

## COMMITTEE REPORT

BY THE DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC GROWTH AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES  
READING BOROUGH COUNCIL  
PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE: 13<sup>th</sup> January 2021

**Ward:** Battle

**Application No:** 201448/FUL

**Address:** Reading West Railway Station, Oxford Road, Reading, RG1 7PY

**Proposals:** Improved facilities from Oxford Road entrance to platform 1 and platform 2. Provision of gate lines to enhance safety and security to the station access from Oxford Road to platform 1 and platform 2. Provision of a new station building on Oxford Road to provide ticketing, gateline, staff mess area with WC, public WC and small retail area.

**Applicant:** Great Western Railway

**Date received (valid):** 14 October 2020

**26 Week date:** 14 April 2020

### RECOMMENDATION:

**GRANT** Full Planning Permission

**Subject to the following conditions - to include:**

- 1) Time Limit - 3 years
- 2) Approved Drawings
- 3) Details of materials to be submitted for approval prior to any works to construct the station building, to be in accordance with types indicated on approved drawings and submitted sample panel. Implementation in accordance.
- 4) Not to bring any part of approved station building into use until all highway works have been completed in accordance with the approved drawings.
- 5) Not to occupy any part of approved station building until street tree planting feasibility study for at least one street tree within the area of the approved highway works has been submitted to and approved in writing by the LPA. To include a planting plan, timetable for provision and details of future maintenance (except where non-feasibility is demonstrated). Implementation in accordance.
- 6) All trees within and adjacent to area of Highway Works to be protected to BS5837:2012.
- 7) Roof railings shown on approved drawings not to be raised except for the duration of maintenance activities.
- 8) Retail kiosk not to be used other than as ancillary to the use of the station. No use of kiosk servery hatch to Oxford Road outside hours 0630-2300. Hatch to be fixed shut outside permitted hours.
- 9) No servicing of retail kiosk outside hours of 0700 to 2200 hrs
- 10) No external plant except in accordance with mitigation identified in noise assessment to be submitted.
- 11) No part of the station building hereby approved shall be first occupied until a Security Strategy document and a timetable for its implementation has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Strategy shall include the following details:
  - i) Ticket barriers to Oxford Road and Tilehurst Road entrances and hours of operation in accordance with the submitted Design and Access Statement.

- ii) Out-of-hours gates and hours of secure closure.
- iii) CCTV cameras. To be connected to Police and Council systems.
- iv) External lighting to the building and surrounding spaces
- v) Security measures for the retail kiosk, ticket office, public toilet and ticket vending machines.
- vi) Physical security measures for doors, windows, shutters etc. min standard LPS 1175 SR2.  
The strategy shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details and timetable at all times thereafter.

12) Building to achieve BREEAM Very Good standard.

13) Provision of Cycle parking in accordance with approved plans.

14) Existing Highway to be stopped up prior to

**Informatives (all applications):**

To include:

- 1. Positive and Proactive
- 2. Works affecting protected birds
- 3. Thames water infrastructure requirements
- 4. Highways informatives (licences, s.278 agreement etc)
- 5. Nesting birds could be disturbed by the proposals: advice

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### Site description

- 1.1 Reading West Station is located to the west of the town centre and lies to the south of Oxford Road and north of Tilehurst Road. Reading West Station provides access to rail services to Basingstoke and Newbury to the south and west and to Reading Station to the east.
- 1.2 The application site is at street level on Oxford Road and forms part of the footway between the two station platform accesses and running beneath the Reading West railway overbridge.
- 1.3 The site extends to within the western edge of the recently extended Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road Conservation Area which shares a boundary with the Heritage Action Zone.
- 1.4 The application has been referred to Planning Applications Committee for determination due to the degree of Council involvement in the scheme and because the majority of the land is owned or controlled by the Council. Great Western Railway are the applicant and are responsible for the day-to-day running of the station and train services. The Council as Highways Authority are partnering with the applicant to provide the land and associated highway works. Network Rail would be expected to adopt the station building as one of their assets once constructed.



Site Photograph



Location plan (extract from submitted plan)

## **2. PROPOSALS**

- 2.1 Full planning permission is sought for a new station building at street level on Oxford Road. This single storey flat roofed building would span the two platform entrances and provide a range of station facilities including a ticket office, a small retail shop with a servery hatch to the street, staff welfare facilities and a public toilet. The layout is designed with a central entrance from Oxford Road under the railway bridge directing passengers past the ticket office and through a ticket barrier before allowing passengers to turn to the left or right to the platforms.
- 2.2 The proposals have been revised on the advice of officers and in response to public comments received as part of the application. The building is now predominantly brick finish with a bottom section of stack-bonded grey-coloured brickwork with red facing brick above. A series of detail panels comprising recessed brick with protruding brick headers are proposed fronting Oxford Road. The thickness of the roof has been reduced compared with previously and the rooftop safety maintenance railings have been altered so that they fold flat when not in use. The glazed entrance and ticket hall façade and the secondary glazed wall to the back of the ticket hall have been retained as part of the revised proposals.

## **3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

- 3.1 150629/PNN - 'Application under Part 18, Schedule 2 of the GPDO 2015 for demolition and reconstruction of Reading West Station Footbridge to provide increased clearance underneath the footbridge to allow for overhead power cables associated with the electrification of the line.' Report to 3/6/15 Planning Applications Committee published. Withdrawn by Applicant (prior to consideration by the Planning Applications Committee).
- 3.2 160866/PNN - 'Prior Approval under Part 18 Class A to Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (the GPDO) for 'jacking up' of bridge to increase height of footway over railway, and raising of parapets'. Approved (Planning Applications Committee 20/7/16)
- 3.3 172192/PNN Prior Approval under Part 18 Class A to Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (the GPDO) for reconstruction of the footbridge to provide the necessary clearance for the OLE [overhead electric] which is to run underneath the structure. Refused.
- 3.4 191934/PRE - Pre-application enquiry -New station building to Oxford Road frontage. Observations sent

## **4. CONSULTATIONS**

- 4.1 Consultation was carried out on the initial proposals on 21 October 2020 and again on 1 December 2020 in response to the revised proposals.
- 4.1 Consultation responses are summarised where necessary.
- 4.2 **Network Rail**  
*"Network Rail has no objection in principle to the above proposal subject to all the related concerns raised by the Route Asset Managers, the Project Engineer and*

*the Architectural Team being resolved to Network Rail's satisfaction. We believe the LPA is already aware of some of the concerns raised.*

*The applicant should continue to engage with Asset Protection on this scheme.*

#### **DRAINAGE**

*Network Rail's drainage system(s) are not to be compromised by any work(s). Potential exists for unknown assets to be in the area - If located, please advise drainage team. Ground levels - if altered, to be such that water flows away from the railway. Drainage is not to show up on Buried service checks. Surface water and foul water are to be discharged into the public sewer.*

*The project is to engage with the NR drainage team at the earliest opportunity and the team are to review and sign off Form 1.*

#### **PLANT, SCAFFOLDING AND CRANES**

*Any scaffold which is to be constructed adjacent to the railway must be erected in such a manner that, at no time will any poles or cranes over-sail or fall onto the railway. All plant and scaffolding must be positioned, that in the event of failure, it will not fall on to Network Rail land.*

#### **ACCESS TO RAILWAY**

*All roads, paths or ways providing access to any part of the railway undertaker's land shall be kept open at all times during and after the development."*

*[Officer Comment - Any grant of planning permission will not affect other legal controls which Network Rail may have over the scheme and its impact on their infrastructure. This is a matter for the scheme designers to discuss with Network Rail].*

### **4.3 RBC Conservation Officer Planning constraints**

*"It needs to be understood that the initial designs, submitted for this site, were very different to the final scheme, and did not relate at all to the setting and immediate area in design or materials. The current proposal has gradually evolved, and been developed through a consensus of opinions, at a number of design consultation meetings, to address a range of issues, including access, heritage character and practical service issues.*

*One of the main issues for heritage included what materials and should be used. In the recent Conservation Area Character Appraisal (2020), it is stated that the materials used are as follows:*

*" 6.2.2 Materials Reading's most dominant building material, red brick, is seen frequently especially along the Georgian terraced façades. Polychrome brick and terracotta embellishment is notable and impressive further along to the west of the route nearer the railway bridge with later development along the road.*

*Figure 6.2.2 Reading West railway bridge, facing west along the Oxford Road, the iron bridge replaced an original brick design."*

*The submitted Design & Access Statement reflects this advice, which was given to the architects during design development meetings*

*“ The new station building materials selection wants to be simple and complement with the vernacular of red brick, stone detailing and tiled roofs typical of the surrounding area and railway architecture and heritage, whilst also representing the simple function the building serves and acting as a reference point within the streetscape.*

*The external walls of the building will be formed using two brick colours (red and grey, typical of the surrounding area) separated with a continuous cill level coping and utilising different brick bonds, recesses and projections to add visual interest. ... The large metal framed glazed entrance doors and screens provides visibility to and from the street and also an opportunity as a non-station user to be aware of the buildings function.*

*Conclusion: The site has evolved over the years, and the original brick rail bridge was replaced by the current steel overhead bridge. It is acknowledged that, the present scheme has to meet a number of complicated functional needs, but the final scheme has evolved to address its setting and the main one of these is the choice of materials used and having a simple functional entrance to the station.*

*There are no objections to the current scheme, subject to the standard materials condition.*

*Reason: The new entrance will be seen as an entrance or portal of the conservation area along Oxford Road. Its scale and materials have been chosen to relate to the context in which it is set.”*

#### **4.4 RBC Transport (Highways Authority)**

*“The proposed development consists of the provision improved facilities to Reading West Station which includes the provision of gate lines to enhance safety and security to the station access from Oxford Road to platform 1 and platform 2, provision of a new station building on Oxford Road to provide ticketing, gateline, staff mess area with WC, public WC and small retail area.*

*The station proposed will help to improve the quality of Reading West Station therefore promoting and encouraging it's use as an alternative mode of transport to that of the private car and therefore the principle of the scheme is acceptable.*

*The station is to be located on the existing footway on the southern side of Oxford Road and as such will require the stopping up of the existing Public Highway. This would need to be undertaken prior to the commencement of development.*

*Given the building is to be located on the Public Highway alterations are required to the Public Highway surrounding the site and I comment on these as follows:*

*The existing footway on the southern side of Oxford Road is to be realigned to ensure that a sufficient footway width is retained. The submitted drawings illustrate a footway width of between 2.5m and 3m and this would comply with Highways England document CD 143 Designing for walking, cycling and horse-riding. It should be stressed that bollards are illustrated on the proposed elevation plans but it has been confirmed by Thames Valley Police and British Transport Police that these are not required and therefore the widths specified above can be provided.*

*The realignment of the footway results in a reduction in the carriageway width to 7.7m which is sufficient to accommodate two-way flows for large vehicles and complies with National Design Standards.*

*The footway on the northern side of Oxford Road is also to be realigned reducing the available footway width, this retained width is however in excess of standards and is therefore acceptable.*

*Tracking has been provided for buses serving Oxford Road (see drawing 45835/5504/SK012 Rev D) and this confirms that buses will be able to access the bus stop on the southern side of Oxford Road following the kerb realignment. The bus stop is also relocated to the west of it's current position and will result in the loss of an on street parking bay, this has however been deemed acceptable.*

*Following the realignment of the central island buses waiting at the bus stop on the southern side of Oxford Road will still allow cars to pass to ensure the free flow of traffic, larger vehicles will be required to wait until the bus leaves the stop however this is no different to the existing situation. Larger emergency vehicles i.e. a fire appliance would currently be obstructed by a bus should a bus be waiting within the bus stop and this would continue following the Highway changes illustrated. However, this scheme allows for sufficient space to the rear of the bus stop for a bus to reverse into therefore allowing a fire appliance to pass, the current layout would not allow for this at peak times given the queue of traffic that would proceed the bus.*

*Cycle parking has been proposed on both side of Oxford Road in the form of cycle lockers and these will also help in encouraging the use of alternative modes of travel and are therefore are deemed acceptable.*

*Given the above there are no objections to the proposed development subject to the below S106 requirement.*

#### **S106**

*No development should commence until the applicant has completed the stopping up of the existing Public Highway." [Officer Comment - this falls under the control of the Highways Authority who are partnering with the developer to deliver the highway works. It can be dealt with by Condition in this instance]*

#### **4.5 RBC Environmental Protection (EP):**

No objection subject to conditions controlling hours of use and servicing of kiosk and controls on external plant noise.

#### **4.6 RBC Planning (Natural Environment) (Tree Officer) (Summary)**

*" This application includes the following elements:*

*Improved facilities from Oxford Road entrance to platform 1 and platform 2*

*Provision of gate lines to enhance safety and security to the station access from Oxford Road to platform 1 and platform 2*

*The provision of a new station building on Oxford Road to provide ticketing, gateline, staff mess area with WC, public WC and small retail area*

*Of particular interest, in tree terms, is the new building and the potential impact on nearby trees from the associated highways works. In addition, it seems appropriate to consider potential new tree planting to improve the general appearance around the new building - there are other reasons to support tree planting as I mention below.*

*Further to our discussion and with reference to READING WEST STATION IMPROVEMENTS OXFORD ROAD PROPOSED LAYOUT PLAN 45835/5504/SK012 A and Proposed Ticket Office Perspective Views (daytime) 19111-OA-B1-XX-DR-A-1511 P6:*

*It is difficult to appreciate from the former plan the full extent of highways works, more specifically, the full extent of disruption to the adjacent pavements. There is one tree located on the north side of the road between the pedestrian crossing and bridge. On the south side there is one pavement tree at the front of MacDonalds, one at the front of Lidl and 2 within the Lidl boundary (subject to a TPO). It is important that due care for the trees is taken when finalising the highways works and during implementation. If no ground works are required within the potential RPAs, then just physical protection should be sufficient, however it would be helpful to get confirmation of 'pavement' works adjacent to the street trees to determine if any other special considerations are required. If this is not resolved prior to a decision and assuming conditions can be applied to the highways works elements, an AMS should be secured.*

*This development would seem a good opportunity to include landscape improvements to a visually unattractive section of the Oxford Road. Given the Council climate emergency declaration (and the need to plant trees as one mitigation technique), the designation of the Oxford as 'treed corridor' in our adopted and revised Tree Strategies, the site being within an extremely low canopy cover area, the site being within the AQMA, partially within a conservation area and partially within the High Street Heritage Action Zone for Oxford Road, tree planting is supported on multiple levels. The proposed street buildout offers an opportunity to explore further street tree planting which should be given serious consideration for the aforementioned reasons. Clearly, an assessment of underground and above ground constraints will be required to identify potential locations and the careful choice of species to be suitable for the location, e.g.*



*tolerance of pruning (if/when required over the highway), tolerance of/filtering of air pollution."*

#### 4.7 Thames Valley Police Designing Out Crime Advisor (in conjunction with British Transport Police).

"I have liaised with Police colleagues (TVP and BTP), analysed crime data, reviewed the submitted documents and visited the site. Unfortunately, I have some concerns in relation to community safety/crime prevention. If these are not addressed I feel that the development may not meet the requirements of;

- The National Planning Policy Framework 2018, Section 12 'Achieving well-designed places', point 127 (part f),
- Local policy CC7 Design and the public realm; and CC8 Safeguarding Amenity

**Crime Risk:** Within the general area surrounding the Station, ASB, Violence and Sexual Offences and drugs are a recurring issues. In addition, for a number of years Reading West Station has been used by county line dealers to access Reading. Offenders taking advantage of the current lack of secure gates, ticket barriers or staff at the Oxford Road and Tilehurst Road Access/egress points.

##### **Observations:**

Within Pre-App meetings Thames Valley Police Neighbourhood policing teams identified that the introduction of a secure line (barriers/ gates) at both Station Entrance points could help deter a set of offences including county line dealers from entering Reading at this location. However from the plans provided the proposed access control (ticket barrier, gate etc) at Tilehurst Rd entrance has not been included.

The two ends of the station are intrinsically linked in terms of security and the need for secure access/exits is directly related to the new station building and the way in which it alters the dynamics and physical arrangement of the station. Securing the Oxford Rd frontage with ticket lines during the day and with suitable exit only out of hours gates at night after the last train has departed is only possible if the Tilehurst Road entrance/exit is also similarly secured. The DAS suggests that this is the intention ( please see above). Not doing so would mean the rear of the new building would remain vulnerable.

As discussed, It was disappointing to note that the proposed Tilehurst Gate discussed during PRE APP meetings has not been included within the proposed development. I would like to draw the applicant's attention to their DAS which states: *Out-of-hours gates are provided at both Oxford Road and Tilehurst Road*" and *"Great Western Railway is taking the opportunity to improve the appearance and safety of the Tilehurst Road access point to the Station. During the construction of the new station building, a pre-fabricated modular covered gateline will be constructed inside the Tilehurst Road access. This will enable users to purchase tickets in advance of travel or on the day of travel within the local vicinity. It will also provide*

*CCTV coverage and improved lighting. General improvements will also be made to the access route including the pruning of vegetation and lighting improvements”.*

The Oxford Road Station building will improve security; however, this can only be achieved if the same security or secure line to prevent unauthorised access to the platforms is also provided at Tilehurst Road Entrance/Exit. A lack of appropriate access control (gates barriers etc) may actually worsen security of the Oxford road Building by providing both a cut through from Tilehurst Road to the Oxford Road (via out of hours gates), and secluded area to the rear of the Oxford Road Station Building

In addition: A lack of secure line, ticket barrier or staff at the Tilehurst entrance would facilitate County line activities. Offenders can still leave the Station unchallenged by staff or barrier, to gain access to Oxford rod and Reading Town Centre via walking Down Western Elms Ave or Brunswick Hill /Argyle Road.

I strongly recommend that the applicant provides a safe and accessible entrance at the Tilehurst Road access point to the Station. Providing a pre-fabricated modular covered gateline and ticket barriers enabling users to purchase tickets in advance of travel or on the day of travel within the local vicinity, the access must include CCTV coverage and improved lighting. It is also recommended that general improvements will also be made to the access route including the pruning of vegetation and lighting improvements. A security strategy is required to prevent an increase in crime/ASB and to achieve the aims of reducing crime/ASB and improving security as set out in the application:

*Condition:* No part of the station building hereby approved shall be first occupied until a Security Strategy document and a timetable for its implementation has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Strategy shall include the following details.

- vii) Ticket barriers to Oxford Road and Tilehurst Road entrances and hours of operation in accordance with the submitted Design and Access Statement.
  - viii) Out-of-hours gates and hours of secure closure.
  - ix) CCTV cameras. To be connected to Police and Council systems <sup>(1)</sup>
  - x) External lighting to the building and surrounding spaces
  - xi) Security measures for the retail kiosk, ticket office, public toilet and ticket vending machines.
  - xii) Physical security measures for doors, windows, shutters etc. min standard LPS 1175 SR2.
- The strategy shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details and timetable at all times thereafter

<sup>(1)</sup> Please note : if the CCTV system is a GWR system a Data Sharing Agreement between GWR and Local Authority may be required. This may need clarifying beforehand with the applicant. In addition the system should be installed as to meet the current BTP Output Requirements Specification (currently version 1.7).”

#### **4.8 RBC Ecologist**

The ecology report (Windrush Ecology) submitted with this application has been undertaken to an appropriate standard and concludes that the proposals are unlikely to affect protected species or priority habitats. There are therefore no objections to this application on ecology grounds.

You should however include an informative on the decision notice to advise the applicant that nesting birds could be disturbed by the works:

All birds, their nests and eggs, are protected by law. It is a criminal offence (with certain exemptions) to deliberately or recklessly take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird whilst it is in use or being built. The buildings and vegetation on the site are likely to be used by nesting birds and any works to buildings with bird nests or vegetation clearance should take place outside the bird nesting season (March - August inclusive). If this is not practicable areas to be cleared should first be checked for bird nests by an appropriately qualified person. If bird nests are found works that could disturb it must stop until any young have fledged the nest.

- 4.9 **BBO Wildlife Trust**  
No objection received
- 4.10 **RBC Sustainability Team**  
No objection received
- 4.11 **Berkshire Archaeology:**  
No objection received
- 4.12 **RBC Emergency Planning Manager**  
No objection received
- 4.13 **Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service**  
No objection received
- 4.14 **Reading Civic Society**  
No objection received
- 4.15 **Reading UK CIC**  
No objection received
- 4.16 **Thames Water**  
"We're writing to tell you that reference **201448 Reading West Train Station, Ready RG1 7PY** potentially have minor public sewers within three metres of the proposed building work.

As we don't have confirmation of the exact drainage arrangements for this property, we will require further information from the applicant or agent. A buildover agreement will be required if the work is within three metres of a public sewer or one metre of a lateral drain.

This could be an approved build over agreement or, if the property owner meets all the criteria required in our online questionnaire, a self-certified agreement.

Due to the Coronavirus we will not be contacting the applicant or agent regarding a build over agreement. Please therefore forward this email response to your customer along with this link in order that they are aware of the build over agreement process.

<https://www.thameswater.co.uk/help/home-improvements/building-near-pipes>

It has recently come to our attention that there have been multiple misconnections on small developments across our region where foul sewage has

been wrongfully discharged into surface water sewers resulting in pollution incidents. We believe that H1-B.2 describes the powers available to you. Please ensure that the Building Control Officer is inspecting any private drainage alterations being undertaken and direct the applicant to [connectright.org.uk](http://connectright.org.uk) where they can find advice on making their connections correctly. Where separate systems are provided for foul and surface water, the developer is legally required to use the respective systems and not connect foul drains to surface water drains and vice versa."

*[Officer comment: This response has been forwarded to the developer for their information. It would not affect the grant of planning permission as it is covered by other legal controls. An informative could be included re-iterating the need to liaise with TW]*

4.17 **Scottish and Southern Energy**  
No response received

4.18 **Southern Gas Networks**  
No response received

4.19 **BT (Openreach)**  
No response received

Where the response above indicates no objection or response received, any response subsequently received will be reported to Committee in an Update Report.

#### Public consultation

4.20 A site notice was displayed in October and again in December 2020 in response to the revised proposals.

4.21 11 letters of objection were received in response to the consultation on the initial design consultation as follows:

4.22 "After reading through the proposal, what I find hard to believe is that big sums of monies are going towards upgrading Reading West station. To put up such a monstrosity as the proposed metal cladding of the ticket office and retail buildings will do nothing to enhance the beauty of this part of Oxford Road. And, I totally agree with my husband that it is not even in keeping with the character of the area and therefore, would also highly recommend changing the metal cladding for brick walls."

---

4.23 "I saw the details of the new Reading West Ticket Office on Get Reading and although yes it desperately is in need of refurbishment I really don't think the proposed plans are nice at all, in fact they look like a large port-a-cabin. Also the pictures show a very narrow pavement left, this is a very busy part of the Oxford Road and this will just cause congestion especially with the amount of bikes on the paths too. Also I'd like to point out that you have just taken away the bench outside the adjacent McDonalds to cut down on street drinking and now you want

to give them a lovely warm port-a-cabin to sit in. By the way the street drinkers have just moved to the bus stops."

---

- 4.24 "Improvements to reading West Station are welcome and necessary to stop the ongoing problems with antisocial behaviour which happens on and around the platforms. It's worth noting however that such an ugly building will probably encourage such behaviour rather than deter it. The design is also detrimental to the surrounding streetscape and makes for a very unattractive space under and around the bridge. From a secure by design point of view the station building blocks views as you come from under the bridge. The eastern facade with the sharp corner makes a great hiding spot and the railings against the road box pedestrians in. A flat roof with railings on top next to the railway bridge also seems like a tempting climbing place for vandals.

The overall design quality of the building is severely lacking and would do little more than create an eyesore where a better building would echo the character of the place."

---

- 4.25 "This has to be the most uninspired design I've seen. It seems to place the greatest importance on keeping a advertising hoarding surrounded by weeds. It doesn't in any sense provide a modern updated station for the people of Reading. It's obviously two containers welded together, it's quite awful to think that this should have got past any planning. The people of Reading deserve something that they can look at in a few decades and be proud of. Can anyone say they would be proud of this ?

I would ask that you apply whatever pressure you can to have the "containers"; replaced with an actual design. I would go as far to say that you should remove Oxford Architects from the project and see if the students of Reading university could do something better.

1. Its containers welded together
2. It removes space from cycle path and the road
3. it doesn't offer any better disabled access
4. It doesn't remove the advert and the weeds growing around the bridge.
5. Does it actually provide secure cycle parking ?
6. Why can it not be built into the weed infested sides of the bridge?

I really hope this is not an attempt at submitting an initial awful design, and then submitting a second design that will pass "because it's not as bad as the first";. I suggest you never work with Oxford architects again. They should be ashamed."

---

- 4.26 "Comment: 1. This development fails to meet 4.5 of the Council's transport strategy as the initial scheme fails to provide inclusive access for all, nor does it meet the needs of all users, given that there are no lifts provided, thus prohibiting the use of the station by those in wheelchairs, those with limited mobility, those with luggage (including business travellers), those with pushchairs and those with bikes. The affordability is no excuse for a new build scheme, if GWR can't provide accessibility, then the building should not be built until they can afford it.
2. The design & access statement, Access states that it complies with M2 of the building regulations. M2 references a document called Inclusive Mobility. Section of this document (Access to and within transport related buildings) states that the provision of lifts must be made. Therefore by not including lifts during the initial phase of the design, it does not comply with M2 Access strategy 0.20 on page 14, as

it cannot demonstrate to building control that access for the likely end users has been met.

3. How are the out of hours doors powered? If it is manually, then they fail to meet the requirements of the Inclusive Mobility document. If they are electrically powered, then what happens out of hours if there is either a power cut or a technical failure? Are you stuck inside the building? The submission fails to detail this.

4. This development fails to meet 4.5 of the Council's transport strategy as a) the design creates pinch points & prevents cyclists from using the station (the scheme initially is not providing lifts to aid cyclists access the platforms) and b) the development creates a pinch point on the pavement and narrowing of the road preventing cyclists from using Oxford Road at this point, so forcing cyclists into the middle of the road in order to overtake buses at the bus stop, creating an unnecessary hazard to cyclists.

5. This fails to meet the strategy for West Reading & Tilehurst by the Council, as the provision of the cafe will not aid businesses to thrive, but instead will be of detriment to the existing businesses along that section of Oxford Road. The excessive prices charged by station outlets is likely to render this facility of little use. The addition of the serving hatch will add an additional pinch point if used, adding to congestion.

6. Network Rail have in the past provided replacement buses due to Engineering works. As this scheme will narrow the road, where will these buses park whilst waiting, so that they do not impede the regular buses using Oxford road causing a blockage? This scheme should not be accepted without the works including pull in bus stops to allow a) the free flow of traffic on a red route and b) to allow for the emergency services to pass freely."

---

- 4.27 "This design is unattractive and not in keeping with the area, which is predominantly brick buildings. Even the McDonalds is a brick building.

The way it encroaches on the road also means there is no space for a future cycle path, and that impacts active travel.

This is an ugly building that detracts from the local area, and should not be built."

---

- 4.28 "I object to planning application 201448 for Reading West Railway station. It's not in keeping with the local area, it doesn't seem to meet the requirements of the Reading High Streets Heritage Action Zone which turns most of the Oxford Road from the town centre to Reading West Bridge into a conservation area, the station development doesn't have any provision for disabled passengers, and that the architect has clearly not considered the local environment as a cafe less than 100m from a McDonald's and if approved this is misuse of space that is required for pedestrians to safely move along the Oxford Road."

---

- 4.29 "I object to the planning application for the redevelopment of Reading West station, the application fails to consider the Reading's High Streets Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ), and is not sympathetic to the conservation area status which ends at Reading West bridge.

The plans of the conservation area, and the station published on the RBC website prevent accurate assessment of the placement of the station development but it does appear that the new design encroaches on the conservation area, and as such should be rejected by the committee."

---

- 4.30 "Having lived in West Reading for over 12 years now I have been looking forward to an upgrade of the station for some time, but unfortunately I find the plans disappointing and inadequate. The one thing the station really needs is step free access for users on both platforms from the Oxford Road end so that disabled people and those with pushchairs can use the station fully. Without it there really doesn't seem to be much point.

I don't see the need for a cafe, and it would probably do more harm than good by taking up space on the pavement. With the narrowest part of the pavement set to be 2 metres I think you'll have bottlenecks on the pavement, the potential for people ending up on the busy road and I believe is also insecure from a COVID perspective should that continue to be an issue in future."

---

- 4.31 "I support the principle of improvements to Reading West train station, however I object to this proposed solution. The proposed exterior building design is not in keeping with either the historic or modern aspects of the Oxford Road area, nor the designs of any other stations on the Basingstoke & Newbury train lines. The proposed position of the station building will reduce space for pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles on a major traffic and public transport route that already suffers from severe congestion, therefore making passage past the proposed design more dangerous for road and pathway users. The overall proposed design is of limited aesthetic and architectural value, neither contributing to or enhancing any strategy to improve the area visually (with the design to rapidly become dated and an eyesore even with regular maintenance) or to deter antisocial behaviour (A flat roof near climbable railings and bridge, next to high voltage electrical cables and open defaceable spaces; plain metal hoardings that are negatively attractive for graffiti; spaces created at both ends of the new building that encourage loitering). The proposals fail to take into account additional remedial works required on the southbound platform in respects to improving the existing shelter and generally the appearance of the platforms. Overall, the plans do not offer a solution that reflects the aspirations of the town to improve its environment and inspire people to live and work there. The designs do not offer an acceptable quality of facility construction when compared to Reading station (for which Reading West is treated as a sister station for through the 'Reading Stations' ticket offer). The designs do not seem to make appropriate use of the brownfield land that borders the rail line as to limit any proposed solution encroachment onto the existing road and pathways. Summarising, I reiterate my objection to this proposed solution for a required need to improve this public transport station."

---

- 4.32 "The proposed metal cladding of the ticket office and retail buildings is very ugly and will do nothing to enhance the beauty of this part of Oxford Road. It is not in keeping with the character of the area. Recommend changing the metal cladding for brick walls".

4.33 The Conservation Area Advisory Committee commented as follows:

*"The proposed Reading West Station building lies partly within the Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road Conservation Area.*

*Reading CAAC expected to find a heritage assessment from the applicant among the papers. This is not the case. Moreover in the Design & Access Statement the applicant seems entirely unaware of the position within the CA, the location in close proximity to many buildings of townscape merit and the need to address the impact of the ticket office on views within the CA.*

*Can you please ensure that a heritage assessment is submitted?"*

And subsequently:

"This application for improved facilities at Reading West Station is entirely inappropriate to the setting and we object strongly to the proposal as currently submitted for the following reasons:

#### **1. HERITAGE**

##### **1.1 Conservation area**

1.1.1 The Russell Street/Castle Hill/Oxford Road Conservation Area (CA) extends west along Oxford Road as far as the railway bridge and therefore a significant proportion of the footprint of the building lies within the CA. The applicant does not recognise this in the application and we have already commented separately on this.

##### **1.2 Listed buildings**

1.2.1 The applicant should also address the context of listed buildings in the immediate area.

1.2.2 Prospect Terrace, 237-247 Oxford Road, is listed Grade II.

1.2.3 Oxford Road Primary School is listed Grade II.

1.2.4 The Tilehurst Road bridge over the line is an 1840s bridge and is listed Grade II. This listing important in the context of the utilitarian gate intervention on Tilehurst Road and any refurbishment of the existing ticket office on Platform 2.

#### **2. DESIGN**

2.1 Reading CAAC expected that the challenge of designing a secure but inviting ticket office, with other facilities in this location would have encouraged some ingenuity and response to the context. The result is an insult to the community of the area, the commuters and travellers who in non-Covid times would have used this station.

#### **3. OPENING HOURS**

3.1 The opening hours on the application form are stated as being 6.30 to 22.45.

Could the applicant

please clarify if these are the hours when the station/ticket office is expected to be manned? This

represents a significant increase in hours over and above those which we understand are currently the case.

3.2 Could the applicant please set out the planned opening hours of the cafe?

#### **4. LOCATION AND CONTEXT**

4.1 Shoe horning the building into a space beneath the railway bridge causes a pinch point in the

pavement, which is likely to be shared by pedestrians and cyclists. The pavement is delightfully wide and open here - much better than the pavement under the Caversham Road railway bridge and ideally this would be retained rather than occupied by the ticket office.



4.2 Reading CAAC are unconvinced by the need for a shop and cafe within the ticket office. This is Oxford Road not a remote out of town station. If these facilities were not included the footprint of the building could be smaller.

4.3 The railway bridge is a landmark of the Oxford Road, celebrated in many historic views of the street. The ticket office will block that view and unbalance the symmetry of the view west and east.



*Under the railway bridge looking west*

## 5. CONCLUSION

5.1 This proposal is truly dreadful and Great Western Railway must reconsider.

5.2 The design of any revision should take into account the location and heritage context as well as the functional requirements of enhancing facilities and security at the Oxford Road and Tilehurst Road entrances."

## 5 letters were subsequently received in response to the second round of consultation following receipt of revised proposals:

4.33 *"The revised highways plan still needs amendments. The example bus size is significantly smaller than the sizing of the 15, 16 & 17 buses, so therefore the vehicle tracking is wrong. It may not be possible for a 4x4 to overtake. It is still unlikely that an ambulance or fire engine could overtake. As a result, I object to this as this plan is not suitable for the current vehicles when the realignment of the road takes place."*

*[Officer Comment - this is addressed in the Highways Authority comments above]*

- 4.34 Will you please ask British Rail - or whoever is responsible - for a very small amount of the funding allocated for this job to be allocated to installing a screening fence to the rear of Platform 2, in the same way as Platform 1 is screened, to reduce noise and light spillage and pollution and to remove the problem of overlooking that is a considerable nuisance at present. The cost will be minimal compared with the overall works and the job as a whole."

*[Officer comment: This could well be a significant issue that needs resolving. However it is considered to be beyond the scope of this application in that it doesn't have a direct connection to the proposed station building. It is a matter for the railway companies to resolve.]*

- 4.35 "On behalf of Railfuture Thames Valley I am writing in support of this application. For many years Reading West station has suffered from poor facilities. This proposal will make the station far more welcoming and user friendly and particularly welcome is the provision of staffed ticket office (in addition to two TVMs) and take-away cafe (at least during relevant hours) as well as a gateline to prevent non-user access to platforms and cut fraudulent travel. It will also enhance the public realm in the immediate vicinity of the station thus making that part of the Oxford Road more pleasant to residents and visitors alike. With the amount of housing in the catchment area there is scope for more use to be made of the station and when Green Park station opens we anticipate that Reading West will be busier with passengers changing there on home to work journeys to/from Green Park and stations on the Kennet Valley line or vice versa. Given the constrained site this development seems to make effective use of the space available and we look forward to seeing its early completion which will result in a much improved user experience and a welcome modal shift to rail travel for the west of Reading.  
Andrew McCallum, Secretary, Railfuture Thames Valley Branch"

- 4.36 "I just assume now that dislike cyclist, and dislike Reading. The new brick design looks like a replacement prison. Why the kiosk?? Oxford Road is literally all shops! Let them have the trade, and turn the empty space into secure cycle storage / lockers next to the station, rather than some extra U bars out in the rain! I also wonder what it will look like with either the inevitable pigeon droppings or the pigeon wire to keep them off? But at least you are keeping the weeds and the advertising hoarding , Reading West must know its place."

- 4.37 "Further to your letter dated 2nd December 2020 regarding the planning application for Reading West Station, I partially withdraw some of my previous objections regarding architectural merit, however maintain others in respects to space and pedestrian safety.

I note that the revised changes to the building materials and design is an improvement and more in keeping with the local area. I still have concerns regarding a flat roof near a rail line and the potential for unsafe access, although the change regarding railings may appear to have resolved this. However, despite some reservations regarding the need for additional retail space in an area with high saturation of such use, I withdraw my previous objections regarding architectural and aesthetic design.

I still maintain my objection to the reduction of space to the Oxford Road, particularly considering the heavy road traffic use as well as the reduction in available space for pedestrians and cyclists. I note the additional railings for safety

and they are welcomed, but believe that this cannot compensate for such a significant reduction in space. I still believe making better use of the land running adjacent to the rail line would help alleviate this issue.

I make a comment to GWR specifically that remedial works to the existing platform infrastructure is still required - the existing shelters are in a poor state and are inadequate for where the trains stop on the platform, and that some managed planting would improve the pathways leading up to the platforms.

I make a comment to Reading Borough Council specifically that the authority should take the opportunity to repaint the railway bridge by Reading West station with a new design whilst construction work for the new station is ongoing, working with the applicable stakeholder, Network Rail, to do so. Public art is vitally important, and the current design is in poor condition and lacks inspiration. Concurrent working would limit overall any disruptions to the public highways.

I remain supportive of the concept of improvements to this public railway station - it is long overdue.

I copy this letter to my local councillors for their reference."

**4.38 The Conservation Area Advisory Committee commented on 17 December as follows:**

"New plans have now been submitted for improved facilities at Reading West Station. The appearance of the unit has marginally improved but remains inappropriate to the setting and we object strongly to the proposal as currently submitted for the following reasons:

**1. HERITAGE**

**1.1 Conservation area**

1.1.1 The Russell Street/Castle Hill/Oxford Road Conservation Area (CA) extends west along Oxford Road as far as the railway bridge and therefore a significant proportion of the footprint of the building lies within the CA. The applicant does not recognise this in the application and we have already commented separately on this.

**1.2 Listed buildings**

1.2.1 The applicant should also address the context of listed buildings in the immediate area.

1.2.2 Prospect Terrace, 237-247 Oxford Road, is listed Grade II.

1.2.3 Oxford Road Primary School is listed Grade II.

1.2.4 The Tilehurst Road bridge over the line is an 1840s bridge and is listed Grade II. This listing important in the context of the utilitarian gate intervention on Tilehurst Road and any refurbishment of the existing ticket office on Platform 2.

**2. DESIGN**

2.1 Reading CAAC expected that the challenge of designing a secure but inviting ticket office, with other facilities in this location would have encouraged some ingenuity and response to the context. The brick clad units are an improvement on the original plans but are still bland and generic. The 'brick climbing wall' effect is not a response to the local context.

**3. OPENING HOURS**

3.1 The opening hours on the application form are stated as being 6.30 to 22.45. Could the applicant please clarify if these are the hours when the station/ticket

office is expected to be manned? This represents a significant increase in hours over and above those which we understand are currently the case.

3.2 Could the applicant please set out the planned opening hours of the cafe?

#### **4. LOCATION AND CONTEXT**

4.1 Shoe horning the building into a space beneath the railway bridge causes a pinch point in the pavement, which is likely to be shared by pedestrians and cyclists. The pavement is delightfully wide and open here - much better than the pavement under the Caversham Road railway bridge and ideally this would be retained rather than occupied by the ticket office.

4.2 Reading CAAC are unconvinced by the need for a shop and cafe within the ticket office. This is Oxford Road not a remote out of town station. If these facilities were not included the footprint of the building could be smaller.

4.3 The railway bridge is a landmark of the Oxford Road, celebrated in many historic views of the street. The ticket office will block that view and unbalance the symmetry of the view west and east.

*[repeats photo from previous comment]*

#### **5. CONCLUSION**

5.1 This proposal is truly dreadful and Great Western Railway must reconsider.

5.2 The design of the revised plans has added some token bricks but still does not take into account the location and heritage context as well as the functional requirements of enhancing facilities and security at the Oxford Road and Tilehurst Road entrances."

### **5. RELEVANT POLICY AND GUIDANCE**

5.1 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.

5.2 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy framework (NPPF) - among them the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'.

#### **5.6 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2019)**

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

- 2. Achieving sustainable development
- 4. Decision-making
- 6. Building a strong, competitive economy
- 8. Promoting healthy and safe communities
- 9. Promoting sustainable transport
- 12. Achieving well-designed places
- 16. Conserving and enhancing the historic environment.

#### **Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)**

Sections of particular relevance include:

- Air Quality
- Climate Change

- Design: process and tools (and associated National Design Guide)
- Healthy and Safe Communities
- Historic Environment
- Natural Environment
- Noise
- Travel plans, Transport Assessments and Statements
- Use of planning conditions

Other Government Guidance which is a material consideration

HM Government: Crowded Places: The Planning System and Counter-Terrorism (2012)

5.7 The following local policies and guidance are relevant:

**Reading Borough Local Plan 2019**

CC1: PRESUMPTION IN FAVOUR OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

CC2: SUSTAINABLE DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION

CC3: ADAPTATION TO CLIMATE CHANGE

CC5: WASTE MINIMISATION AND STORAGE

CC7: DESIGN AND THE PUBLIC REALM

CC8: SAFEGUARDING AMENITY

EN1: PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

EN2: AREAS OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE

EN3: ENHANCEMENT OF CONSERVATION AREAS

EN5: PROTECTION OF SIGNIFICANT VIEWS WITH HERITAGE INTEREST

EN6: NEW DEVELOPMENT IN A HISTORIC CONTEXT

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

TR2: MAJOR TRANSPORT PROJECTS

TR3: ACCESS, TRAFFIC AND HIGHWAY-RELATED MATTERS

TR4: CYCLE ROUTES AND FACILITIES

RL1: NETWORK AND HIERARCHY OF CENTRES

RL2: SCALE AND LOCATION OF RETAIL, LEISURE AND CULTURE DEVELOPMENT

**Other Reading Borough Council corporate documents:**

- Local Transport Plan 3: Strategy 2011-2026 (2011)
- Draft Local Transport Plan 4.
- Reading Tree Strategy 2010
- Russell Street/Castle Hill Conservation Area Appraisal 2020

## 6. APPRAISAL

### (i) Principle of Development

- 6.1 Policy TR2: Major Transport Projects states:  
*"Priority will be given to the implementation of the major transport projects identified in the Local Transport Plan (or any successor document) and other identified major transport projects. Land required for these projects will be safeguarded where necessary. These will include:...Reading West station upgrade"*
- 6.2 The supporting text explains the upgrade as follows: *"Reading West Station Upgrade: There is a proposal to upgrade the existing Reading West Station with improved passenger facilities. The Council is working with Network Rail and First Great Western on progressing this project."*
- 6.3 The scope of the policy is not limited to this building and would include other necessary improvements to the station, including better access, lighting, CCTV and security. In some cases these works fall outside the scope of Planning control and are for the railway companies to provide through the wide ranging Acts of Parliament under which they operate.
- 6.4 For these reasons, this report focuses on the considerations which have a real connection to the application proposals in particular and which result from the proposed building. Wider issues relating to the station and the routes up to the platforms and the platforms themselves are largely beyond the scope of this current application and in most cases would not require planning permission. Standards of design, accessibility, and the impacts on neighbour amenity (the lighting issue raised in the comments section for example) are clearly important but remain the responsibility of the railway companies.
- 6.5 It is considered that the proposals would achieve the policy aims of TR2, to the extent that the limited scope of this application can achieve this.

### ii) Layout

- 6.6 The layout of the building has changed following officer and Police advice to the applicant at pre-application stage and now has a central entrance leading into a ticket hall area, single line of ticket barriers and a central circulation space (instead of entrances either end). This provides a more coherent arrangement focused on the staffed ticket office. The western end of the building is proposed to house a café kiosk with the eastern end housing the ticket office, staff welfare area and an accessible public toilet.
- 6.7 The building is required by Network Rail (who own and manage the railway track, bridge etc) to be kept away from the embankment wall under the bridge for maintenance and inspection of the embankment structure. The design achieves this by extending the roof to abut the embankment but setting the main back wall of the building away to form a corridor space. This corridor allows paying passengers to access either platform from behind the ticket line. It also allows passengers changing platforms to by-pass the main part of the new building relatively unhindered.
- 6.8 The provision of out of hours exit gates is standard railway practice and allows passengers to leave the station when the ticket hall is closed.



### *Accessibility*

- 6.9 The building itself is designed for inclusive access and would allow all persons to pass through the ticket hall and access the various facilities, including those with wheelchairs, prams and buggies etc.
- 6.10 The design includes indicative locations for passenger lifts within the embankment. This falls outside the application site and is intended to demonstrate how the building would not prevent provision of this type of facility as part of a wider redevelopment of the station in the future. It is understood for instance that the platforms would need to be widened to meet railway safety standards before access for wheelchairs could be improved. Officers are satisfied that this remains the responsibility of the railway and beyond the scope of this planning application, which is strictly limited to the works which require planning approval. It is apparent that other improvements including improved steps and ramps up to the platforms and passenger lifts are needed and that current accessibility is poor. However officers are satisfied that these areas of the wider site lie beyond the parts requiring planning permission and remain the responsibility of the railway. Representations received query whether the out of hours gates will be powered, or manual. Normally these are set in the open position unless the station is locked overnight. In both cases this should not require passengers to move the gate.
- 6.11 In overall terms it is considered that the layout is well designed and would offer significant improvements in terms of the quality of the station environment, in accordance with Policies TR2 and CC7.

### **iii) Architectural Detailing and Appearance**

- 6.12 The design has been substantially changed during the course of the application's consideration, requiring re-consultation on the revisions. These revisions have been secured on the advice of officers, including the Council's Conservation Officer, and in response to the concerns raised by objectors. The layout has remained the same as originally proposed, as has the good quality glazed entrance and glazed back wall. However, the corrugated cladding has been replaced with what officers consider is a much more appropriate brickwork design comprising good quality red multi facing bricks (Michelmersh First Quality Multi, or equivalent) to the top section of the building above window cill level and a grey multi facing brick (Michelmersh Synthesis S20, or equivalent) below cill level. These bricks have good colour variation within them and have a texture and variation in their surface that will fit well with the older bricks of the embankment and neighbouring buildings and provide a texture and visual interest that sits well within the clean contemporary lines of the overall design.
- 6.13 The brick detailing also incorporates additional interest due to the way the bricks are proposed to be arranged. This includes a stack-bonded brickwork within the lower section of grey brick and use of brick feature panels containing recessed brickwork with protruding headers. This is a modern arrangement, appropriate to

the style of building, but with some reference to the use of patterned brickwork which characterises older buildings in the area.

- 6.14 The roof has also improved considerably and is now presented with a sloping metal soffit ending with a slimmer outer edge to the roof. This compares favourably with the original bulky box-profile.
- 6.15 The proposals include fold down safety railings to the roof. These would be unsightly if permanently present but are considered acceptable if used solely for inspection and maintenance purposes. A condition to this effect is recommended.
- 6.16 The various concerns over the revised design expressed in the comments section above are noted. However, overall, it is considered that the proposed building would have a good quality contemporary appearance that is appropriate to its use. The design differs from other buildings in the area, which is perhaps a necessary quality to ensure it stands out as a public building of importance to the wider area and to raise the profile of the station as an important transport facility. It needs to be instantly recognisable. That said, the design and materials would fit well within its immediate context and would improve an otherwise unwelcoming space beneath the bridge that is considered to currently detract from the appearance of the area.
- 6.17 The site lies at the edge of the Heritage Action Zone where improvements to the historic environment are to be secured and it is considered that the building, in its revised form, would successfully marry the modern requirements of the railway; the desire to raise the standards of design for new buildings in the area; the need for an unapologetically prominent civic quality to the building; and the need to respect the character and setting of older buildings in the vicinity.
- 6.18 The proposals would not harm the character or appearance of the area of conservation area immediately around the railway bridge. The proposals are considered to be in accordance with Policies TR2, CC7, EN1, EN3 and EN6 on this basis.
- 6.19 The effect on the wider setting is considered further below.

#### iv) Townscape, Views and Heritage

- 6.20 The eastern end of the building extends into the Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road Conservation Area. There is a statutory duty on the LPA to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area. This is supported by Policies EN1, EN3, EN5 and EN6 of the Local Plan. This includes views into the Conservation Area when approaching the station and the eastern end of the conservation area from along Oxford road from the West.
- 6.21 Accordingly, the recent Conservation Area Appraisal (March 2020) identifies the site as forming part of the Oxford Road Character Area and notes that the view west towards the railway overbridge is important to the heritage of the area: *"looking west along Oxford Road towards the railway bridge from the eastern end, the parade of polychrome brick residential and retail buildings display their colours well, with the with the bustle of Oxford Road's pedestrians and vehicles in front. The bridge, with its faded mural of doves, designed by schoolchildren, has been a landmark for over 170 years."*



- 6.22 Looking west from within the conservation area, it is considered that the main significance is that of the bridge itself, with its visually striking form punctuating the street scene. Views beyond to the west are already reduced to glimpses beneath the bridge structure. It is considered that the proposed single storey building would sit to one side serve to frame this view and would not unduly obstruct the glimpses of Oxford Road as it continues onwards beyond the bridge to the west. The proposed building itself is relatively unobtrusive (compared with the mass of the overbridge) given its single storey scale and and is considered to be of a good quality design (as described above). That being said, and as described above, it is considered that a degree of prominence is appropriate, commensurate with its civic function and the presence of the new building in this location is considered acceptable on the basis of the improved revised design. Nevertheless the railway bridge would remain the dominant feature in the street scene.
- 6.23 From the west side of the bridge, views eastward into the conservation area are dominated by the existing bridge and embankment structure which leave only glimpses of parts of the historic terraced buildings beyond. The bridge forms a highly effective end stop to the conservation area and it is necessary to pass beyond the bridge in order to better appreciate its character and appearance. The proposed building would perform a similar book-end function, although not to the same extent as the overbridge.
- 6.24 Views from the southern pavement west of the bridge towards the Grade II listed terrace 237-247 Oxford Road are generally oblique and already limited where the new building would obstruct views the most. Views of this terrace from the northern pavement to the west of the bridge would be less affected by the new building. The Grade II listed Oxford Road Primary School would not be readily visible within views.
- 6.25 Similarly, the Buildings of Townscape Merit to the north of the street at nos. 152 to 164 Oxford Rd and Bridge Hall and nos 249 to 253 and 255 to 261 Oxford Road would retain their significance and the contribution that they make within the conservation area.
- 6.26 It is considered that the setting of these listed buildings would not be harmed by the proposals and that the proposed building would preserve the character and appearance of the conservation area and its setting.
- 6.27 The proposals are considered to comply with policies CC7, EN1, EN3, EN5 and EN6 on this basis.

**v) Public Realm - Highways and Landscaping**

- 6.28 Comments have been received regarding the spaciousness of the pavement under the bridge. The pavement is currently unusually wide at this point. However, it is considered that the space is uninviting and unpleasant. It also does little to announce the presence of the station, with access to the station pedestrian ramp being little more than an alleyway presented to the pavement.
- 6.29 The new station building will inevitably narrow the pavement at this location. This is not necessarily harmful of itself. The key question is the quality of the remaining space and the way it functions.

- 6.30 The highway works widen the pavement around the new station building by reducing the width of the northern pavement and building out the southern pavement. This allows for a minimum footway width of 2.5 metres towards the eastern end of the building, increasing to 3 metres at the western end. Functionally, this will allow for sufficient width as per Highways Authority comments above.
- 6.31 The Highway Authority advice set out in the Consultation section above confirms that the proposals would not cause undue obstruction of the highway and would maintain a suitable environment for all road users.
- 6.32 The proposed works to the highway land include the widening of the existing southern pavement and narrowing of northern pavement and a re-worked pedestrian crossing. These are considered to be an important aspect of the works that are necessary to integrate the new building within its surroundings both visually and functionally. The lack of covered cycle storage raised by objectors is noted, however the Sheffield stand hoops proposed are standard across the Borough and are considered to be sufficient.
- 6.33 The highway falls outside of the application site, however a (Grampian) condition securing the works prior to occupation of the station building is considered appropriate as the land is under Council control and the Council is partnering with the applicant to deliver the station improvement works. There is therefore reasonable certainty that the off-site works would be capable of being accomplished, either by the developer or others.

**vi) Trees and Planting**

- 6.34 The existing trees identified on the highways plan require protection during the highways works. This is to be secured by condition.
- 6.35 Policy CC3 seeks additional tree planting to combat the effects of climate change. Policy EN12 seeks biodiversity enhancements (the site is part of an identified Green Link). Policy EN14 states that Reading's vegetation cover will be extended and requires new development to provide tree planting within the site and particularly on street frontages. Officers are therefore satisfied that there should be a requirement for additional street tree planting, where feasible (subject to underground services, Highway safety matters etc). A location is envisaged towards the eastern end of the build-out to the southern pavement. This has been suggested to the applicant, although no details have been provided at this stage. A condition to this effect is therefore recommended.

**vii) Security**

- 6.36 Thames Valley Police have been closely involved during pre-application discussions and the layout of the building with the central entrance is a result of the need to achieve a secure space with the ticket office staff having a clear view of persons entering the station building.
- 6.37 The building will improve passive surveillance of the area under the bridge when the station is open and staffed.

- 6.38 The revised roof design, including overhanging eaves are is considered appropriate to discourage unauthorised access.
- 6.39 However, the building will also introduce additional corners and 'dead spaces' within the street that could be vulnerable to crime or anti-social behaviour, especially out of hours. It is considered essential that the new building includes full CCTV coverage of the public spaces within and around the building, including a live feed to Council and/or Police systems. A condition securing this is recommended.
- 6.40 The building will improve security on the railway land south of the building but only if suitable managed access is provided including ticket barriers during operational hours and secure exit only gates out of hours to prevent unauthorised access to the platforms and access paths. Without this security, the building could worsen security by providing unsecured secluded spaces to the rear which could be attract criminal/Anti-social behaviour.
- 6.41 Officers agree with Police advice that securing the Oxford Road frontage with ticket lines during the day and with suitable exit only out of hours gates at night after the last train has departed is only possible if the Tilehurst Road entrance/exit is also similarly secured. The submitted Design and Access Statement suggests that this is the intention, which is welcomed, but implementation would remain uncertain without a suitable Planning condition. Not doing so would mean the rear of the new building would remain vulnerable.
- 6.42 It is considered that the entrances/exits at the two ends of the station (Oxford Road and Tilehurst Road) are intrinsically linked in terms of security. Police advice is that improving security at only one end would displace unwanted behaviour to the other end. It is clearly the case that the new station building will provide much-needed additional security; however only as part of a wider strategy. Officers are satisfied that the need for secure access/exits is directly related to the new station building and the way in which it alters the dynamics and physical arrangement of the station.
- 6.43 The areas under the bridge and to the rear of the proposed building will need appropriate lighting to assist CCTV imaging and avoid dark secluded areas.
- 6.44 A security strategy is therefore required to prevent an increase in crime/ASB and to achieve the aims of reducing crime/ASB and improving security as set out in the application.

**viii) Amenity (Neighbouring Occupiers)**

- 6.45 Policy CC8 seeks to prevent detrimental impacts on existing residential properties. Relevant to this case are matters relating to loss of sunlight/daylight, overbearing effects, noise and disturbance and artificial lighting.
- 6.46 The nearest residential property is at 283 Oxford Road, adjacent to the eastern platform entrance. The roof overhang would intrude to some extent into the area around the front of this neighbouring building but the basement windows are already heavily affected by stairs, railings and other items to the front of the property. The

ground floor rooms are well above street level and would not be unduly affected. It is considered that the proposed building would not harm the amenity of occupiers of this property in terms of unacceptable loss of daylight, loss of outlook, loss of privacy or overbearing effects.

- 6.47 The proposed retail kiosk is considered to be a reasonable and not uncommon addition to a railway ticket hall. However, only as a use ancillary to the use as a station building as the two are bound up functionally and the site is considered unsuitable for a retail kiosk in isolation. A condition to this effect is proposed.
- 6.48 The Council's Environmental Protection section advises that the hours of use of the kiosk should be controlled. The applicant has raised concerns over controls. Officers consider that a reasonable compromise would be to limit the hours of use of the external serving hatch to Oxford Road to the hours suggested on the application form, i.e. between 0630 and 2300. This would contain any activity within the building. This combined with a condition requiring the use of the kiosk to remain ancillary to the use of the main station building would provide a sufficient limit on the potential intensity of use and associated disturbance.
- 6.49 A condition requiring a noise assessment for any external plant (air conditioning, refrigeration condensers etc) is recommended as these could also harm neighbouring amenity (none are currently proposed and in most instances would require further planning permission).

**ix) Environmental Sustainability**

- 6.50 Policy CC2 requires all minor non-residential developments to meet the most up-to-date BREEAM 'Very Good' standard as a minimum. A condition is recommended to secure evidence of certification once constructed.

**x) Need for Kiosk**

- 6.51 A number of objections received question the usefulness of the retail kiosk and suggest that it would provide unwelcome competition with Oxford Rd businesses. It is considered that the size and layout of the kiosk is primarily for the convenience of rail users. The ancillary nature is unlikely to have significant impact on existing businesses.

**xi) Wider Maintenance Matters**

- 6.52 Representations received raise concerns over the visual appearance of the overbridge and the need to re-paint. Concerns are also raised over the maintenance of the existing platform shelters, and lack of landscaping etc. These matters relate directly to railway company infrastructure and are the responsibility of GWR, and/or Network Rail.

## **xii) Equality**

- 6.53 In determining this application, the LPA is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation. There is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that the protected groups have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to the particular planning application (acknowledging the existing situation in terms of access is less than ideal). Matters relating to accessibility are addressed elsewhere in this report. In terms of the key equalities protected characteristics it is considered there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the development.

## **xiii) Conclusion and Planning Balance**

- 6.54 The proposed development is considered to be a good quality addition to the area that will improve the environment around the station entrance and raise standards of design in this part of the Conservation Area, enhancing its character. The proposals are considered to preserve the setting of nearby listed buildings fronting Oxford Road as well as other buildings of Townscape Merit.
- 6.55 The proposals (with the recommended conditions) will improve the experience of station users and the security of the station as a whole. The proposals will not worsen the accessibility of the station, which largely remains a matter for the railway companies to resolve and would not harm the amenity of neighbouring dwellings (subject to the recommended conditions).
- 6.56 Overall it is considered that the proposals will act as a positive catalyst for ongoing improvements to the station and the sustainable transport benefits that are associated with this. It will also serve to revitalise this part of the Oxford Road and the newly designated Conservation Area and Heritage Action Zone.
- 6.57 The application is recommended for approval on this basis and as set out in the recommendation at the beginning of this report.

Case Officer: Steve Vigar

## **SUBMITTED DETAILS**

### **Drawings**

19111-OA-B1-00-DR-A-1000 Rev. P3, Site Location and Block Plan, dated 25 November 2020

19111-OA-B1-00-DR-A-1504 Rev. P6, Proposed Ticket Office Option D2, dated 1 December 2020

19111-OA-B1-00-DR-A-2000 Rev. P4, Existing and Proposed Elevations, dated 1 December 2020

19111-OA-B1-XX-DR-A-4001 Rev. P3, Proposed Sections, dated 1 December 2020

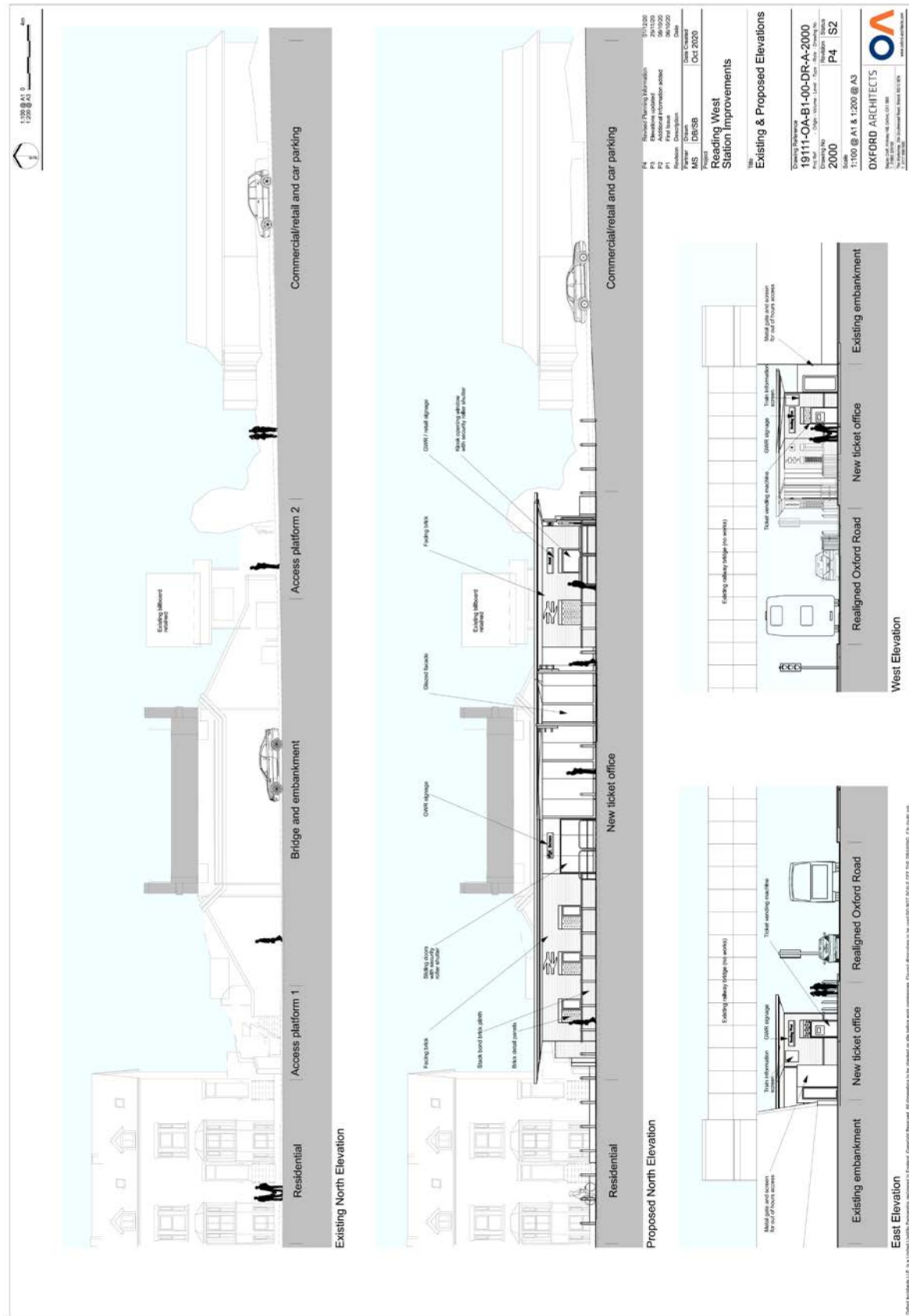
19111-OA-B1-XX-DR-A-8001 Rev. P1, Typical Window Detail, dated 30 November 2020

45835/5504/SK012 Rev.D 'Reading West Station, Improvements, Oxford Road, Proposed Layout Plan', dated 14 December 2020 [Highways Plan]

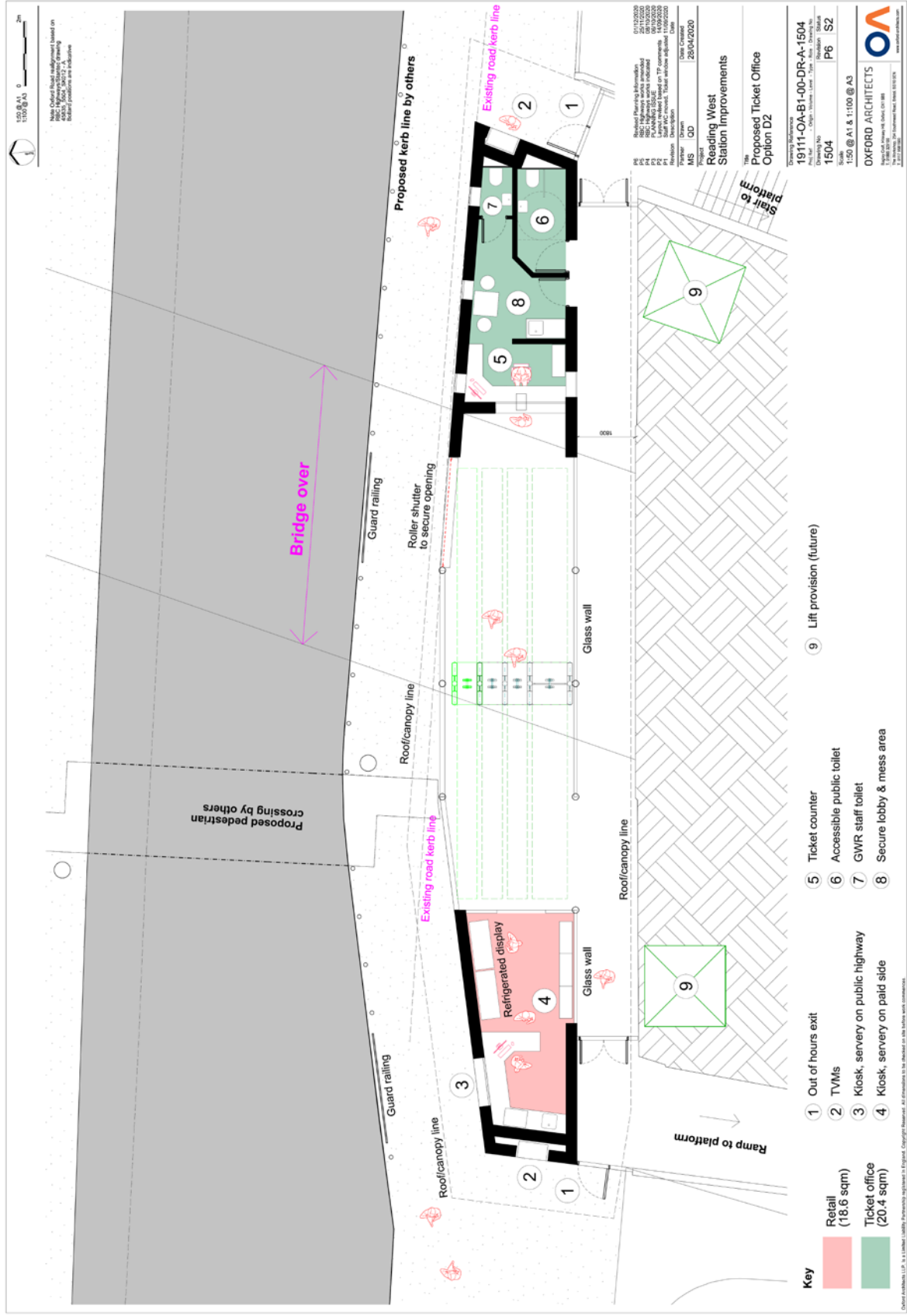
### **Documents**

Design and Access Statement v.2.2 received 15 December 2020

APPENDIX: Drawings - Selection Only. Full set available at <http://planning.reading.gov.uk/>

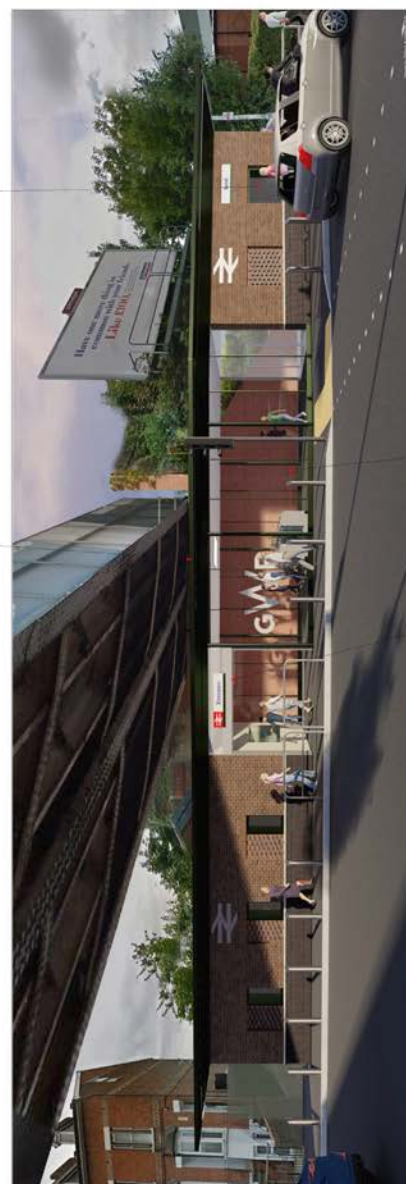


Existing and Proposed Elevations



Proposed Station Building Layout





2 Street view from the east -  
1511 evening

1 Street view from the west -  
1511 evening

3 Street view from north -  
evening

W

**Roof**  
EPDM single ply membrane on WBP plywood deck,  
PPC aluminium soffits and fascias

Retail window  
PPC aluminium with double glazing

Toughened & laminate single glazing  
PPC aluminium frame

Roller shutter

Revision	Description	Date Created
P6	Revised Planning Information	01/12/20
P7	Minor amendments	12/10/20
P4	Minor amendments	08/10/20
P3	Design amended	06/10/20
P2	Notes added	16/12/19
P1	Token office design amended	05/12/19

Reading West  
Station Improvements

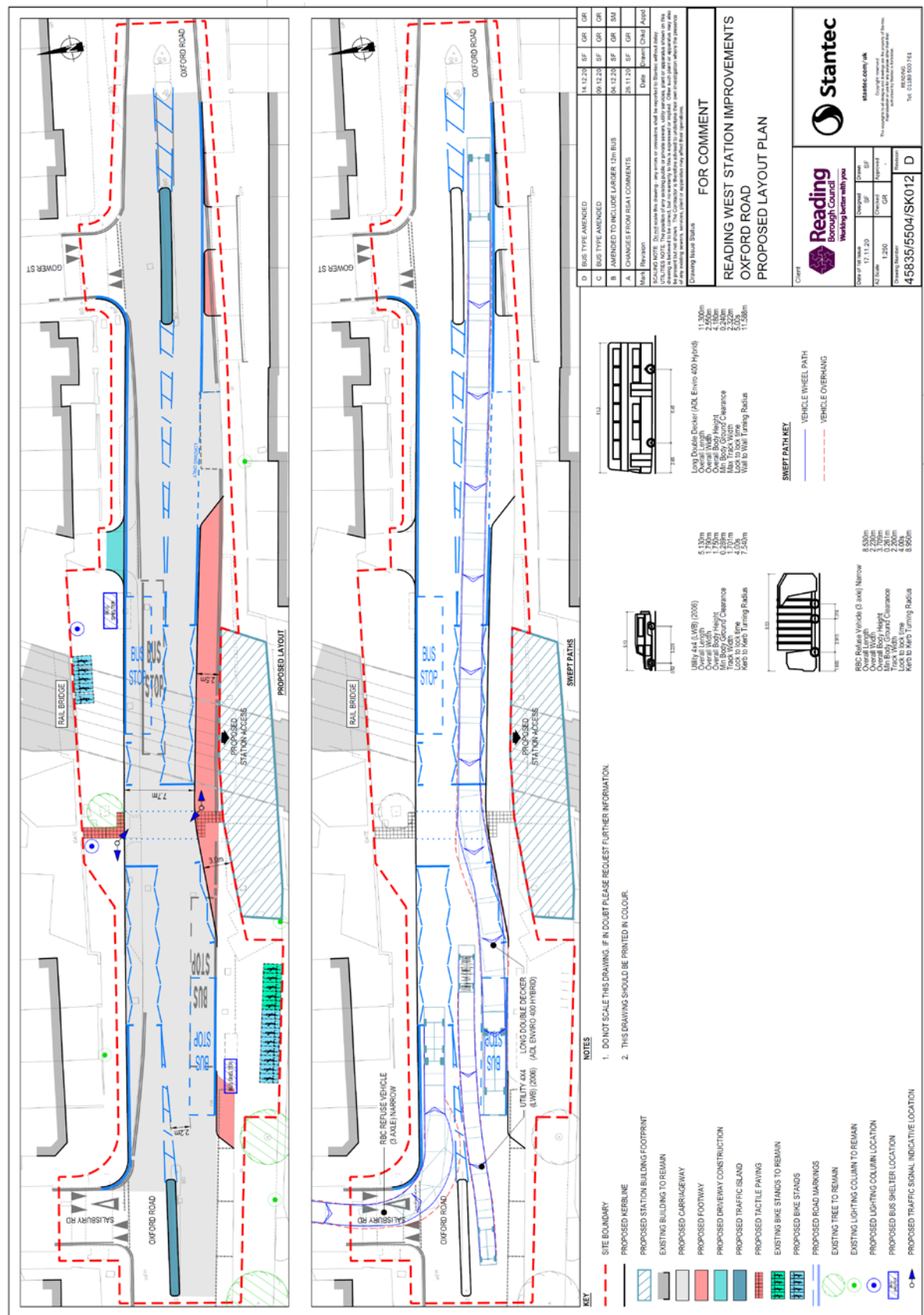
Drawing Reference  
**19111-OA-B1-XX-DR-A-1511**  
 1 Digit Volume Level Type Run Drawing No

Revision Status  
**P6 S2**

Drawing No  
**1511**

Scale  
**UNITS**

**OXFORD ARCHITECTS**  
 1000 Cook Highway (Rt. 202), 301 100  
 1 (781) 229-7000  
 The Oxford Building, 200 South Main Street, 02126  
 www.oxford-architects.com



Highways Layout Plan

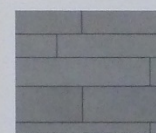


# READING WEST STATION

## Ticket Office Improvements - Material Samples Board



- (A) Brick Type 1 - Grey brick plinth in stacked header bond
- (B) Brick Type 2 - Red brick stretcher bond
- (C) Recessed panels - Red Brick in Type 2 Flemish bond with projecting grey Brick Type 1
- (D) Precast stone band - grey Portland fine etched
- (E) Roof - polyester powder coated in RAL 6012 Black Green, matte finish
- (F) Internal walls - fibre cement board, natural grey
- (G) Brushed stainless steel InterCity signage



This samples board accompanies Planning Application Number: 201448

GWR Great Western Railway

OA OXFORD ARCHITECTS

Submitted materials sample panel.



## SITE PHOTOGRAPHS



Oxford Rd looking west towards station and overbridge.



Oxford Road looking east towards overbridge



Area under bridge - looking south