

08 January 2025



Reading
Borough Council
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Title	PLANNING APPLICATION UPDATE REPORT
Ward	Abbey
Planning Application Reference:	PL/24/1392 (REG3/VAR)
Site Address:	The Hexagon, Queens Walk, Reading, RG1 7QF
Proposed Development	Variation of condition 2 of permission 240063 (dated 24/04/24 for 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), including the omission of the third floor, internal rearrangement, changes to massing, changes to the access bridge and various other associated works.
Recommendations	As per main report
S106 Terms	As per main report
Conditions	As per main report
Informatives	As per main report

1. Further Consultee Response

1.1 Since publication of the main agenda, the Conservation Officer has provided the below response:

- No objections to the scheme, as no substantial heritage impacts are identified.
- High quality design, accessibility, sustainable and regenerative design and landscaping are supported. Proposed materials and lighting are acceptable.
- The scheme would appear less integrated with the built environment due to the changes to the access bridge. This would also result in views over the parked cars below when entering the Hexagon which is less positive than the previously approved scheme.

1.2 Officers have considered the Conservation Officer's response and do not consider any of the points raised to affect the proposed recommendation.

2. Accessibility

2.1 Officers advise that the changes to the entrance of the scheme also raise queries as to whether the redesign would result in decreased accessibility, especially for those with disabilities. The Access Officer was consulted when this application was submitted, but has provided no comments on the proposals application.

2.2 For clarity, officers advise that the proposed scheme is considered to address this in the following ways:

- It is accepted that the access route into the extension is narrower than previously approved as it is a 'bridge link' rather than extending the podium the width of the proposed building. At its narrowest point, the bridge link is 3.7m wide, which continues for a distance of 9.2m, before opening out onto the podium at one end or the seating area adjacent to the main entrance of the building at the other. This is wide enough for level disabled access into and out of the building.
- Step-free access within the building between all levels is provided
- Step-free access between the proposed extension and the existing Hexagon building at all levels is provided
- Disabled WCs are available for performers and visitors on every level
- Wheelchair positions are included in the stalls and the gallery level within the auditorium

2.3 Overall, officers consider that the proposed scheme would ensure that suitable levels of access into, out of and between the existing and proposed buildings would be provided. The scheme is considered acceptable in this regard.

Case Officer: Thomas Bradfield