

27 March 2024

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

	<p>Insertion of Condition SU7 (Sustainable Drainage to be Approved). The applicant has provided enough information to agree that the SUDS scheme is acceptable in principle, but additional detail will be required.</p> <p>Insertion of a condition to secure the Employment Skills and Training Plan, as worded below:</p> <p><i>Prior to the commencement of construction, an Employment, Skills and Training Plan for construction skills shall have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority in consultation with Reading UK CIC and shall thereafter be implemented in accordance with the approved plan.</i></p> <p><i>REASON: to ensure that the relevant economic development services including employment, skills and training development initiatives are implemented in accordance with Policy CC9 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 and the Employment, Skills and Training SPD 2013</i></p>
<b>Informatives</b>	As per main report

## 1. Further consultation responses

- 1.1 Two additional consultation responses were received following publication of the committee report, and are detailed below:
- 1.2 The first was from the Theatre Trust, who wrote in support of the application:
- The principle of the proposals is supported
  - The extension is sensitively designed with little impact on the existing theatre
  - The proposals would provide operational improvements to both the new theatre and the existing Hexagon
  - The energy efficiency and sustainability measures are welcomed
- 1.3 The second was an expanded objection from the party who objected as per the Committee Report:
- Insufficient consideration of the harm arising from the proposals when making the planning balance
  - Expanded objections to daylight and sublight impacts of the proposals on the neighbouring student accommodation
  - Loss of privacy as a result of the walkway addition, as well as the roof terrace
  - Further concerns raised regarding the noise and disturbance during construction
  - Further concerns raised about operational noise emanating from the venue and from people leaving the venue.
- 1.4 It is considered that sufficient weight was given to the harm arising from the proposals within the main committee report when making the planning balance and arriving at the recommendation.
- 1.5 With regards loss of privacy to the student accommodation, it should be stressed that the roof terrace is on the southern side of the site, set well away from the student accommodation with no direct overlooking. The walkway would essentially extend the podium level towards the site to allow access, but

given the oblique angle to the nearest windows, and the obstruction the proposed building would cause, it is not considered that there would be any unacceptable loss of privacy. Due to the position of the roof terrace and proposed walkway, it is not considered that there would be a significant increase in harm.

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

## **2. Removal of requirement for legal agreement**

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

## **3. Sustainable Urban Drainage Scheme (SUDS)**

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

Case Officer: Thomas Bradfield