

UPDATE REPORT

BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC GROWTH AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES
READING BOROUGH COUNCIL
PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE: 7th December 2022

ITEM NO. 9

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Ward: Abbey

Application No.: A) 221232/FUL & B) 221233/LBC

Address: 1-15 (odd) Queen Victoria Street & 145-148 Friar Street, Reading, RG1 1SY

Proposals: A): Demolition of No. 146 Friar St and structures to rear and partial demolition of No. 145 Friar St and various external works to other existing buildings, as part of redevelopment to provide: reconfigured basement and ground floor uses (Class E(a) or (b)) on Friar St and Queen Victoria St frontages and proposed apart-hotel (Class C1) at part-basement, part-ground and on all upper floors; part-two, part-three storey rear extension to No's 5-15 (odd) Queen Victoria St; replacement basement and five storey building at No. 145 Friar St and two-storey roof extension to No. 146 Friar St; proposed public courtyard accessed via Queen Victoria St walkway; roof level plant; and various other associated works.

B) Various internal and external works associated with No's 147 and 148 Friar St and No's 1 - 15 (odd) Queen Victoria St, including part-two, part-three storey rear extension to No's 5-15 (odd) Queen Victoria St, as part of redevelopment to provide reconfigured basement and ground floor uses (Class E(a) or (b)) on Friar St and Queen Victoria St frontages and proposed apart-hotel (Class C1) and on all upper floors.

Applicant: Thackeray Estates Reading Investments Ltd

Date Valid: A) & B) 22/08/2022

Application target decision date: Originally A) 21/11/2022 & B) 17/10/2022, but extensions of time have been agreed until 21/12/2022.

26 week date: 20/02/2023

Amended Recommendation:

A) 221232/FUL:

Delegate to the Assistant Director for Planning, Transport and Regulatory Services (AD PTRS) to (i) GRANT full planning permission subject to the satisfactory completion of a Section 106 legal agreement or (ii) to REFUSE permission should the Section 106 legal agreement not be completed by the 21st December 2022 (unless officers on behalf of the AD PTRS agree to a later date for completion of the legal agreement).

The S106 legal agreement as in main report.

Conditions as in main report, barring a summary of insertions to conditions 3, 4, 5, 6, 14, 15, 21, 23, 25, 26, 27 and 28 (marked in **bold** below) and the following additional conditions 44, 45, 46 and 47:

3. Pre-commencement, barring demolition and repair works to 12 roof level gables, details of all external materials to be submitted to the LPA (and sample details to be provided on site) and approved in writing with the LPA. Approved details to be retained on site until the work has been completed

4. Demolition works (**but barring repair works to 12 roof level gables**) not to be undertaken before a contract for site redevelopment **up to and including at least the demolition and proposed shell and core stages**, as per submitted and approved details to LPA.

5. Pre-commencement in relation to (i) works to 12 roof level gables and (ii) all other component parts of the proposed development, level 2 photographic recording of existing buildings
6. Pre-commencement in relation to (i) works to 12 roof level gables and (ii) all other component parts of the proposed development, Demolition and Construction Method Statement (including EP based matters)
14. Pre-commencement (including demolition, but barring repair works to 12 roof level gables) contaminated land site characterisation assessment
15. Pre-commencement (including demolition, but barring repair works to 12 roof level gables) contaminated land remediation scheme
21. Pre-commencement, barring demolition and repair works to 12 roof level gables, submission and approval of Sustainable Drainage Strategy
23. Pre-commencement, barring demolition to ground level and repair works to 12 roof level gables, submission and approval of archaeological details
25. Pre-commencement, barring demolition and repair works to 12 roof level gables, submission and approval of all hard and soft landscaping details, specifically including green/brown/blue roof and green wall details
26. Pre-commencement, barring demolition and repair works to 12 roof level gables, submission and approval of biodiversity enhancement works
27. Pre-commencement, barring demolition and repair works to 12 roof level gables, submission of and approval of access control strategy
28. Pre-commencement, barring demolition and repair works to 12 roof level gables, submission of and approval of CCTV operations requirements study

44. Pre-commencement, barring demolition and repair works to 12 roof level gables, submission and approval of an interim BREEAM Certificate demonstrating a minimum BREEAM Excellent rating
45. Pre-occupation submission and approval of a final BREEAM Certificate demonstrating a minimum BREEAM Excellent rating
46. Compliance condition for the development to be carried out in accordance with the energy measures and carbon reductions achieved in the Energy Statement hereby approved
47. Pre-commencement the demolition of No. 146 Friar Street, submission and approval of scheme and details of repair for 12 roof level gables at 1-15 Queen Victoria Street and 148 Friar Street, including timetable for reinstatement of all 12 gables

Informatives as in the main report, barring the following additional informative:

12. Definition of shell and core works, further to condition 4.

B) 221233/LBC:

As in main report.

1. Floorspace & CIL clarification

- 1.1 Further to paragraph 2.3 of the main report, the applicant responded on 30/11/22 confirming agreement to the floorspace figures detailed by officers (which differed to the information submitted at the time by the applicant), barring a 0.1sqm difference to the proposed first floor total.

2. Additional information submitted

2.1 Further to paragraph 2.15 of the main report, the applicant has subsequently submitted the following additional information:

- CIL form 1: CIL Additional Information, as received 30/11/2022
- CIL Spreadsheet 29.11.22, as received 30/11/2022
- 1-15 Queen Victoria Street and 145-148 Friar Street, Reading Comments on Planning Submission (Rev A) 29th November 2022 by Troup Bywaters + Anders dated and received 29/11/2022
- 138-144 and 145-148 Friar Street: TB+A supplementary information in relation to PR6 - Sustainable Design and Construction SPD Section 8.6 Ground-Source and Air-Source Heat Pump by Troup Bywaters + Anders dated and received 01/12/2022
- 138-144 and 145-148 Friar Street: TB+A supplementary information in relation to EE2 Baseline energy demand by Troup Bywaters + Anders dated and received 01/12/2022
- Email from Town Planning Bureau 'Re: 1-15 Queen Victoria St 145-148 Friar St (221232/221233) - recommended conditions', dated and received 01/12/2022 - accepting wording of pre-commencement conditions

3. Addition to the planning history section

3.1 The following proposal was inadvertently not included at paragraph 3.1 of the main report:

1-15 Queen Victoria Street and 148 Friar Street

181737/FUL & 181738/LBC - Repair and maintenance, and where necessary replacement of the roof, windows and brickwork including repair and maintenance of 12 roof gables. Finally Disposed of 28/07/2022.

3.2 In short, the above proposal was being progressed but was awaiting the completion of a s106 legal Agreement when application 210223/FUL & 210224/LBC ('QVS1') were submitted. Accordingly, the proposals were effectively subsumed within the 2021 scheme, and this is also the case in relation to the current proposal too. Given the lack on progress on the original standalone application, this was 'finally disposed of' by the LPA in July 2022, meaning that those applications were closed, without a decision.

4. Further public consultation response

4.1 In addition to section 4ii of the main report, one additional public consultation response has since been received in relation to application 221232/FUL. A summary of the observations / comments, from a Shinfield Road, RG2, resident are:

- A general liking for the first stage plan.
- Imposing a consistent colour palette on all the retail signage would be too limiting and lead to a gentrified feel that might well put a lot of retailers off (as they want their brands to stand out)
- Regarding The Bugle, it would be great to see it reopen as a pub/bar as part of the development.

- 4.2 Officer comments: No advertisement consent is sought as part of the current proposals, so there would be scope for individual future occupiers to separately apply for signage, which would be judged on their own individual merits at the time. In terms of The Bugle (144 Friar Street), this is outside of the red line boundary of this application (and consent) site.

5. Update on Sunlight matters

- 5.1 Whilst paragraph 4.70 of the main report advised that no further input was considered to be required by BRE, for completeness it is confirmed that BRE's subsequent response did not have any further comments on the courtyard, over those in BRE's original review (as per paragraph 4.68 of the main report).

6. Update on Sustainability and Energy Matters

- 6.1 Section 4u and paragraph 6.40 of the main report advised that Hoare Lea, the LPA's independent reviewers on sustainability and energy matters, were still in the process of assessing and clarifying various points in terms of the appropriateness of these components of the scheme. Additional information was submitted on 29/11/2022 and, following a meeting on 30/11/22 some further information was then submitted on 01/12/22 (as detailed within section 2 above). Following further assessment of all information submitted by the applicant, Hoare Lea has now been able to confirm to officers' satisfaction that the proposals respond to the RBC policy requirements.
- 6.2 It is acknowledged that the listed nature of some of the existing buildings at the site results in an additional challenge in respect of meeting the required standards, as changes to meet sustainability targets could alter the special character and appearance of the buildings. Accordingly, the listed parts of the application site buildings have been excluded from the BREEAM assessment (which has been evidenced sufficiently in line with paragraph 3.5 of the Sustainable Design and Construction SPD), with this instead focusing on the new build elements of the proposals. Following various clarifications and submission of additional information by the applicant, Hoare Lea confirmed officers' expectation that sufficient information to demonstrate how the proposal would achieve the targeted overall BREEAM Excellent rating. This is welcomed and is in line with Policy/SPD requirements for a scheme of this scale and nature.
- 6.3 Two planning conditions are recommended to secure the BREEAM Excellent rating in practice. The first relates to securing an Interim BREEAM Excellent rating Certificate at the pre-commencement, barring demolition and gable works stage. The second will secure a Final BREEAM Excellent rating Certificate prior to the first occupation of the apart-hotel. These conditions are necessary to ensure the development is carried out in accordance with sustainable building standards, adhering to both Policy CC2 and the guidance within the Sustainable Design and Construction SPD. These conditions are therefore duly added to the Recommendation above.
- 6.4 Turning to consider the energy strategy, this has been divided between the refurbishment and new build components of the scheme. It is shown that in terms of the total estimated reduction in the development's baseline carbon and/or energy emissions, the refurbishment scheme achieves a 68% (and the new build component 71%) reduction in carbon emissions when calculated against Part L 2013 and also including SAP 10 carbon factors.

The overriding majority of the savings are achieved through the proposed decentralised energy options incorporated, namely air source heat pumps (ground source has been ruled out for technical reasons) and rooftop photovoltaics. Each of the decentralised energy options have been suitably considered by the applicant, as confirmed by Hoare Lea following the submission of clarifications during the application. In addition, the scheme has been designed to be compatible with a future district heating network, with provision made for the heat pumps to work with a water-based energy source in the future.

- 6.5 Hoare Lea have confirmed their satisfaction that the proposals are policy compliant. In the circumstances officers consider it necessary and reasonable for a compliance condition to secure the development being carried out in accordance with the energy measures and carbon reductions achieved in the Energy Statement documentation submitted. This condition is duly added to the Recommendation above.

7. Update in relation to pre-commencement conditions / clarifications regarding repair works to 12 roof level gables at 1-15 Queen Victoria Street and 148 Friar Street

- 7.1 Paragraph 6.46 of the main report specified that the exact wording of the pre-commencement conditions would be sought to be agreed with the applicant. As part of that process matters have arisen in respect of the proposed repair works to the 12 roof level gables at 1-15 Queen Victoria Street and 148 Friar Street, as proposed as part of this application, and the interaction between these works and the pre-commencement conditions. More specifically, the applicant has confirmed that they intend to prioritise works to repair the gables first as part of any permission/consent, so as to enable the removal of the existing scaffolding along Queen Victoria Street. As such, the applicant has sought for the pre-commencement conditions to be worded to specifically exclude the gable works, so that these works are not constrained / delayed by the preparation, submission and formal determination of such approval of details applications.
- 7.2 Officers have carefully considered the applicant's suggested approach and it is advised that flexibility can be applied in this regard. Overall and on balance, the potentially harmful impacts of works to the gables not being undertaken (i.e. harm to structural stability and neglect to the detriment of the special character and appearance of the listed buildings that these gables provide) are considered to outweigh harm from deviating from the standard condition trigger points in this specific instance. Altering the wording of the condition does not dilute the level or nature of information required to be submitted in these regards, but offers greater flexibility in the timing of the submission in line with a sequence of works indicated by the applicant (namely the intention of gable repairs to commence imminently). It is also confirmed that the additional wording would still result in each of these conditions passing all six tests required of any planning condition.
- 7.3 More specifically, conditions 4 (contract for redevelopment) and 14 & 15 (contaminated land) are recommended to be re-worded to specifically be barring works to the gables, to exclude these conditions being triggered by the intended repair works. In terms of conditions 5 (photographic record of the existing building) and 6 (Demolition and Construction Method Statement) the gable work repairs, by their very nature, will themselves

trigger requirements in these regards. As such, in these instances, the wording of the condition is recommended to be separated out to specifically reference (i) gable works and (ii) all other component parts of the development. In practice, the applicant will then have the ability to submit an approval of details application to partly discharge the condition in respect of condition 5 (i) to facilitate the gable works, and then separately submit an approval of details application to discharge the remainder of the condition in respect of condition 5 (ii) at a subsequent date. Alternatively, condition 5 (i) and (ii) could be submitted as one if later desired by the applicant. In short, the applicant is still required to submit these details in relation to the gable works, but this is separated out from the rest of the development to enable flexibility for this to be undertaken separately (and prior to the remainder of the development - as specified by the applicant).

7.4 With more specific regard to the gable works themselves, the level and nature of information submitted in this regard is identical to that submitted as part of applications 210223/FUL and 210224/LBC at the site. That submission followed on from standalone applications 181737/FUL & 181738/LBC (see section 3 above). The information submitted with this application highlights that the gables are deteriorating structurally are in need of significant repair, as also witnessed on the Members site visit on 01/12/2022. The structural report recommends that the gables are taken down, repaired, re-built and re-erected. A summary of the proposed methodology for the intended approach for each gable is detailed below:

- Full photographic and dimensional survey of a gable and record all its details (as per recommended condition 5).
- Demolish the gable by hand, brick by brick and store all the components in bags within the building to prevent loading out the scaffold.
- Take down the gable to window or parapet level to try to expose all likely internal structural items such as lintels and timber joists. All demolition works photographically recorded and logged.
- Any damaged terracotta items that are salvageable carefully removed and repaired using reconstituted terracotta mortar with stainless steel wire reinforcing resin fixed in position.
- Any terracotta units beyond repair carefully recorded prior to removal and applicant to then manufacture a mould and re-cast a new unit. Sample of any replacement unit to be presented for approval prior to manufacture.
- Once the rebuilding starts all bedding and pointing mortar will be natural hydraulic lime (to match existing as close as possible)
- All re-building works will be photographically recorded.

7.5 Officers are satisfied that the proposed methodology for repair/replacement of the gables would preserve and enhance the special historic character of the listed buildings and ensure they continue to contribute positively to the visual amenity of the surrounding area and the setting of the other buildings within the listed terraces along Queen Victoria Street. It is recommended that a condition is included (see condition 47 above) to secure exact details of the scheme and precise details for the repair works themselves, including a timetable for the reinstatement of all 12 gables. The trigger point for the submission of such details is pre- the commencement of the demolition of No. 146 Friar Street, to ensure that the application follows through on the stated intention to seek to undertake these works prior to the wider site redevelopment. Put another way, this safeguards the LPA from a position whereby other conditions have been re-worded (as per this update report) to specifically exclude the gable works,

but inadvertently potentially enables the applicant to undertake the wider redevelopment without undertaking works to the gables (thereby causing harm to the listed buildings by virtue of their continually poor structural state). There is nothing to suggest that this is the intention of the applicant, who has advised that it is intended to carry out the gable works first, but permission/consent runs with the land and land ownership could change at any point. Accordingly, the trigger point on the condition effectively precludes the wider redevelopment of the site until details relating to the gables, importantly including a timetable for reinstatement, have been submitted and approved. Such a condition will ultimately seek to preserve and enhance the special historic character of the buildings and the wider setting within Queen Victoria Street and surrounding streets.

- 7.6 At the same time the applicant also separately raised questions in respect of condition 4, which relates to a contract for redevelopment details to be submitted/approved prior to demolition taking place. After discussions with the applicant, it has subsequently been agreed that the ‘works of redevelopment’ are clarified as up to and including at least the demolition and the proposed ‘shell and core’ stages of the build. The shell and core stages are clarified as ensuring that the proposed building is weather-tight and produces the final external appearance of the intended building, with the applicant also clarifying that this will include *“all new substructure, superstructure (structural frame), new floors, internal loading bearing walls/frame, staircases and full building envelope works (external cladding, windows, external doors, roof) and elements of external site works”*.
- 7.7 The applicant originally raised concern that the originally worded condition required a contract to be agreed/completed/submitted/approved for the entire completion of the redevelopment prior to any demolition beginning. The applicant explained that contracts would be anticipated to be divided up into separate demolition, shell and core and fit-out stages, with the fit-out contract only likely to be signed at least 12 months subsequent to the others. On balance, officers consider that the reason for the condition, as explained in paragraph 6.14 of the main report, is not diluted by the additional wording now sought to be incorporated and that this strikes an appropriate balance between the practical requirements of the applicant and the reason for the condition. Accordingly, the Recommendation at the outset of this update report includes additional wording in relation to condition 4, together with an informative defining shell and core works.

8. Additions to other recommended conditions

- 8.1 As a result of the discussions undertaken with the application in respect of pre-commencement conditions (see section 7 above), the applicant has also sought for additions to be made to the ‘pre-commencement, barring demolition’ conditions, to specifically exclude works to the gables triggering the requirement for the submission of these details too. The position which the applicant has outlined, namely a desire for the gable works to take place without delay of requiring various approval of details applications being required to be satisfied, is acknowledged and understood. It is considered that flexibility can be offered by officers in this regard, with the potential harmful impacts of works to the gables not being undertaken considered to outweigh harm from deviating from standard condition trigger points in this specific instance. Altering the wording of the condition does not dilute the level or nature of information required to be submitted in

these regards, but offers greater flexibility in the timing of the submission in line with a sequence of works indicated by the applicant (namely the intention of gable repairs to commence imminently).

- 8.2 Therefore, the wording of the ‘pre-commencement, barring demolition’ conditions are recommended to be altered to be pre-commencement barring demolition and repair works to the 12 roof level gables at 1-15 Queen Victoria Street and 148 Friar Street, with the relevant drawings referenced to explicitly specify such works. As per the Recommendation, this relates to conditions 3, 21, 23, 25, 26, 27 and 28.

9. Updated conclusion, including the overall planning balance

- 9.1 Section 7 of the main report included a number of caveats owing to some matters not being fully resolved at that time. In light of the updates specified in this report, and also being mindful of the additional public consultation response received, a final conclusion and overall planning balance can now be made. Accordingly, section 7 of the main report is updated in full as follows:

- 9.2 Considering solely planning application 221232/FUL first, the application is required to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise, as per Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

- 9.3 As such, the harmful impacts of the development need to be weighed against the benefits. Based on the main and update report assessments, harmful impacts include the less than substantial harm to the on-site and nearby heritage assets and the unproven level of sunlight to the proposed public courtyard.

- 9.4 The harmful impacts of the development are required to be weighed against the benefits of the proposals. The applicant has put forward a series of planning and - what the applicant considers to be - wider public benefits too, the majority of which are summarised below:

- The repair and reinstatement of the original historic frontages of the listed buildings and the architectural detailing that contributes to their significance.
- A visual improvement to the retail streets of Friar Street and Queen Victoria Street, where uniform shopfronts are proposed
- The removal and enhancement to the form and appearance of the built form at the rear of the site.
- Provision of suitable built form to the rear of the site, enhancing the visual appearance and supporting the setting of the retained listed buildings.
- Reconfigured and an expanded number of retail and related retail units (enhancing variety and small shop units) in a highly accessible and sustainable location.
- Introducing an apart-hotel use, providing short-term let accommodation, supporting the needs of, and attracting, working professionals and visitors to Reading.
- Provision of an enhanced public realm with the public courtyard, providing opportunities for respite, relaxation and play, as well as community and public events and the opportunity to foster and support local community initiatives, exhibitions and performances.

- Provision of a town centre destination that will attract visitors, shoppers and workers to this part of the town centre, enhancing the activity, vitality and viability of this part of the centre.
- Assist the vitality and viability of Queen Victoria Street and bolster the Reading economy, playing an important role in the post-Covid19 recovery of the town centre.
- Potentially providing a catalyst for the wider regeneration of Friar Street and Queen Victoria Street.
- Car free development, promoting more sustainable forms of transport such as cycling and walking

9.5 It is recognised by officers that the applicant has specified a series of planning benefits which when considered cumulatively amount to a scheme which is welcomed and supported by officers. In conclusion officers therefore consider that the conflicts with the development plan are significantly outweighed by the benefits of the proposals in this instance. Returning to paragraph 202 of the NPPF the main and update report assessments demonstrate that the public benefits of the scheme are considered to outweigh the less than substantial harm caused to the on-site and nearby heritage assets.

9.6 Overall, the proposals are considered to be acceptable within the context of national and local planning policies, as detailed in the appraisal of the main and update reports. As such, full planning permission is recommended for approval, subject to the recommended conditions and completion of the S106 Legal Agreement. Separate Listed Building Consent is also recommended for approval, subject to conditions.

Case Officer: Jonathan Markwell