600mm Brick Wall

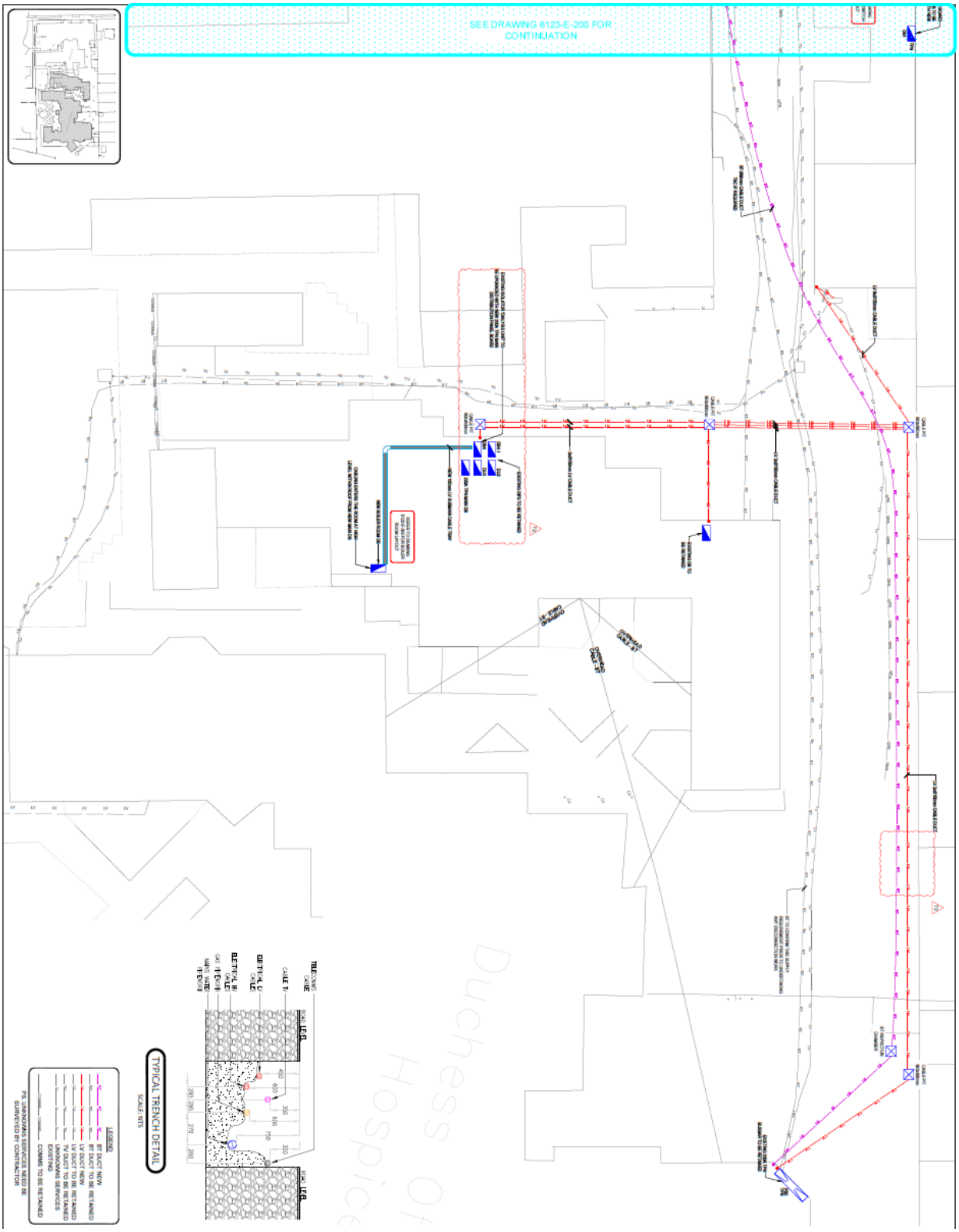
Proposed Hard Landscaping Plan



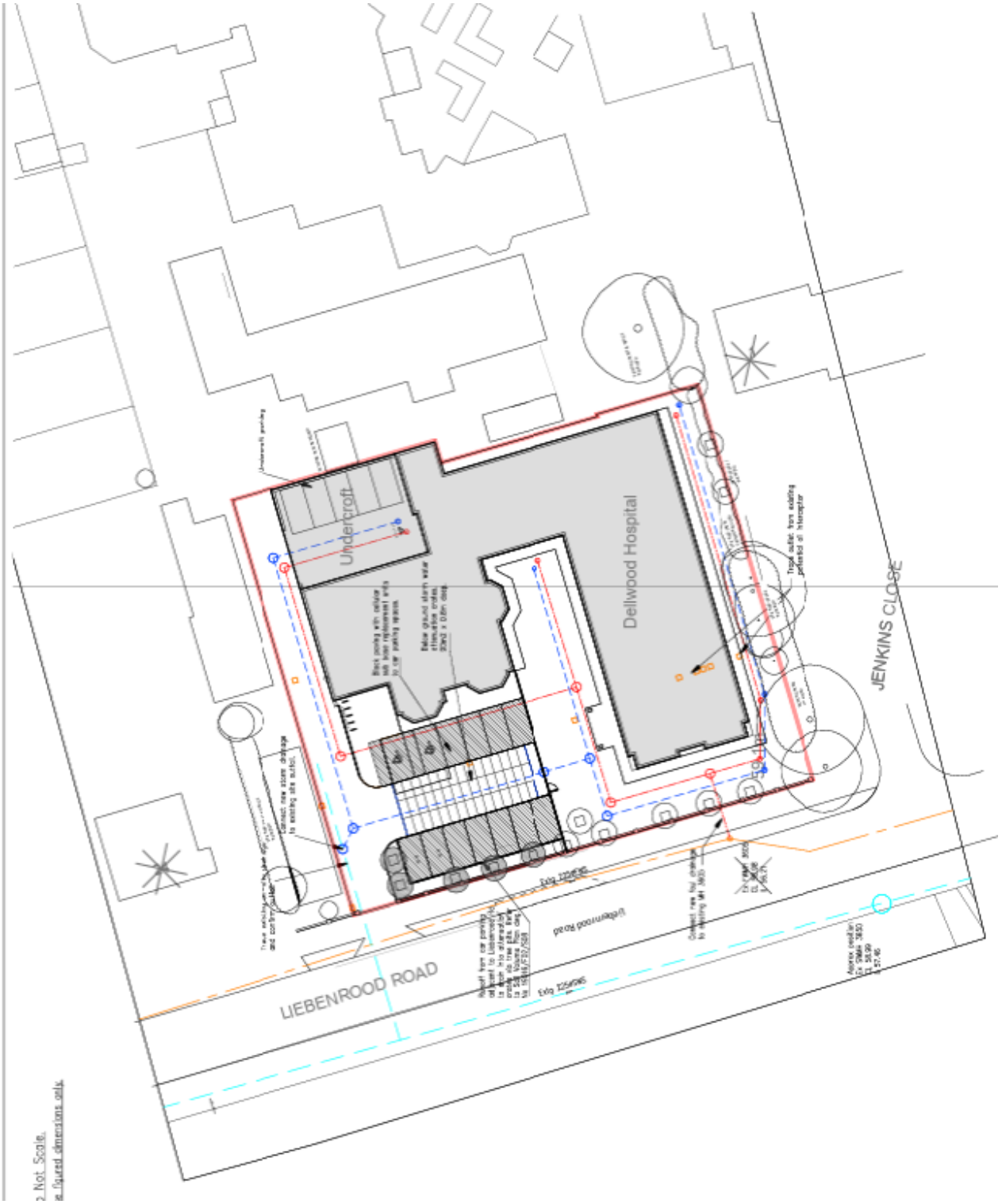
Existing underground services layout



Proposed underground services layout



Proposed underground services layout



Proposed SuDS layout

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Appendix 1

COMMITTEE REPORT

BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECETOR FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES
READING BOROUGH COUNCIL
PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE: 1 June 2022

Ward: Southcote
App No.: 211728/OUT
Address: Dellwood Hospital Liebenrood Road
Proposal: Outline application considering access, appearance, layout and scale for the partial demolition, conversion and extension of existing building to form a care home (C2 use class) and ancillary accommodation, amended access arrangements, car parking and associated works (landscaping reserved for future consideration).
Applicant: Montpelier Estates Ltd
Major Application: - Decision date: 01/07/2022 (Extension of Time)

RECOMMENDATION

Delegate to Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection Services to (i) GRANT full planning permission subject to completion of a S106 legal agreement or (ii) to REFUSE permission should the legal agreement not be completed by 01/07/2022 (unless officers on behalf of the Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection Services agree to a later date for completion of the legal agreement). The legal agreement to secure the following:

- An Employment Skills and Training Plan (construction phase)
- Use of the development as a C2 care home only

<u>And the following conditions to include:</u>

1. Outline Time Limit – Reserved Matters to be submitted with 3 years
2. Outline Time Limit – Development to commence within 3 years or 2 years from date of approval of reserved matters
3. Outline Reserved Matters – Prior to commencement of development reserved matters in respect of landscaping to be submitted and approved
4. Outline Principles – Reserved Matters in respect of landscape to accord with principles shown in approved plans and documents
5. Approved Plans - Development to be carried out in accordance with the approved plans only
6. Pre-Commencement - details of all external materials to be submitted to and approved by the LPA
7. Pre-Commencement - submission and approval of a Construction Method Statement (also including noise and dust measures)
8. Pre-Occupation – provision of vehicle parking spaces
9. Pre-Occupation – provision of vehicular access
10. Pre-Occupation - access closure with reinstatement
11. Pre-Occupation – submission, approval and provision of cycle parking
12. Pre-Occupation – submission and approval of refuse store details
13. Pre-Occupation – submission, approval and implementation of a scheme for 2 electric vehicle charging points
14. Pre-Commencement – submission, approval and implementation of Arboricultural Method Statement

15. Delivery and Servicing Hours (08:00hrs to 19:00hrs only)
16. Plant noise assessment to be submitted and approved prior to installation of any mechanical plant equipment
17. Pre-Occupation - implementation of odour control strategy
18. Reporting of Unexpected Contamination
19. Construction and/demolition standard hours (08:00hrs to 18:00hrs Mondays to Fridays, and 09:00hrs to 13:00hrs on Saturdays, and not at any time on Sundays and Bank or Statutory Holidays)
20. Pre-Occupation - submission, approval and implementation of an external lighting scheme
21. Pre-Occupation - provision of all internal and external communal areas; retention thereafter
22. Pre-Commencement - BREEAM pre-estimator report to achieve a level of Very Good (minimum score of 61.76%)
23. Pre-Occupation - BREEAM completion certificate
24. Pre-Commencement – submission and approval of a scheme of decentralised energy provision
25. Pre-Occupation provision of all lifts and retention thereafter
26. All on-site facilities to operate as ancillary to the C2 Care Home use only
27. Pre-Commencement – submission, approval and implantation of a Natural England Licence for work impacting bats
28. Pre-Occupation submission and approval of a plaque to commemorate the nurse Freda Holland

Informatives to include:

1. Positive and Proactive Statement
2. S106 Legal Agreement
3. CIL (not liable)
4. Terms and conditions
5. Building Regulations
6. Pre-commencement conditions
8. Constriction Nuisance

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The application site relates to the former Dellwood Community Hospital on the east side of Liebenrood Road. To the front of the building is the hospital car park accessed from Liebenrood Road with the current building set back 20m from the road frontage. To the rear (east) of the building, the remainder of the site is The Duchess of Kent Hospice. To the west of the site on the opposite side of Dellwood Road is Prospect Park which is Grade II listed on the English Heritage Register of Historic Parks and Gardens. To the north of the site are residential properties along Liebenrood Road whilst to the south is Jenkins Close, a residential cul de sac.

1.2 The existing Hospital building is a two and a half storey Victorian building built in the late 1890's. The building incorporates a number of different terracotta details, red-faced brickwork, and overlapping geometric patterned clay wall tiles in the two large feature front gable roof projections that face Liebenrood Road. The building's windows comprise large stone cills and string courses and there are two large, two-storey feature bay windows to the front elevation. The building was converted into a Community Hospital and Maternity Home in 1920.

1.3 The hospital was the scene of a catastrophic fire on Easter Sunday in April 1954 where 13 babies sadly died. Nurse Freda Holland was awarded the George Cross for her efforts in saving the lives of some of the babies at the hospital. Understandably the building retains a strong link to the Reading community given its shared history and the fact that a substantial number of people were born there may still live locally.

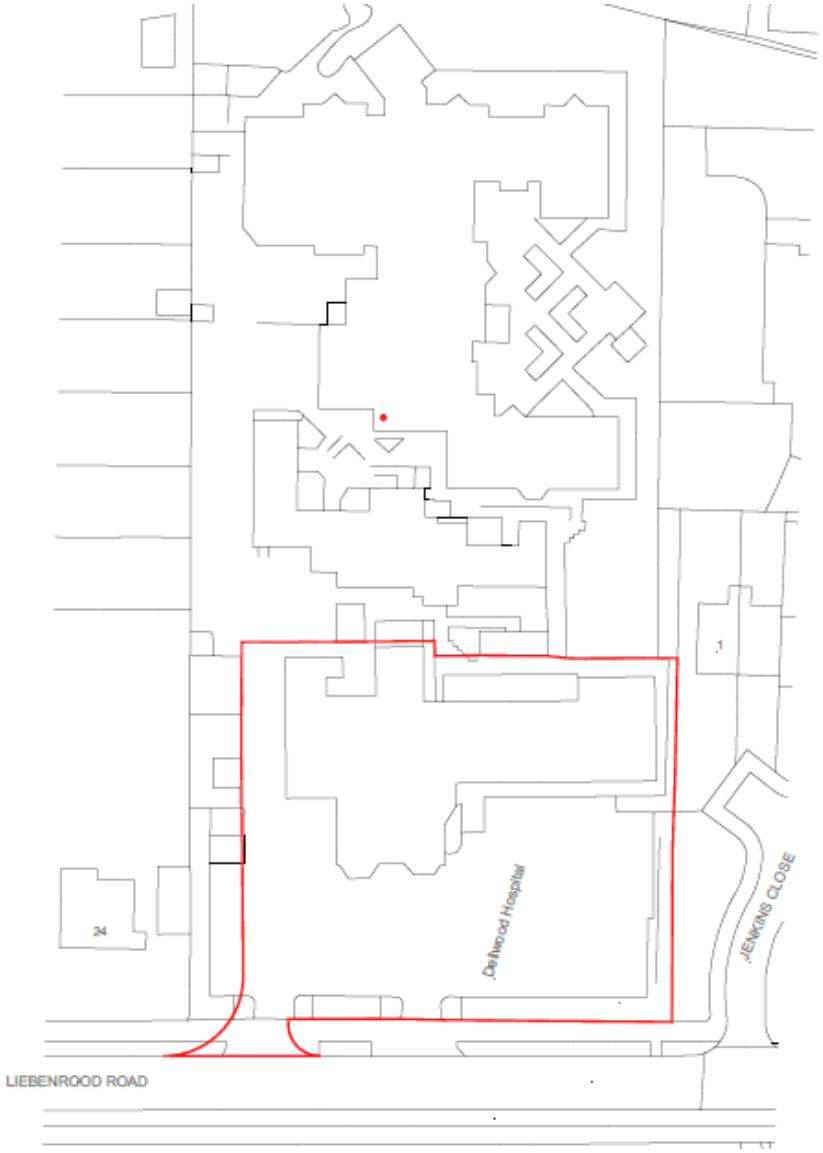
1.4 A large unsympathetic two storey side and single storey side extensions were added to the building in the 1970's and the building continued in a health-related use as a GP surgery for the elderly up until 2005 when it was closed by the NHS Clinical Commissioning Group who declared the site surplus to requirements. The site has been vacant ever since and the service was relocated to nearby Prospect Park Hospital. The Applicant has since acquired the site from NHS Property Services. Whilst the interior of the building has been subject to significant remodelling over the years the exterior of the building remains substantially intact.

1.5 The Heritage Statement submitted with the application identifies that the building was one of the first properties built on Liebenrood Road. The Statement sets out that the building, by way of its external appearance (described above) and historic community association, with long history of use as a local medical/maternity facility and given it is likely a substantial proportion of the local community were born in the building) is considered to be a non-designated heritage asset. Officers and the Council's Conservation and Urban Design Officer agree with this assessment of the building.

1.6 Paragraph 39 of the Historic Environment section of the National Planning Practice Guide (NPPG) sets out that non-designated heritage assets are buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas or landscapes identified by plan-making bodies as having a degree of heritage significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, but which do not meet the criteria for designated heritage assets.

1.7 A previous outline planning application at the site (ref. 210275) for a care home development which proposed demolition of the entirety of the existing building and replacement with a new build development was withdrawn following Officer concerns regarding the complete loss of the non-designated heritage asset.

1.8 The planning application is subject to determination by Planning Applications Committee because it is a Major category development.



Site Location Plan



View of Hospital building from Liebenrood Road



Front Elevation

2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

2.1 The proposal has been submitted as an Outline planning application with the only reserved matter being Landscaping.

2.2 The following matters are therefore required to be considered and subject to determination within this application (as defined in paragraph 006 of The National Planning Practice Guide):

Means of access - the accessibility to and within the site, for vehicles, cycles and pedestrians in terms of the positioning and treatment of access and circulation routes and how these fit into the surrounding access network

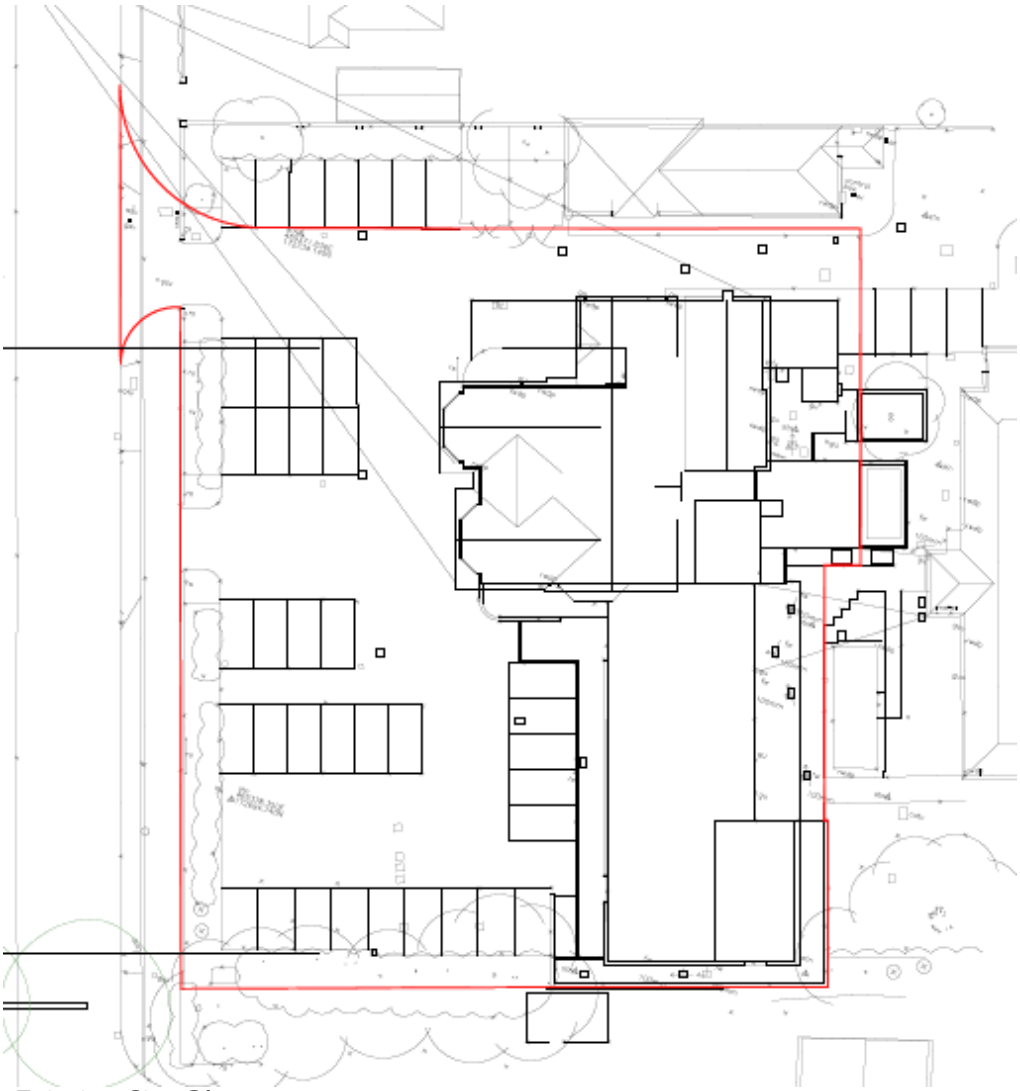
Appearance – the aspects of a building or place within the development which determine the visual impression the building or place makes, including the external built form of the development, its architecture, materials, decoration, lighting, colour and texture.

Layout - the way in which buildings, routes and open spaces within the development are provided, situated and orientated in relation to each other and to buildings and spaces outside the development

Scale - the height, width and length of each building proposed within the development in relation to its surrounding

2.3 The proposal is for partial demolition, conversion and extension of the existing building to form a 56-bed care home (C2 use class) and ancillary accommodation, amended access arrangements, car parking and associated works. The proposed care home would be capable of providing care to residents of all dependency levels, including those with higher dependency, who require nursing care or dementia care within a specialist unit designed to cater for their needs.

2.4 The proposed development incorporates retention of the original Victorian portion of the existing building and demolition of the large 1970's single storey side extension to the southern elevation of the building and two storey side extension to the north elevation. By way of proposed extension, it is proposed to add an 'L-shaped' three storey extension to the southern elevation which would extend 23m towards the southern boundary of the site with Jenkins Close and then project forwards 27m towards Liebenrood Road. A 6.2m wide and 17.5m deep three storey side element is also proposed to the north (side) and east rear elevation which incorporates an under-croft car park are accessed from the existing access way from Liebenrood Road which runs along the northern boundary of the site.



Existing Site Plan



Proposed Site Plan and Indicative Landscaping

2.5 The existing Victorian part of the building to be retained would house the communal facilities and day spaces of the care home with all residents' rooms and care facilities to be located within the proposed new-build extensions. The care home will be arranged over three floors with roof space used for staff facilities and ancillary spaces. In addition to the 56 en-suite bedrooms proposed there would be drug stores, assisted bathing facilities, disabled toilet facilities and communal day spaces on each floor. Communal day spaces are proposed along the western elevation along with terraces at first and second floor to allow views over Prospect Park. Ancillary bar, bistro, and hair/beauty salon facilities are also proposed at ground floor level. The development is proposed to be fully accessible and DDA compliant with lifts to serve all floors and step-free access across the ground floor of the building. Ancillary staff facilities are proposed in a small basement area to the extension.

2.6 In terms of appearance the extensions are proposed to reflect the architectural style and materiality of the Victorian building to be retained with roof gables, use of red brick, hanging tiles, sash windows, chimneys and red tile roofs. Soft landscaping and tree planting are proposed to the site frontage with Liebenrood Road and also to the southern site boundary with Jenkins Close. Access to the site would be retained from Liebenrood Road with a 13-space car park to the front of the site. A further 5 under-croft parking spaces would be located to the rear of the

site accessed via the existing accessway along the north boundary of the site. An enclosed bin store is proposed adjacent to the parking at the back of the building alongside facilities enabling bins to be wheeled out on collection day.

2.7 A central landscaped area is to be created separating the retained building with the new southern wing extension. This would provide a focus for the bistro and to the day spaces allowing movement out from these areas into the garden. Additional areas of landscaping are to be provided to the south of the building adjacent to Jenkins Close including new tree planting to replace those lost through the development. Footpaths are suitable for wheelchairs and walking frames with frequent areas to stop and rest.

2.8 Officers have worked with the Applicant during the course of the current application to secure reductions in the bulk and massing of the proposed extensions. The comparative visuals below show the scheme as originally submitted and as now proposed following submission of amended plans.



Scheme as originally proposed



Scheme as Amended which is under consideration within this report



Proposed Elevations showing reduction in massing following submission of amended plans

3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

3.1 969022 – Residential development for 9 dwellings (social housing) – Granted

3.2 980225 - Replace existing external fire escape and form new internal fire escape stair. Fire precautions work to existing building – Granted

3.3 990236 - Single storey extension to the rear of the building to create a quiet sitting area for patients and relatives – Granted

3.4 111209 – Proposed siting of a new portacabin for 5 years – Granted

3.5 120438 – Single storey front and side extensions – Granted

3.6 191257 – Retain and amend the existing site access to provide an entrance of 8m in width to facilitate vehicular movements both accessing and exiting the site – Granted.

3.7 201275 - Outline application considering access, appearance, layout and scale involving demolition of existing hospital building (Class C2) and erection of a three-storey elderly care home facility (Class C2) including ancillary office / administration facilities, amenity space and associated car parking (landscaping reserved for future consideration) - Withdrawn

4. CONSULTATIONS

4.1 RBC Transport – No objection. Recommend conditions to secure pre-commencement submission and approval of a construction method statement, pre-occupation implementation of proposed access arrangements, vehicular car parking, cycle parking and refuse collection arrangements and submission and approval of a scheme of electric vehicle charging points.

4.2 RBC Environmental Protection – No objection. Recommend conditions to control delivery hours (0800 to 1900), submission and approval of a plant noise assessment, implementation of proposed odour controls, submission and approval of an external lighting scheme, submission and approval of a construction method statement, control of construction hours (0800 to 1800 Monday to Friday and 0900 to 1300 Saturdays and no working on Sundays or Bank Holidays), submission and approval of bin store details to ensure appropriate pest control measures and a condition to monitor and report any unexpected contamination.

4.3 RBC Consultant Ecologist – No objection. Recommend a condition to secure submission and approval of a licence for development works affecting bats from Natural England.

4.4 RBC Natural Environment – No objection. Recommend conditions to secure submission and approval of a final arboricultural method statement and a detailed hard and soft landscaping scheme.

4.5 RBC Conservation and Urban Design – No objection following submission of amended plans.

The current design has been created over the past year and in consultation with the Architects. Initially it was proposed to demolish the main original hospital building. It is considered to be a Non-Designated Heritage Asset and as such its demolition is a material consideration under the NPPF. Now the architects and developer have reassessed their plans for the site and have created a design that incorporates the original hospital building into the new scheme. The current proposal is supported in regard to conservation issues.

4.6 Conservation Area Advisory Committee (CAAC)/Civic Society - No objection. Support the proposals.

Reading CAAC supported the original outline application to partially demolish Dellwood Community Hospital and extend Victorian 'Dellwood', subsequently used as Dellwood Maternity Home, for use as a care home. The comments below relate to the changes made in the amended plans submitted in March 2022.

We note that the reconfiguration presented in the revised plans has enabled an increase in room count from 53 to 56 (55 in withdrawn application).

The new plans are an improvement as they remove what we considered to be the visually weakest element of the original design, the gables and roofs of the southern block.

We liked the 'modern' styling of the originally proposed southern wing of the care home in the original plans which clearly differentiated it from the Victorian Dellwood. The proposed mirroring of Dellwood in the new wing does not work as well. Consideration should be given the arrangement of the windows of the public rooms facing the park and changing them to a larger and more modern format (as in the original plans). A variation in brick colour for this wing (as in the original plans), rather than trying to match the original Dellwood colour, would also enhance the distinction. These two changes would strike a balance between the original and revised plans.

Finally, we are still unclear whether the doorway of old Dellwood is to be glazed or bricked up and the materials to be used.

Reading CAAC support this application which is a considerable improvement on the withdrawn application as it retains Dellwood and has a much improved and less dominating layout on the site. The current proposal has a neutral impact on listed Prospect Park on the other side of Liebenrood Road.

Public consultation

4.7 A planning application site notice was displayed at the site on 3rd November 2021 and the following properties were notified of the application by letter:

- 1 to 22 Dorchester Court
- 2 to 16 Kearsley Road (evens only)
- Flats 1 to 6 no. 18 Liebenrood Road
- 24 to 30 Liebenrood Road (evens only)
- 1 to 12 Jenkins Close
- The Maples Resource Centre Amethyst Lane
- Dellwood Community Hospital 22 Liebenrood Road

4.8 Seven letters of objection have been received raising the following points:

- Concern about loss of on-site car parking spaces and provision of insufficient on-site parking for all staff and visitors resulting in an increase in on-street parking on surrounding roads which are already busy resulting in obstructions and highway safety hazards
- Use of public transport by residents as envisaged in the supporting Transport Statement is not realistic
- Overlooking and loss of privacy to nearby existing surrounding dwellings particularly flats at Dorchester Court
- Lack of appropriate on-site cycle parking and electric vehicle charging points

4.9 The Sue Ryder Duchess of Kent Hospice to the rear of the site have also submitted comments on the application and whilst supportive of the principle of the proposed development they have raised similar parking concerns to those outlined above as well as seeking assurance from the Applicant that agreement for retention of adequate signage for the Hospice to the Lienbenrood Road frontage. *(Officer Comment - new/amended signage provision would be a civil matter between neighbouring landowners and also subject to separate advertisement regulations which may require an application for advertisement consent)*

4.10 The Applicant also carried out their own public consultation exercise prior to submission of the planning application in form of a leaflet drop to existing nearby residential and commercial properties.

5 RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY AND GUIDANCE

5.1 National and Local Policy
National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)
National Planning Policy Framework (2021) sections:
- 2 Achieving Sustainable Development
- 5 Delivering a Sufficient Supply of Homes
- 9 Promoting Sustainable Transport
- 11 Making Effective Use of Land
- 12 Achieving Well Design Places
- 15 Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment
- 16 Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment

5.2 Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)
Policy CC1 (Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development)
Policy CC2 (Sustainable Construction and Design)
Policy CC3 (Adaptation to Climate Change)
Policy CC4 (Decentralised Energy)
Policy CC6 (Accessibility and Intensity of Development)
Policy CC7 (Design and the Public Realm)
Policy CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity)
Policy H6 (Accommodation for Vulnerable People)
Policy EN1 (Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment)
Policy EN4 (Locally Important Heritage Assets)
Policy EN12 (Biodiversity and the Green network)
Policy EN14 (Trees, Hedges and Woodland)
Policy EN15 (Air Quality)
Policy EN16 (Pollution and Water Resources)
Policy EN17 (Noise Generating Equipment)
Policy TR1 (Achieving the Transport Strategy
Policy TR3 (Access, Traffic and Highway-related Matters)
Policy TR4 (Cycle routes and Facilities)
Policy TR5 (Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging)
Policy OU1 (New and Existing Community Facilities)

5.3 Relevant Supplementary Planning Documents
Revised Parking Standards and Design (2011)
Sustainable Design and Construction (2019)
Employment, Skills and Training (2013)
Planning Obligations under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (2015)
Reading Borough Council Tree Strategy (2020)

6 APPRAISAL

The main issues in the consideration of this application are:

- Principle of development
- Layout, Design and Appearance
- Residential Amenity

- Transport Matters
- Natural Environment
- Other Considerations

Principle of the Development

6.1 The proposed development is to provide a care home facility to cater for people of all dependency levels, including those with higher dependency, who require nursing care or dementia care within a specialist unit designed to cater for their needs.

6.2 The proposed redevelopment of the site would align with the general principles of the NPPF which states that the use of previously developed land, should be encouraged where suitable opportunities exist. The application site is not an allocated site for development with the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

6.3 Policy H6 (Accommodation for Vulnerable People) allows development providing specialist accommodation for vulnerable people to address identified needs, including accommodation that enables occupants to live as independently as possible, particularly older people and people with physical disabilities.

6.4 The supporting text to Policy H6 sets out that Reading is facing a range of housing needs over the coming years, and it is vital to recognise some of the more complex needs that should be taken account of specifically in future provision. Whilst some of these derive from an ageing population (for instance, the amount of people in Reading aged over 65 is expected to increase by more than 60% to 203685), they also emerge from the fact that many people with existing needs are in poor or unsuitable accommodation. Groups covered by this section include elderly people, people with learning or physical disabilities, people with mental health problems, young people at risk, children, people with a drug or alcohol problem, ex-offenders, homeless people, asylum seekers and people fleeing domestic violence The provision of the proposed care home facility to cater for people of all dependency levels, including those with higher dependency, who require nursing care or dementia care is therefore considered to meet an identified need.

6.5 Policy H6 goes on to state that development for specialist accommodation for vulnerable people will fulfil the following criteria (officer comments in *italics*):

- Developments will, where possible, locate accommodation close to, or incorporate, relevant community facilities, such as healthcare services, or day care for elderly people; *(the proposals incorporate a number of on-site facilities/services including drug stores, assisted bathing facilities, disabled toilet facilities, communal day spaces on each floor and ancillary bar, bistro, and hair/beauty salon facilities)*

- Where development would result in a loss of general housing, it must meet identified needs in the most up-to-date Housing Strategy and be able to accommodate at least an equivalent number of people; *(the proposals would not result in the loss of housing)*

- Larger developments will include adequate provision for ambulance access; *(Access retained from Liebenrood Road)*

- Development will incorporate areas of green space, which are particularly important for many groups of vulnerable people; *(Communal landscaped courtyard green space areas proposed with the development - this is an*

outline planning application with matters of landscaping reserved for consideration at a later date)

• Developments within residential areas will be designed to respect the residential character of their surroundings; and *(proposed design is considered acceptable in the context of the existing site and surrounding area - see Layout, Design and Appearance section of this report)*

• Where a development requires a new physical link between buildings and where the gaps between buildings form part of the character of a street, the need for a linkage must be clearly demonstrated, and must avoid negative impacts on the character of the street (*(proposed design is considered acceptable in the context of the existing site and surrounding area - see Layout, Design and Appearance section of this report)*

6.6 The proposal seeks to provide residential care home accommodation under the C2 use class (Use for the provision of residential accommodation and care to people in need of care). The supporting information submitted as part of the application provides details about the nature of the use proposed and states that:

- The Applicant, 'Montpelier Estates' was founded in 1996 and specialise in designing and delivering nursing and residential homes, health centres, surgeries, hospitals and independent hospitals. Montpelier are founded on the principle that good quality therapeutic design supports the delivery of high-quality healthcare and leads to more positive outcomes for patients, families and carers. Since inception Montpelier has provided over 500 secure hospital beds, over 1,000 nursing beds and 200 rehabilitation and other specialist service beds.

- The care home would provide specialist care for vulnerable people of all dependency levels, including those with higher dependency, who require nursing care or dementia care within a specialist unit designed to cater for their needs

- The care home will meet a variety of elderly needs and will enable residents to stay for varied lengths of time with 24/7 medical care if required.

- The proposed development would offer access to a range of communal facilities including drug stores, assisted bathing facilities, disabled toilet facilities, communal day spaces on each floor and ancillary bar, bistro, and hair/beauty salon facilities for residents.

- The proposed care home would be fully accessible with level access across the ground floor and lift access to upper floors within.

- The care home would be served by 55-60 full time equivalent staff and 56 residents at capacity, however only 20-22 staff will be on site at any one time.

- Significant outside green space is proposed for residents.

6.7 Based on the above information with regard to the nature of the proposed care home use, how it would operate, and the range and level of care offered, Officers are satisfied that the proposed use would fall within the C2 planning use class. It

is proposed to secure this use in practice by way of a section 106 legal agreement which will secure a range of matters associated with the proposed use:

- Class C2 use only
- Not to permit any of the accommodation to be sold / disposed of / occupied / otherwise used as Class C3 dwellinghouses at any time
- To provide a copy of a written log of current occupiers and associated details within 10 working days of a written request from the Council.

6.8 The terms of the s106 agreement would ensure that the development could only operate as a Class C2 residential care home use only. It is considered pertinent to specify that the development shall not be occupied/sold/disposed of or otherwise used as Class C3 dwellinghouses at any time given the subtle differences between the two use classes and differing requirements of a Class C3 use. Notably the nature of accommodation proposed would not be considered to offer a standard of residential amenity suitable for C3 use, whilst a C3 use would also be subject to requirements to provide affordable housing (either on-site or by way of a financial contribution towards off-site provision of affordable housing elsewhere within the Borough) unlike the proposed C2 use. It should be noted that the application seeks permission for C2 use only and not C2A (Secure Residential Institutions). Provision of a C2A secure institution would likely require additional external and internal works to provide a secure facility which would be unlikely to be acceptable given the heritage sensitivities of the building and site. Therefore, a restriction of the development to C2 use only in considered to be further justified in this respect.

6.9 With the above elements secured via legal agreement, it is considered that the nature of the use will be suitably managed. It is noted that there is no prescribed requirement relating to the age of future occupiers. Officers consider that there is no overriding planning policy requirement to restrict the age of occupiers in this instance. More specifically, the February 2016 Strategic Housing Market Assessment demonstrates that housing need exists for specialist accommodation across all age groups. Moreover, it is also considered that officers are applying due regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010 by not restricting the age of occupiers in this instance.

6.10 The proposed development includes a range of on-site facilities including restaurant, laundry, and staff offices dedicated to residents and staff and as such they are ancillary to the care home use. As set out in Policy H6 such ancillary facilities to accommodation for vulnerable people are not required to fulfil the location tests in national and local planning policy. A condition is recommended to ensure the on-site facilities included within the development remain ancillary to the proposed C2 care home use and these facilities cannot operate as independent standalone businesses. This is to mitigate against any potential increase in vehicle movements and disturbance to neighbour amenity if these facilities began to operate independently.

6.11 Also of relevance is Policy OU1 (Additional and Existing Community Facilities) states that proposals for new, extended or improved community facilities will be acceptable, particularly where this will involve the co-location of facilities on a single site. The application site was most recently in use as a doctor's surgery but has been vacant since 2005. The proposals would replace the previous vacant community use with a new community use and would be located directly adjacent to an existing health care use (Hospice) which is considered to accord with Policy OU1.

6.12 Subject to the terms of the section 106 agreement referred to above the principle of a care home on the site is considered acceptable and would accord with Policies H6 and OU1.

6.13 The site has historically been in healthcare related uses, but the proposals have the potential to intensify this use within what is a predominantly residential area. Whilst the principle of the continued healthcare use is considered to be acceptable the potential intensification of this use proposed by the care home needs to be considered. The impact in terms of additional built form and users of the site on the surrounding area will be covered in the following sections of this report.

Layout, Design and Appearance

6.14 Policy CC7 (Design and the Public Realm) states that all development must be of high design quality that maintains the character and appearance of the area within which it is located including layout, landscape, density, scale and architectural detail and materials.

6.15 As set out in the Introduction section of this report the existing building is considered, by way of its appearance and historic association with the community, to be a non-designated heritage asset. Paragraph 203 of the NPPF sets out that the effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

6.16 Policy EN1 (Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment) states that development proposals will be expected to protect and where possible enhance the significance of heritage assets and their settings. Policy EN4 (Locally Important Heritage Assets) states that development proposals that affect locally important heritage assets will demonstrate that development conserves architectural, archaeological or historical significance which may include the appearance, character and setting of the asset. Planning permission may be granted in cases where a proposal could result in harm to or loss of a locally important heritage asset only where it can be demonstrated that the benefits of the development significantly outweigh the asset's significance.

6.17 Following discussions with Officers in relation to the previously withdrawn application for a care home on the site (ref. 201275) the proposed development seeks to retain the original historic portion of the Victorian building. The original portion of the building displays external features which contribute to the building's pleasant aesthetic, grandeur and historic significance including roof gables, use of red brick, hanging tile sash windows, projecting bays, chimneys and red tile roofs. The proposed demolition of the modern unsympathetic extensions, which are not fit for purpose for continued health care use of the site or for the proposed care home use, is not considered harmful to the building's heritage significance. These extensions are not considered to have architectural merit and ultimately detract from the merit of the appearance and character of the original portion of the building.

6.18 The heritage statement submitted with the application sets out that the original retained portion of the building would be subject to restoration works as part of the proposed development to ensure it is fit for purpose for the proposed use. This would include, whilst considered to be in good order generally, replacement roof

tiles, lead flashings, windows, doors and other joinery where required. Reinstatement of matching brickwork and pointing following removal of modern extensions is also proposed as well as retention and restoration (where required) or external cast iron rainwater goods and waste pipes. Conditions are recommended to secure detail of this external restoration/reinstatement works.

6.19 The heritage statement also evidences that the building is in a poor condition internally with lack of ventilation meaning damp has taken effect and original staircases, fireplaces and chimney breasts having been removed previously whilst the addition of previous modern extensions, electrical and other services has further eroded elements of the building's original fabric. As such it is proposed to strip out the internals of the building back to the brick structure and provide fit for purposes accommodation to adhere to current building regulation and care standards.

6.20 Officers welcome retention and restoration of the original portion of the non-designated heritage asset which is considered to contribute positively to the character and visual amenity of the surrounding area. Key to the assessment of the application is also the form of the proposed extensions to the building and their impact on the significance of the non-designated heritage asset but also the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

6.21 The proposed L shaped extension to southern flank elevation of the building would reflect the footprint of the existing single storey 1970's side extension to be demolished. Notably the extension would not adjoin the original south elevation of the building but rather would connect to the host building via the rear part of the proposed new extensions. Whilst the extension is proposed to be of greater massing, at three storeys, its height would remain below that of the host original building, which whilst two storey contains significantly greater floor to ceiling heights than modern buildings. Whilst this extension is significant and creates a new wing of accommodation that is larger than the original part of the building to be retained, the application site itself is large with much of the space currently taken up by the frontage car park visible from Liebenrood Road and with the original part of the building to be retained sited in the north-east corner of the site only. Despite the significant scale of the proposed southern flank extension, it would be sited such that there would be a 5m separation to the southern flank boundary with Jenkins Close and similarly despite the significant forward projection of the extension a 6.5m set back from Liebenrood Road would be provided.

6.22 The L shaped layout of the extension would also provide relief to the host building to be retained in terms of its setting through provision of a 9m wide area of soft landscaping between the north flank elevation of the new wing and southern flank elevation of the existing building.

6.23 The three-storey element of the extension to the north and rear elevation of the building would similarly reflect the general layout of the existing extensions to the building to be removed which are between three and single storey in scale. Again, whilst the proposed extension would be of greater massing this would retain a subservient relationship to the core original part of the building to be retained.

6.24 In design terms the proposed extensions have been designed to reflect the architectural style and materiality of the original Victorian element of the building to be retained. The proposals include gable pitched roofs, use of red brick and tile hanging sash windows, red tile roofs and chimneys which are considered to

integrate well with the existing building and to present a building of high-quality design when viewed from the surrounding area.

6.25 Comments from the Conservation Area Advisory Committee have queried what will happen to the original front door of the building. The Applicant has confirmed that whilst the new main entrance to the building would be to the front of the northern extension to the building the original front door would be retained and would not be bricked up or replaced. Comments in respect of the use of contrasting colour brickwork to the original building are noted and exact specifications would be secured by way of condition.

6.26 In overall design terms, it is considered that the proposed extensions would sit comfortably within the parameters of the site and allow for provision of significant areas of soft landscaping, tree planting and green space within the development. Whilst soft landscaping details are a reserved matter for consideration at a later date the site in its current form is entirely covered in hardstanding and the provision of soft landscaping and tree planting on the site as indicated in principle on the proposed plans, particularly to the Liebenrood Road street scene is a benefit of the development and an enhancement to the character of the surrounding area. Car parking currently spans the full width of the area to the front of the existing building and site frontage and the proposed reduction in spaces and addition of soft landscaping and tree planting is considered to be a significant enhancement to the Liebenrood Road street-scene. Whilst the proposed extensions are a significant increase in massing compared to the existing situation it is considered that they retain a suitable level of subservience to the original building.

6.27 It is considered that the continued historic healthcare related use of the site, retention of the original part of the Victorian building, subservient form of the extensions, together with the proposed sympathetic and high-quality design and increase in on-site landscaping and tree planting would ensure the development preserves the significance of the host non-designated heritage asset and would maintain and enhance the character of the surrounding area. A condition is recommended to secure provision of a plaque on the building in memory of nurse Freda Holland's heroic actions following the fire at the former hospital in 1954.

6.28 The proposals are not considered to materially impact on the setting of the Grade II listed Prospect Park located on the opposite side of Liebenrood Road. Notably the grade II listed Mansion House located centrally within the park is located over 500m from the application site such that there is considered to be no direct impact on the setting of this building. There are developments of a variety of styles found around the extensive perimeter of the park. There would only be direct visibility of the proposed development from the eastern boundary of the park along Liebenrood Road where the proposed extensions would respect the general building line to this part of the street and would not project any closer to the park or road frontage. The proposals are considered to present a design of suitable scale and design quality which together with the reduction in frontage car parking and scope to enhance the soft landscaping and tree planting provision on the site, it is considered that the proposals would not materially impact upon the setting of the park.

6.29 The proposals are considered to accord with Policies CC7, EN1 and EN4.

Residential Amenity

6.30 Policy CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity) seeks that development proposals should safeguard the amenity of both existing and future occupiers and Policy EN16 (Pollution and Water Resources) seeks that development will only be permitted where it would not be damaging to the environment and sensitive receptors in terms of pollution. Policy EN15 (Air Quality) seeks to protect from the impacts of poor air quality.

Future Occupiers

6.31 For future occupiers of the proposed units, it is considered that a high quality of accommodation will be provided. Each of the proposed rooms offers en-suite accommodation and all units would be provided with good levels of outlook, daylighting and privacy. The rooms sizes proposed are slightly smaller than the average studio flat and whilst the Local Planning Authority does not have adopted room sizes for care home accommodation, residents would benefit from a wide range of on-site communal facilities and open space which would be a significant benefit and contribute to the overall quality of accommodation on offer. The extensive landscaped grounds and communal garden areas are also considered to be a significant benefit of the quality of accommodation on offer. It is considered reasonable to include a condition detailing that all communal areas will be ready for use at the time of first occupation and thereafter retained.

Surrounding Occupiers

6.32 The closest residential occupiers to the proposed development are no. 1 Jenkins Close to the south and no. 24 Liebenrood Road to the north. The southern flank wall of the proposed extension would be positioned 5.5m from the boundary with the front driveway of no.1 Jenkins Close and 9m from dwelling. Officers consider this separation would be sufficient to prevent any undue overbearing impact of the proposed extension whilst additional tree planting is also indicated along this boundary (albeit landscaping is a reserved matter). Furthermore, the proposed extension would be located to the front of the adjacent dwelling such that any relationship between facing care home bedroom windows on the southern flank elevation of the extension would be at an angle and this together with the separation distance is not considered to result in a relationship where any undue overlooking or loss of privacy would occur.

6.33 The north flank elevation of the extension would be set 12m from the side boundary with the rear garden of no. 24 Liebenrood Road. Whilst this elevation again incorporates windows to care home bedrooms, the separation distance is considered sufficient to prevent any undue overbearing impact from the extension and given the direct relationship between any windows would be with the rearmost part of the adjacent garden no undue overlooking or loss of privacy is considered to result.

6.34 The range of facilities on offer to residents of the care home is such that there would be regular deliveries to the development. Environmental Protection Officers have raised concern that this may result in noise disturbance to existing and future residential occupiers and therefore delivery hours are recommended to be controlled via condition to take place only between 0800-1900 only.

6.35 On-site kitchen facilities would also be provided. An odour assessment in relation to kitchen activities and the proposed ventilation and extraction measures has been submitted as part of the application and Environmental Protection Officers have confirmed that the measures proposed would be sufficient to prevent any

undue kitchen odours adversely affecting surrounding occupiers, implementation of which would be secured by condition. A condition is also proposed ensure that any additional extraction or other plant equipment cannot be installed until a noise assessment has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority, to prevent any harmful noise impact to surrounding occupiers.

6.36 Environmental Protection Officers have also raised concern about the impacts of external lighting associated with the proposed development and impact on surrounding occupiers. As such a condition is recommended to secure submission and approval of an external lighting scheme.

6.37 An internal bin store for the proposed development is proposed at ground floor level within the under-croft car park access from the accessway along the north boundary of the site from Liebenrood Road. A condition is recommended to require further details of the proposed bin storage area to be submitted to ensure this is designed and managed in a way that prevents vermin and pests accessing the bins.

6.38 Conditions are also recommended to secure submission and approval of a construction method statement to ensure existing occupiers are not adversely impact upon by construction noise and dust, while further conditions are proposed to control construction hours (08:00hrs to 18:00hrs Mondays to Fridays, and 09:00hrs to 13:00hrs on Saturdays, and not at any time on Sundays and Bank or Statutory Holidays) and to prevent burning of construction waste on site.

6.39 A condition to secure a construction method statement for control of construction noise and dust is also recommended to ensure implementation of the proposed development does not adversely impact on existing surrounding occupiers. Given the historic medical use of the site a condition is also proposed for monitoring and reporting of any contamination identified during the construction process and provision submission and approval of a contamination remediation scheme if required.

6.40 Subject to the recommended conditions the proposals are considered to accord with Policies EN15, EN16 and CC8.

Transport Matters

6.41 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 relates matters relating to development.

6.42 Liebenrood Road is a classified Road and is a main transport corridor. The site is located within Zone 3, secondary Core Area, but close to the borders of zone 2 of the Council's adopted Parking Standards and Design SPD. Typically, these areas are within 400m of a Reading Buses high frequency 'Premier Route', which provides high quality bus routes to and from Reading town centre and other local centre facilities.

6.43 Planning permission ref. 191257 was approved for a new shared access to the site for vehicles and pedestrians which is also to be shared with the hospice facilities to the rear. The current proposals seek to utilise this revised access for the proposed car home development replacing the existing separate entrance and exit points to the site. The proposed access is already subject to a separate planning permission and is considered to be acceptable for the proposed care home use. A condition is

recommended to secure full implementation of the access prior to occupation of the care home. The accessway to the Hospice to the rear along the northern boundary of the site would be retained as existing.

6.44 In accordance with the Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD the required parking standard for C2 development is 1 car parking space per full time equivalent staff and 1 per 4 residents. The existing site contains 34 parking spaces to the site frontage on Liebenrood Road. The proposed development would result in the overall reduction of parking with 18 spaces proposed which is a net loss of 15 spaces. A Transport Statement has been submitted in support of the application which sets out that it is expected that 20-22 staff would be on site at the busiest times during the morning shift and based on a 56-room proposal, 13 spaces would be required for the residents. 20 spaces would be required for 20 full time staff. The submitted Transport Statement sets out that residents would not be provided with car parking at the development due to the level of care required whilst many of the staff would work on a part time basis. A trip rate assessment has also been carried out and submitted for the proposed development based on a typical care home operation which estimates a demand for 14 spaces (including parking for visitors). RBC Transport Officers are satisfied that the trip rate assessment has been carried out to an appropriate standard and that the 18-spaces proposed are sufficient to accommodate the needs of the care home in this instance. Transport Officers have confirmed that the dimensions and layout of the parking spaces are acceptable and provision of all the spaces prior to occupation of the care home would be secured by way of condition.

6.45 In accordance with Policy TR5 the proposed development would incorporate two electric vehicle charging points. Full detail and implementation of which would be secured by way of condition.

6.46 In terms of cycle parking facilities the proposed development is required to provide one space per three full time equivalent staff members (7 spaces based upon a maximum of 20 staff on site at busiest times). Two covered and secure cycle store areas are proposed within the development at ground floor level to accommodate 10 cycle spaces which exceeds the Council standards and is considered acceptable. Full details of the layout of the cycle spaces would be secured by way of planning

6.47 Tracking diagrams have been submitted with the plans which indicate that servicing and refuse collection can be undertaken safely within the site with sufficient space for vehicles to turn.

6.48 A condition is recommended to secure the submission of a construction method statement prior to commencement of development to ensure the construction is undertaken in a manner which does not result in undue disturbance upon the local transport network.

6.49 Subject to the recommended conditions the proposals are considered to accord with Policies TR1, TR3 and TR5.

Natural Environment

6.50 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. Policy EN14 (Trees, Hedges and Woodland) states that individual trees,

groups of trees, hedges and woodlands will be protected from damage or removal where they are of importance, and Reading's vegetation cover will be extended. Policy CC7 (Design and the Public Realm) sets out that good design should incorporate appropriate landscaping.

Trees and Landscaping

6.51 The existing site whilst largely surfaced in landscaping does contain some existing trees and hedgerow located around the site boundary. There are eighteen trees/hedgerows on or directly adjacent to the site boundary and one notable group of shrubs. None of the trees are not subject of TPO's and nor is the site located within a Conservation Area, however the site is located within an area of strong green character including Prospect Park.

6.52 A Tree Survey and Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) has been submitted with the application. This identifies that the highest quality trees are two limes located just outside the southern site boundary on the grassed verge of Jenkins Close. The Tree Survey classifies these as category 'B' trees which are trees of moderate quality. These are considered to be a significant feature within the wider Liebenrood Road landscape in keeping with the limes on the eastern boundary of Prospect Park and are to be retained as part of the proposed development. The RBC Natural Environment Officer is satisfied that he submitted Arboricultural Method Statement demonstrates suitable mitigation to ensure these trees would be protected during construction of the proposed development.

6.53 All other trees on the site are classified as C category trees (trees of low quality) or U category trees (trees of a quality that is not suitable for retention). Five trees, a hedgerow and a group of shrubs are proposed to be removed from the site to accommodate the proposed development. The RBC Natural Environment Officer notes that whilst these features are not considered to have arboricultural value in their own right they do as a collective add to the positive canopy coverage and green character of the area. However, it is noted that there is significant potential within the site to increase the level of tree planting and green coverage over and above the existing situation.

6.54 Whilst this is an outline planning application and landscaping is a reserved matter for consideration at a later date, indicative landscaping proposals have been provided which indicate new tree planting to the Liebenrood Road frontage and to the southern boundary with Jenkins Close. Officers are content that there is sufficient scope to provide an acceptable degree of landscaping under the reserved matter and that based on the indicative details submitted would be able to achieve an enhancement in terms of tree canopy coverage, particularly to the Liebenrood Road frontage.

6.55 Subject to a condition to secure a final Arboricultural Method Statement and securing landscaping details a reserved matters the proposals are considered to accord with Policies EN14 and CC7.

Ecology

6.56 The bat survey report submitted with the application identifies that the building hosts two bat roosts (a common pipistrelle day roost and a brown long eared day roost). It is therefore very likely that the proposed works would disturb roosting bats. The report contains a number of mitigation measures including good practice measures for working around bats and provision of four bat boxes integrated int the

new development and one tree mounted bat box. Given the development has the potential to impact on bats a licence for development works affecting bats will need to be obtained from Natural England prior to commencement of any works which would further detail mitigation measures in line with the provisions of the Habitat Regulations. Therefore, the RBC Ecological Adviser recommends that a condition is applied to secure submission and approval of a licence from Natural England prior to commence me to works on site. On this basis the proposals are considered to accord with Policy EN12.

Other Considerations

Sustainability

6.57 Policy CC2 (Sustainable Design and Construction) states that all major non-residential development (non C3 uses) are required to meet a BREEAM Excellent standard where possible. Policy CC3 (Adaptation to Climate Change) states that all new development should be designed to incorporate measures to adapt to climate change. Policy CC4 (Decentralised Energy) seeks that major category development should consider the inclusion of decentralised energy provision or connection to existing decentralised energy provision where this is present in the vicinity of an application site.

6.58 A Sustainability Statement has been submitted with the application. This sets out that the development is projected to achieve a BREEAM Very Good Standard (score of 61.79%). Whilst this is below the Excellent Standard (score of 70%) sought by Policy CC2 the report sets out that this is principally as a result of the retention of the original Victorian element of the building) which due to its age and structure means the development falls down on a number of scoring elements of BREEAM such as thermal efficiency which would require significant intervention to original building fabric to overcome. Officers have worked with the Applicant to secure a scheme which retains the original part of the building which as set out earlier in this report is considered to be a non-designated heritage asset. Any further intrusion or removal of original fabric would likely be harmful to the buildings historic character and heritage significance. The development would also still score well in BREEAM terms being well above the minimum score for Very Good Standard (55%). In overall terms Officers consider that the development strikes the appropriate balance between sustainability of design construction and preservation of a heritage asset.

6.59 The Sustainability Statement also sets out that the development would include a number of measures to adapt to climate change including energy efficient lighting, building materials, maximising access to daylight to all rooms which are well served by natural light and natural ventilation as well as provision of landscaped grounds, tree planting and a scheme of Sustainable Drainage (SuDS) which would align with the requirements of Policy CC3 in providing a development which considers adaptation to climate change.

6.60 The Sustainability Statement also considers provision of decentralised energy provision within the proposed development. This notes that there is not an existing decentralised source nearby that the development can connect to but sets out that the development would have the capability to provide an on-site decentralised energy provision in the form of photovoltaic panels, combined heat and power or air source heat pumps. A condition is recommend to secure full details of a scheme of decentralised energy provision.

6.61 The development is proposed to be fully accessible and disabled access compliant with lifts to serve all floors and step free access across the ground floor of the building.

Community Infrastructure Levy

6.62 The Council's Community Infrastructure (CIL) charging schedule sets out that care homes are not liable for CIL.

Employment, Skills and Training

6.63 In accordance Policy CC9 (Securing Infrastructure) and the Council's Employment, Skills and Training Supplementary Planning Document the developer is required to provide for a Construction Employment and Skills Plan which identifies and promotes employment opportunities generated by the proposed development, or other developments within Reading, for the construction phase of the proposed development. This or an equivalent financial contribution in accordance with the adopted SPD is to be secured within the S106 legal agreement.

Representations

6.64 Issues raised in representation letters from third parties have been addressed within the report above.

Equality

6.65 In determining this application the Council is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. There is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that the protected groups as identified in the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to the particular planning application. Therefore, in terms of the key equalities protected characteristics it is considered there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the development.

7 CONCLUSION

7.1 The proposed development is considered acceptable in principle and in respect of design, layout and character of the area, transport matters, landscape, ecology, residential amenity and other matters.

7.2 Concerns have been raised in representations regarding intensification of the use of the site in providing a care home in what is a primarily residential location. However, it is considered that the nature of the proposed use, layout of the development with scope for enhanced soft landscaping and tree planting on what is a large site, together with the site's sustainable location in terms of transport would ensure the continued health care use of the site could be carried out without undue additional disturbance to surrounding residential occupiers.

7.3 The development is considered to adhere to the relevant policies of the Development Plan as set out in the appraisal section of this report above. The application is therefore recommended for approval, subject to conditions and completion of a section 106 legal agreement.

7.4 Officers conclude that the proposals would preserve the historic charter and significance of the host building, a non-designated heritage asset. However, if the

alterations and extensions proposed to facilitate the development were found to result in any overall harm to the significance of the building or setting of Prospect Park then Officers consider this would amount to no more than less than substantial harm in accordance with paragraph 203 of the NPPF and it is considered that the public benefits of the development would outweigh this.

7.5 The public benefits of the proposed development are considered to include:

- The provision of a 56-bed care home which meets an identified local need and the demands of an ageing population;
- Economic benefits through a range of employment opportunities and have wider positive spin-off effects to the local economy representing a significant level of investment;
- The scale, massing, design and proposed materials reflect the local vernacular;
- Increase in soft landscaping and tree planting across the site;
- A substantial investment into the site, safeguarding the long-term viability of the building as a non-designated heritage asset and removal of unsympathetic and substandard extensions that detract from the heritage value of the original building;
- Preventing any further decline and damage to the building, bringing it back into productive use; and
- Continued evolution of the site for its historic healthcare related uses.

Case Officer: Matt Burns

Plans and Documents Considered:

Drawing no.s
- 200 – P6 – Proposed Site Plan
- 204 – P1 – Proposed Floor Plan – Basement
- 205 – P1 – Proposed Floor Plan – Ground Floor
- 206 – P1 – Proposed Floor Plan – First Floor
- 207 – P1 – Proposed Floor Plan – Second Floor
- 208 – P1 – Proposed Roof Plan
- 303 – P1 – Proposed Sections
- 302 – D1 – Proposed Elevations with Previous Application Line

Received by the Local Planning Authority on 18th March 2022

- 300 – P7 – Proposed Elevations
- 301 – P4 – Proposed Elevations Colour

Received by the Local Planning Authority on 27th April 2022

- Existing First Floor Plan ref. 19016/F01/202

- Existing Ground Floor Plan ref. 19016/F01/201

- Existing Second Floor Plan ref. 19016/F01/203

- Existing Elevations ref. 19016/F01/EL01

Received by the Local Planning Authority on 29th October 2021

- Design and Access Statement – March 2022
Received by the Local Planning Authority on 18th March 2022

- Advanced Arboriculture letter ref. TH/B085/1021
Received by the Local Planning Authority on 4th May 2022

- Spectrum Kitchen Vent Technical Specification
- Airclean Activated Carbon Filters Specification
Received by the Local Planning Authority on 10th May 2022

- Hydrock MRB Sustainability Statement ref. S397 Issue 5
Received by the Local Planning Authority on 23rd March 2022

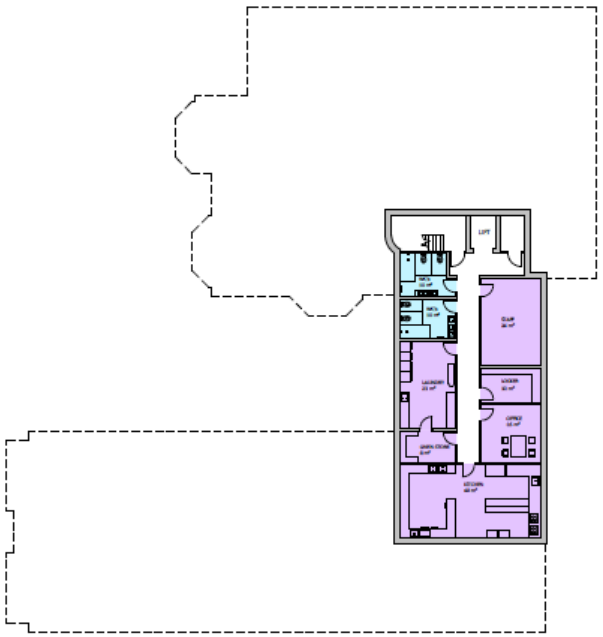
- DTA Transport Assessment ref. SJT/RT 22075-01f dated 12th November 2021
Received by the Local Planning Authority on 12th November 2021

- Inacoustic Noise Assessment for Planning ref. 21-149 dated 14th April 2022
Received by the Local Planning Authority on 14th April 2022

- Planning and Heritage Statement – Q+A Planning Ltd
- Flood Risk and Drainage Strategy - Baker Hall Ltd
- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal – Ramboll
- Daytime Roost Inspection – Lockhart Garratt
- Bat Survey Report and Mitigation Strategy – Windrush Ecology
- Utilities Search – Groundwise Searches
- Phase 1 Ground Investigation Report
Received by the Local Planning Authority on 21st October 2021



Proposed Site Plan



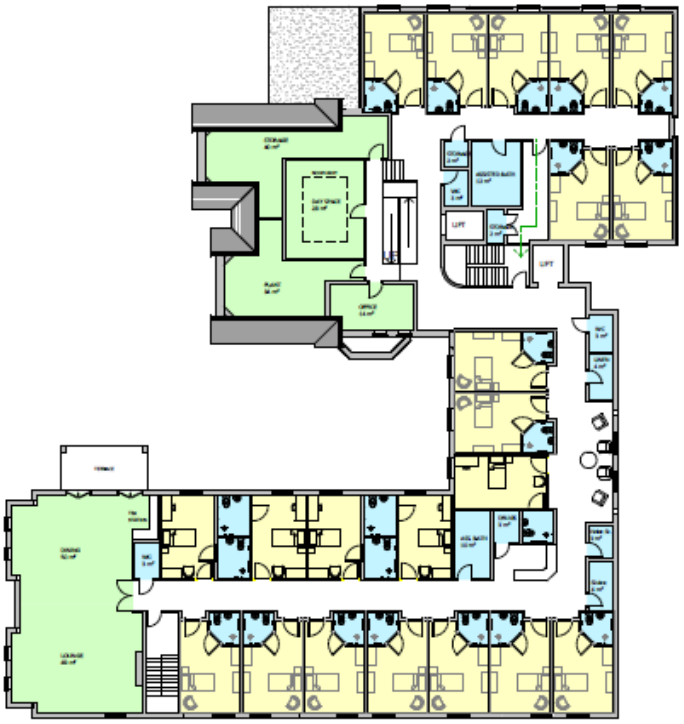
Proposed Basement Plan



Proposed Ground Floor Plan



Proposed First Floor Plan



Proposed Second Floor Plan



Proposed Elevations and Street-Scene



Proposed Visual from Liebenrood Road

Appendix 2

UPDATE REPORT

BY THE DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC GROWTH AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES	
READING BOROUGH COUNCIL	**ITEM NO. 13**
PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE: 1st June 2022	Page no: 143

Ward: Southcote
App No: 211728
Address: Dellwood Hospital Liebenrood Road
Proposals: Outline application considering access, appearance, layout and scale for the partial demolition, conversion and extension of existing building to form a care home (C2 use class) and ancillary accommodation, amended access arrangements, car parking and associated works (landscaping reserved for future consideration)
Applicant: Montpelier Estates Ltd
Deadline: 1st July 2022

RECOMMENDATION:

Amended as follows:

~~Delegate to Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection Services to (i) GRANT full planning permission subject to completion of a S106 legal agreement or (ii) to REFUSE permission should the legal agreement not be completed by 01/07/2022 (unless officers on behalf of the Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection Services agree to a later date for completion of the legal agreement). The legal agreement to secure the following:~~

~~- An Employment Skills and Training Plan (construction phase)~~
~~- Use of the development as a C2 care home only~~

GRANT full planning permission subject to the conditions set out in the main agenda report plus the following additional conditions:

29. Use of the development as C2 care home use only
30. Pre-commencement submission and approval of a construction phase employment and skills plan

1. Amended Recommendation

1.1 Since publication of the main agenda report the Applicant has confirmed that they agree to provide a construction phase employment and skills training plan and do not intend to take up the option of providing an equivalent financial contribution as per the terms of the adopted Employment Skills and Training Supplementary Planning Document 2013 referenced in paragraph 6.63 of the main report. As it is now confirmed that a financial contribution will not be required the provision of

an employment, skills and training plan can be secured by way of planning condition rather than a section 106 obligation.

1.2 It is also now recommended that the use of the development as a C2 care home only is secured by way of a planning condition instead of a section 106 obligation. This is on the basis that there are no permitted development rights to change from C2 care home to C3 (Residential Dwellinghouse) or C2A (Secure Residential Institution) use, which the terms of the proposed section 106 obligation sought to restrict. Therefore, such a change of use would require planning permission in its own right. Whilst the Local Planning Authority has secured the use of care homes as C2 use only by way of section 106 in some instances previously this has generally been on developments where self-contained units/apartments are proposed where the distinction between C3 (Residential Dwellinghouses) and C2 care homes use is more blurred and where the level of care options available is more limited. Given the nature and type of accommodation proposed in the current application, which Officers consider is clearly articulated and set out for a C2 care home, it is considered that the use can be reasonably be controlled by way of a condition.

1.3 On the basis of the above the Officer recommendation is no longer subject to completion of a section 106 legal agreement.

Case Officer: Matt Burns