

UPDATE REPORT

BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC GROWTH & NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

ITEM NO. 10

PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE: 2nd December 2020

Ward: Whitley

App No.: 192054

Address: Reading International Logistics Park, A33

Proposal: Redevelopment to provide 15,080 sqm (GEA) of class B1(c), B2 or B8 floor space in four buildings, with associated external yards, car and cycle parking, landscaping, and all related and ancillary works (amended)

Applicant: Arlington LP UK Ltd

Deadline: 9/4/2020

Extended Deadline: 29/1/2021

Planning Guarantee 26 week target: 9/7/2020

RECOMMENDATION:

As in the main report.

1. AMENDED INFORMATION

Written Statement

- 1.1 The applicant has submitted a letter, sent to all Planning Application Committee members. This is included in the appendix below.

Biodiversity

- 1.2 Further information has been provided by the applicant with respect to net biodiversity gain. In summary, the applicant's position is that the proposal would deliver a net biodiversity gain of over +17% and is therefore, compliant with Policy EN12.
- 1.3 Further detail on this, with respect to the background calculation, will be presented as a verbal update at committee.

Watercourse

- 1.4 To clarify information within the main report, the proposed buildings would be located beyond the 8m from the bank top of the main river - The Kingsley Close Ditch, as required by the Environment Agency and this would be supported by a recommended condition (no.9), as set out in the main report, requiring the submission and approval of a scheme for the provision and management of a minimum 8m wide buffer along the southern side of the Kingsley Close Ditch. In accordance with RBC's Local Plan policy SR4e the proposed buildings are for the most part beyond 10m from the top of the bank.

Conclusion

- 1.5 The recommendation remains as in the main report.

Case Officer: Alison Amoah

APPENDIX 1: Letter from Barton Willmore received 30th Nov 2020

BIRMINGHAM
BRISTOL
CAMBRIDGE
CARDIFF
EBBSFLEET
EDINBURGH
GLASGOW
LEEDS
LONDON
MANCHESTER
NEWCASTLE
READING
SOUTHAMPTON

**BARTON
WILLMORE** bartonwillmore.co.uk
7 Soho Square
London
W1D 3QB
T/ 0207 446 6888

Planning Applications Committee Members
Reading Borough Council
Civic Offices
Bridge Street
Reading
RG1 2LU

BY EMAIL

29718/A3/RM/SL
30 November 2020

Dear Planning Applications Committee Councillor,

RE: PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING – 2 DECEMBER 2020 (APP REF: 192054)
READING INTERNATIONAL LOGISTICS PARK, A33, READING
ARLINGTON

Arlington has a full planning application for the redevelopment of the former Reading Brewery bottling plant site for 4 Class B8 storage and distribution buildings being presented to committee on Wednesday. Ahead of that meeting, Arlington wish to make members aware of the following.

Arlington welcome the officer recommendation to approve. There is occupier interest in the scheme and, if planning permission is granted, then the site can once again deliver economic activity and jobs in 2021.

As the former Brewery Bottling Plant, the site is previously developed land. The site has had an extant office planning permission since 2002, but no interest from office occupiers has been shown since the site became vacant (early 2000s), reflecting the office provision elsewhere. Your previous, and now current, Local Plan allocates the site for c.15,000 sqm of Class B1, B2, B8 uses. Seeing redevelopment occur is an important part of the Council's economic strategy. The application now proposes 15,080 sqm of floorspace, consistent with the Local Plan allocation. The extant office scheme is for c. 34,000 sqm.

As the officer committee report confirms, the Arlington team has been engaged in discussions with officers since 2018 and have worked hard to find common ground whereby a commercially viable, and attractive to the market scheme can be proposed, that is not offices.

To the extent it can, the application proposal respects and responds to important site influences, such as ecology, biodiversity, heritage and transport. Your planning officer considers the planning application to be acceptable and planning permission should be granted. As noted in the officer committee report, there has been concern around ecology and a difference of opinion remains between professionals over the level and importance of impact. To be clear, the Arlington position, supported by the planning officer in that she recommends approval, is that:



Registered in England
Number 03341692

Barton Willmore LLP
Registered Office:
The Blade
Abbey Square
Reading
RG1 3BE
T/ +44 (0)118 943 0001

FS 29637

1. Some of the land which the application proposes to redevelop on is the old car parking areas and foundations associated with the former bottling plant. In Arlington's ecologist's view this is scrub which has colonised over the old concrete because the site has laid vacant for an extended period of time. It is not "priority habitat", which the Council's consultant ecologist considers. Attached are photographs of the area in question;
2. Much of the Officer's report on ecology is historic, no longer applies, and so should be discounted. As a consequence of changes Arlington has proposed that address previous concerns, whilst maintaining a commercial attractive and viable scheme, the Environment Agency and Tree Officer raise no objection to the application proposal;
3. The landscape proposals now include enhancement of the woodland belt along the north of the site by felling trees that are considered dead, diseased or dying. 146 new trees and 166m of new mixed native hedgerow is proposed. Timber from the trees felled will be used to form log piles within the tree belt to support ecological interest. Non-native shrub species such as snowberry will be removed and cleared areas will be interplanted with new native trees and wildflower plugs;
4. The landscape proposals to the east of Unit 1 include generous tree, shrub, hedgerow and grassland planting as mitigation to the loss of trees in this area. The BREEAM report for ecology identifies the site as achieving **a biodiversity net gain** as a result of these landscape proposals. The landscape proposals also maintain a 5m wide landscape buffer between Unit 1 and the A33 (increased to 7m if the grass maintenance path around the building is included). This landscape buffer would be wider but the MRT proposals also encroach into the area. The landscape proposals also respect the existing sewer easement along the A33 frontage; and
5. The scheme proposes a significantly improved visual gateway for the A33, whilst also delivering the MRT, and enhancing the "green Corridor" feel.

Given the economic circumstances the UK is facing, that the application site is allocated for B8 uses, the length of time the site has been inactive, the ability for a new permission to capture the business interest being shown in the site and turn this into jobs and GDP, it is an important application to approve. The Council has recently endorsed Reading UK's Business Recovery Strategy, which identifies the logistics sector as an important component to respond positively to. In their attached letter, Haslams, Arlington's letting agent, say that if permission is not granted, or delayed further, then the current occupier interest will/may look to other locations and boroughs to meet their requirements. It will be disappointing if Reading misses out. The application scheme, if approved and implemented, will also transfer land for the completion on this section of the MRT route, which would also materially improve public transport and sustainability and deliver on another key RBC objective.

The benefits of the application can therefore be summarised as:

1. Delivering regeneration of a previous commercial brownfield site that has been vacant for over 20+ years, meeting a Local Plan site allocations aspiration;
2. Provision of buildings that the market want to immediately utilise, assisting in job generation, economic activity, and business rates;
3. Delivery of an important land parcel for the continuing roll-out of the public transport MRT infrastructure, a key aspiration of the Local Plan;

4. Delivery of 146 new trees and additional vegetation, to present an enhanced and managed contribution to the A33 "green corridor" vista, which is an important part of the Local Plan strategy for the A33;
5. Delivery of a significant ecological biodiversity net gain, in line with latest planning policy;
6. Delivery of high-quality logistics buildings that achieve a BREEAM "Very Good" standard, with a focus on energy efficiency; and
7. Contributions to local employment training and local jobs.

As planning committee members, you will appreciate that in coming to a decision on the application before you, the scheme needs to be assessed holistically. We support the planning officers reasons and balanced judgement that the scheme is consistent with adopted planning policy and the overall benefits of the proposal outweigh any drawbacks, and therefore on balance planning permission should be approved.

We commend the officer recommendation to resolve to approve, subject to the S106 agreement, and hope that you enable the site to be delivered during 2021.

Yours faithfully,

ROBIN MEAKINS
Senior Planning Partner

Encl

Cc: emmett.mckenna@reading.gov.uk
ayo.sokale@reading.gov.uk
paul.carnell@reading.gov.uk
ricky.duveen@reading.gov.uk
john.ennis@reading.gov.uk
jo.lovelock@reading.gov.uk
ruth.mcewan@reading.gov.uk
tony.page@reading.gov.uk
simon.robison@reading.gov.uk
karen.rowland@reading.gov.uk
dayapal.singh@reading.gov.uk
jane.stanford-beale@reading.gov.uk
josh.williams@reading.gov.uk
rose.williams@reading.gov.uk

Officers: nicky.simpson@reading.gov.uk
alison.amoah@reading.gov.uk

READING INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS PARK

1219-G509 EASTERN WOODLAND AREA PHOTOS
OCTOBER 2020

VIEW 1



View from within Woodland TPO Area
Looking south to the Lee Farmhouse.

Image shows low quality self-seeded
shrubs/ small trees with areas of
bramble thicket.

1219-G509
October 2020

VIEW 2



View from within Woodland TPO Area
Looking west. Image shows small
self-seeded trees in front of area of
partially re-colonised hard standing

1219-G309
October 2020

Macgregor • Smith
Landscape Architecture

VIEW 3



View from within the Woodland TPO
near the plot entrance off Reading
International Business Park
roundabout.

Dense bramble thicket dominates the
view with a large poplar and willow
trees growing through it in the back-
ground.

1219-G509
October 2020

Macgregor • Smith
Landscape Architecture



View 4,5,6,7,8 & 9 show additional views around the plot entrance of the Reading International Business Park roundabout.

A mound covered in weeds and scrub blocks the entrance off the Reading International Business Park roundabout.

1219-G509
October 2020

Macgregor • Smith
Landscape Architecture

6

VIEW 4



1219-G509
October 2020

Macgregor • Smith
Landscape Architecture

7

VIEW 5



1219-G509
October 2020

VIEW 6



1219-G509
October 2020

VIEW 7



1219-GSDP
October 2020

10

Macgregor • Smith
Landscape Architecture

VIEW 8



1219-GSDP
October 2020

11

Macgregor • Smith
Landscape Architecture

VIEW 9



1219-G509
October 2020

12

Macgregor • Smith
Landscape Architecture

VIEW 10



1219-G509
October 2020

13

Macgregor • Smith
Landscape Architecture

VIEW 11



View from within Woodland TPO Area
Looking south towards Reading
International Business Park

Image shows low quality self-seeded
shrubs/ small trees breaking through
asphalt hard standing of old car park.

1219-G509
October 2020

VIEW 12



View from within Woodland TPO Area
Image clearly shows the ground is
asphalt / hard standing.

1219-G509
October 2020

VIEW 13



View from within Woodland TPO Area
Looking south east towards A33
junction.

Image shows low quality self-seeded
shrubs/ small trees breaking through
asphalt hard standing of the old car
park.

1219-GS09
October 2020

VIEW 14



View from within Woodland TPO Area
Looking south to the Reading
International Business Park.

Image shows re-colonised ground of the
western side of the old car park. Low
quality, self-seeded trees and shrubs.

1219-GS09
October 2020

VIEW 15



View from within Woodland TPO Area
Looking north to the Premier Inn hotel

The image shows area of grassland
with low quality self seeded trees and
shrubs around it's perimeter.

The image also shows a group of
larger trees in the background
consisting of Ash and willow.

1219-G509
October 2020

18

Macgregor • Smith
Landscape Architecture

VIEW 16



View from within Woodland TPO Area
Looking south to the Reading
International Business Park.

Image shows self-seeded shrubs/ small
trees breaking through asphalt hard
standing of the old car park.

1219-G509
October 2020

19

Macgregor • Smith
Landscape Architecture

VIEW 17



View from within Woodland TPO Area
Looking north to the Premier Inn.
Image shows low quality self-seeded
willow in re-colonising ground

1219-G509
October 2020

VIEW 18



View from within Woodland TPO Area
Looking north east towards Toys R Us.
Image shows low quality self-seeded
willow in re-colonising ground

1219-G509
October 2020

VIEW 19



View from within Woodland TPO Area
Looking north east towards Toys R Us.
Image shows low quality self-seeded
scrub and pampas grass in
re-colonising ground.
Background trees are mostly willow
with one wild cherry

1219-G509
October 2020

22

Macgregor • Smith
Landscape Architecture

VIEW 20



View from within Woodland TPO Area
Looking south east to the Reading
International Business Park
Image shows re-colonising ground with
a group of self seeded willow.

1219-G509
October 2020

23

Macgregor • Smith
Landscape Architecture

VIEW 21



View from within Woodland TPO Area
Looking north east

Image shows low quality self-seeded
willow breaking through asphalt hard
standing of old car park.

1219-G509
October 2020

24

Macgregor • Smith
Landscape Architecture

VIEW 22



View over the boundary fence along
the A33. The outer edge of the site,
behind the boundary fence is mostly
dense bramble thicket with self seeded
willow trees approx. 3-6m behind it.

1219-G509
October 2020

25

Macgregor • Smith
Landscape Architecture

VIEW 23



View over the boundary fence along the A33. The outer edge of the site, behind the boundary fence is mostly dense bramble thicket with self seeded willow trees and individual wild cherry and sycamore trees also visible

1219-G509
October 2020

Google Earth 2006



Google Earth View from 2006 before the previous development was demolished shows the western side of the woodland area mostly clear of trees with the car park hard standing clearly defined.

1219-G509
October 2020

Google Earth 2010

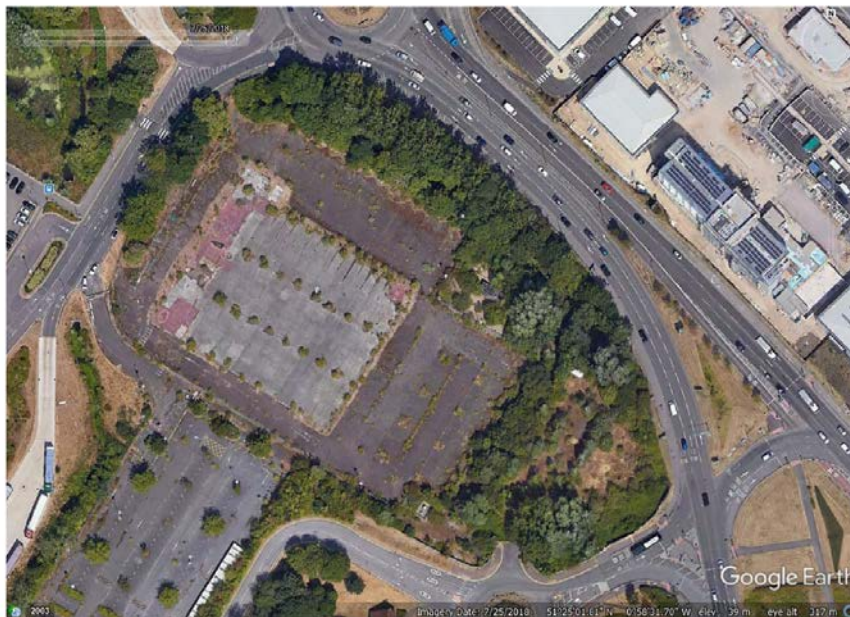


Google Earth View from 2010 after the previous development was demolished shows growth of trees around the perimeter of the eastern end of the woodland. The central area around the car park is mostly clear of trees.

1219-G509
October 2020

Macgregor • Smith
Landscape Architecture

Google Earth 2018



Google Earth View from 2018 shows woodland area close to what it is today. Trees around the perimeter have grown further and the site has been recolonised by pioneer species due to inactivity.

1219-G509
October 2020

Macgregor • Smith
Landscape Architecture

30 November 2020

Mr G Wilson
Arlington
1230 Parkview
Arlington Business Park
THEALE
RG7 4SA

A: County House 17 Friar Street
Reading RG1 1DB
D: 0118 921 1516
M: 07879 600069
E: nellseager@haslams.co.uk

Your Ref:
Our Ref: NS / TALS

Dear George

Re: Reading International Logistics Park - Planning Application

In light of the imminent planning committee meeting in respect of your application I'm writing to reinforce our previous advice on the above which I hope will be considered by the planning committee. As a long term advocate for industrial property in Reading, (and even more so in the current economic climate), it is very important for Reading to ensure that it is capable of attracting and retaining the best possible blend of employers. This development will provide valuable new employment opportunities for the Borough at a time when we need it most.

Whilst the pandemic has generally had an impact on demand for commercial property, the industrial and distribution sector has remained buoyant, with supply continuing to fall and very few new schemes coming through. Covid has accelerated demand from online retailers, with more traditional occupiers being squeezed out. Brexit has accelerated this with many occupiers proactively increasing their UK stock levels. Reading International is an important opportunity for Reading to attract and retain employers that depend on industrial space - and on a brown field industrial site that has sat dormant for 20 years.

As you know, the delays in moving this proposed development forward have already meant that we've been unable to accommodate a number of major employers who have either had to go elsewhere (most notably Bracknell) or been forced to remain in properties that don't provide the right accommodation. We are having detailed discussions with a major employer (offering highly skilled jobs) that is seeking to relocate to Reading. The uncertainty around planning is proving to be a substantial concern for them. More recently two major retailers have also made enquires for distribution units (BB) to support their supply chain network in light of increased online demand. These requirements like many others are time critical and any further delays are likely to result in Reading continuing to miss out to other boroughs.

Kind regards

Yours sincerely

Neil Seager
Haslams