

Planning Applications Committee

26 June 2024



Reading
Borough Council
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Title	PLANNING UPDATE REPORT
Ward	Abbey
Planning Application Reference:	210639
Site Address:	Eaton Court, 112 Oxford Road, Reading, RG1 7LL
Proposed Development	Demolition and residential redevelopment to provide three buildings comprising 120 residential units (Use Class C3), along with car parking, cycle parking, servicing bay and associated landscaping, amenity space, plant and refuse areas, and access arrangements.
Applicant	Venta Propco 1 Limited
Report author	Tom Bradfield
Recommendations	As per main agenda report
S106 Terms	As per main agenda report
Conditions	As per main agenda report
Informatives	As per main agenda report

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The applicant has raised some queries regarding three statements made in the main agenda report and is requesting further clarification on their points. The first point is regarding amenity standards in the development; the second and third relate to heritage matters. A response to each is provided below.

2. AMENITY CLARIFICATIONS

- 2.1 The applicant has queried the section of the report (para 6.52) which, they feel, discusses the separation distances between Buildings 1, 2 and 3 in a negative way.
- 2.2 The separation distance between facing elevations for these blocks is 13.5 metres. At ground floor level the potential for overlooking will be mitigated by the low-level landscape planting proposed. At upper levels, to help reduce overlooking there is a slight offsetting of windows and balconies, however the overlooking distances balcony to balcony are at their nearest points 11 metres to 13 metres.
- 2.3 Therefore, there will be a close relationship between these blocks. The main report explains that in a new-build situation this is far from ideal and raises concerns in terms of meeting the requirements of Policy CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity); however,

Officers have concluded, in this central Reading location and weighing up the benefits of the proposed development, that the arrangement can be supported.

3. HERITAGE ASSET IMPACTS

- 3.1 The applicant has asked for clarification that in the report (para 6.22 onwards), discussion of harm to Listed Buildings is referring to the setting of the listed buildings and not the buildings themselves (ie. their fabric). This clarification is accepted.
- 3.2 Secondly, the applicant has questioned why the report has not referred to the 'net effect' of the proposal on heritage assets (Listed Buildings and views of the Conservation Area). The advice of the Council's Conservation Officer has been sought on this point.
- 3.3 The Conservation Officer advises that there is no "net harm" definition that requires the LPA to compare the proposal with the existing situation. The harm is defined by a development's impact on the significance of the heritage asset, weighing any harm to that significance against any benefits to it is required by the NPPF (paragraph 208). But the Conservation Officer in any event, disagrees with the applicant's assertion, as the existing building can be argued to have less impact than the proposed one. If they consider this a benefit or improvement, it can be counted as some environmental benefit, but it is not enough by itself.
- 3.4 The Conservation Officer continues:
"The related paragraphs from the NPPF are 205, 206, 207, 208. If I do this weighting, I conclude that there is a very limited public benefit (I can see some economic, but little social (because it is blocks of flats – privately owned, purchased and enjoyed) and little environmental – environment one refers to the design, conservation, eco-friendly – innovative solutions, etc.) Still, the massing, scale and architectural languages matter and using paragraph 205, I give great weight to the setting of the buildings & conservation area and suggest refusal."
- 3.5 Notwithstanding the Conservation Officers comments and objection, officers consider that overall, the proposal provides a benefit in townscape and heritage terms.

4. CONCLUSION

- 4.1 The clarifications above should be noted but these do not alter the officer conclusion or recommendation for this planning application.