03 December 2025	Reading Borough Council Working better with you
Title	**PLANNING APPLICATION UPDATE REPORT**
Ward	Abbey/Katesgrove
Planning Application Reference:	PL/22/1916/FUL & PL/22/1917/FUL
Site Address:	PL/22/1916/FUL – Former Debenhams Department Store, west of Yield Hall Place ('Yield Hall Place 1'), The Oracle, Reading, RG2 2AS PL/22/1917/FUL – Existing Vue cinema complex west of Yield Hall Place/London Road ('Yield Hall Place 2'), The Oracle, Reading, RG2 2AG
Proposed Development	PL/22/1916/FUL - Mixed use development comprising part demolition of former department store and erection of new buildings comprising up to 218 build to rent residential dwellings (Class C3) & 1,209sqm commercial uses within Uses Class E and/or bar (Sui Generis Use). Reconfiguration and change of use of up to 5,866sqm remaining department store floorspace (Class E) to uses with within Use Class E and/or bar (Sui Generis Use) and/or experiential leisure use (Sui Generis Use). Associated public realm, infrastructure works & external alterations to shopping centre, including creation of new shopping centre entrance (amended description) (accompanied by an Environmental Statement) PL/22/1917/FUL - Mixed use development comprising demolition of existing buildings and erection of new building comprising up to 218no. build-to-rent residential dwellings (Class C3) & up to 3,046 sqm commercial floorspace comprising cinema (Sui Generis) and ground floor commercial uses within Use Class E and/or Bar (Sui Generis Use). Associated public realm and infrastructure works (amended description) (accompanied by an Environmental Statement)
PL/22/2916/FUL - Yield Hall Place 1 The Oracle, Reading RG2 2AG	
Deadline	**Target decision date:** 20th March 2023 **Extension of time date:** 13th February 2026
Recommendations	**Amended as follows from the main agenda report:** (deletions ~~crossed through~~ and additions in ***bold and italics***) ~~**Subject to:**~~ ~~**Confirmation of satisfactory details of the operation of the Deferred Payment Mechanism (DPM) terms,**~~ ~~**2. Confirmation from the Local Lead Flood Authority that SuDS issues are satisfactory**~~ Delegate to the Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection Services (ADPTPPS) to: i) **GRANT** full planning permission, subject to the satisfactory completion of a s106 legal agreement and delegate to ADPTPPS to make such minor changes to conditions or such additional conditions required, make such

	minor changes to Heads of Terms and details of the legal agreement as may be reasonably required to issue the permission; or ii) Refuse full planning permission if the legal agreement is not completed by 13/02/2026 (unless officers on behalf of the Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection Services agree to a later date for completion of the legal agreement)
S106 Heads of Terms	As per main report with the following amendments/additions: ***2. <u>Affordable Housing Deferred Payment Mechanism</u>*** ***Details agreed as follows:*** • ***Review trigger which will be the earlier of 80% occupancy or 12 months from Practical Completion (PC) (Review at PC is excluded)*** • ***Profit - 12.5% on Gross Development Value of BtR and 15% on Commercial*** • ***Finance rate - 2% over base rate (increased from the agreed 4.25%) and evidenced at review*** • ***OPEX to be evidenced at review (capped at 25%)*** • ***Professional fees – 7% based on actual build cost and evidenced at review*** • ***Build Cost – full disclosure of build contract and actual build costs incurred*** • ***Cost of s106 review to be covered by developer – including legal, accounting, viability, QS, valuation, and any other costs as deemed necessary by the Council*** • ***YHP1 Benchmark Land Value - £300, 000. YHP2 Benchmark Land Value - between £7, 000, 000 and £8, 600, 000 (final figure to be agreed with LPA post committee)*** ***17. Blue Badge Parking Strategy*** ***Pre-commencement submission and approval of a blue badge parking strategy.*** ***All measures within the approved strategy to have been implemented and provided prior to first occupation of any residential dwelling***
Conditions	As per the main agenda report
Informatives	As per the main agenda report
PL/22/1917/FUL - Yield Hall Place 2 The Oracle, Reading RG2 2AG	
Recommendations	**Amended as follows from the main agenda report:** (deletions ~~crossed through~~ and additions in ***bold and italics***) **Subject to:**

	~~**1. Confirmation of satisfactory details of the operation of the Deferred Payment Mechanism (DPM) terms, and**~~ ~~**2. Confirmation from the Local Lead Flood Authority that SuDS issues are satisfactory**~~ Delegate to the Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection Services (ADPTPPS) to: i) **GRANT** full planning permission, subject to the satisfactory completion of a s106 legal agreement and delegate to ADPTPPS to make such minor changes to conditions or such additional conditions required, make such minor changes to Heads of Terms and details of the legal agreement as may be reasonably required to issue the permission; or ii) Refuse full planning permission if the legal agreement is not completed by 13/02/2026 (unless officers on behalf of the Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection Services agree to a later date for completion of the legal agreement)
S106 Heads of Terms	As per main report with the following amendments/additions: ***2. Affordable Housing Deferred Payment Mechanism*** ***Details agreed as follows:*** • ***Review trigger which will be the earlier of 80% occupancy or 12 months from Practical Completion (PC) (Review at PC is excluded)*** • ***Profit - 12.5% on Gross Development Value of BtR and 15% on Commercial*** • ***Finance rate - 2% over base rate (increased from the agreed 4.25%) and evidenced at review*** • ***OPEX to be evidenced at review (capped at 25%)*** • ***Professional fees – 7% based on actual build cost and evidenced at review*** • ***Build Cost – full disclosure of build contract and actual build costs incurred*** • ***Cost of s106 review to be covered by developer – including legal, accounting, viability, QS, valuation, and any other costs as deemed necessary by the Council*** • ***YHP1 Benchmark Land Value - £300, 000. YHP2 Benchmark Land Value - between £7, 000, 000 and £8, 600, 000 (final figure to be agreed with LPA post committee)*** ***14. Blue Badge Parking Strategy*** ***Pre-commencement submission and approval of a blue badge parking strategy.*** ***All measures within the approved strategy to have been implemented and provided prior to first occupation of any residential dwelling***
Conditions	As per the main agenda report unless stated below: (deletions ~~crossed through~~ and additions in ***bold and italics***

	Condition 1 is amended as follows (but only if PAC resolves to grant planning permission for the YHP1 application, otherwise the condition to revert back to the standard 3 year time period for implementation) : 1. Time Limit for implementation – ~~3 years~~ ***5 years***
Informatives	As per the main agenda report

1. SuDS

1.1 The recommendation for both applications as set out in the main agenda report was subject to confirmation from the Local Lead Flood Authority (LLFA) that SuDS issues are satisfactory. Since publication of the main agenda report the applicant has submitted a revised SuDS strategy for both proposed developments. The revised SuDS strategy has been reviewed by the LLFA who have confirmed that the amended proposals mean that they no longer object to both applications.

1.2 The revised SuDS proposals include integration of the drainage strategy for both developments with areas of green roof; tree pits and use of rainwater harvesting along with provision of attenuation tanks at ground floor level to ensure that the run-off rate from both sites would be below that of existing (resulting in an average reduction in run-off rate of 86% across both sites). The LLFA consider the drainage strategy to be acceptable, but a condition is recommended for both proposed developments to secure submission and approval of the full details, including linking of green infrastructure (ie. usually landscaping) to the SuDS proposal and implementation of the drainage strategy prior to first occupation of any part of each development. This is secured via condition 14 of the YHP1 application ref. PL/22/1916 and condition 13 of the YHP2 application ref. PL/22/1917 as set out in the Recommendation box at the top of the main agenda report.

2. Heritage Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment (HTVIA)

2.1 Since publication of the main agenda report the applicant has submitted updated views studies of the proposed developments which consider the YHP1 and YHP2 proposals in isolation, compared to the cumulative views images included within the main agenda report which show both proposed developments together. Officers have reviewed the updated views study for each application and in the majority of instances this does not change the conclusions reached within the main agenda report in terms of visual and heritage impacts of each development.

2.2 There is once instance where the individual views study results in a slight change to the officer conclusions. This is in relation to the impact of the YHP2 proposals from Market Place. Within paragraph 7.2.69 of the main agenda report, officers identify ‘less than substantial harm at a moderate level’ to the setting of a number of listed buildings within Market Place. This harm is identified to the Church of St Laurence (Grade I Listed) and no.s 23-26, 27-28, 29-31, 32, 33-14, 48-49, 50-51 & 52 Market Place and no. 10 High Street (all Grade II Listed) as a result of the visual dominance of the YHP1 and YHP2 proposals with setting and views of these buildings from Market Place. However, the updated individual visuals provided by the applicant (see figures A and B below) demonstrate that the visual impact of YHP1 would be more pronounced than that of YHP2. Whilst the tops of the tower elements of the YHP2 proposals would still be visible from Market Place, the towers are lower in height than the YHP1 tower and also more distant in the view, appearing less dominant, meaning t Officers conclude that this would result in ‘less than substantial harm’ to the setting of the above referenced listed buildings but at a ‘low’ rather than ‘moderate level’. Officers still conclude that the YHP1 tower would result in less than substantial harm at a moderate level and that the cumulative impact of both proposals would also still be less than substantial harm at a moderate level.

2.3 The overall level of harm officers identify upon the character and appearance of the Market Place / London Street conservation area as result of the YHP2 proposals is also still also considered to be 'less than substantial harm at a moderate level' as per paragraph 7.2.71 of the main agenda report.

2.4 This slight change in the identified heritage harm to the setting of a number of listed buildings within Market Place as a result of the YHP2 proposals does not lead officers to come to different overall conclusion in respect of the planning balance position for the YHP2 proposals and the officer recommendation remains as per the main agenda report.

Figure A – Proposed view of the YHP1 development looking south from Market Place from junction with The Forbury

Figure B – Proposed view of the YHP2 development looking south from Market Place from the junction with The Forbury

3. Economic Benefits

3.1 Since publication of the main agenda report, the applicant has also submitted further information in respect of the individual economic benefits of each of the YHP1 and YHP2 proposals. This information has been reviewed by officers and further supports the conclusions already reached, namely that both applications would contribute to maintaining and enhancing the vitality and viability of The Oracle and Central Area as a whole as is the requirement under Policy RL1 (Network and Hierarchy of Centres) for development proposals within Central Area. This information does not change the officer recommendation for both applications which remains as per the main agenda report.

4. Timeframe for Implementation

4.1 As set out in paragraphs 3.7 to 3.8 and 7.1.49 of the main agenda report the YHP1 development is proposed to take place in two sub-phases: 1A and 1B, and the s106 Heads of Terms for the YHP1 development require both phases to be completed in their entirety within 5 years of commencement of Phase 1A. Whilst submitted as two separate planning applications, the applicant also presents the YHP1 and YHP2 proposals as two 'phases; stating that the YHP1 development would be carried out first followed by YHP2; albeit given they are separate applications there is no formal link to require either the developments to be carried out in this order, nor is there any clear reason why this would be necessary. The Applicant has also advised that they would not construct YHP1 or YHP2 concurrently (albeit, again there is no planning reason why this could not happen) with their intention being to implement and complete YHP1 in the first instance before commencing YHP2.

4.2 The standard time limit for commencement of a development is 3 years. However, under s.91(1) (b) of the Town and Country Planning Act (1990), it allows another period (whether longer or shorter) should the LPA consider appropriate. In this case, the applicant has requested a 5 year period to commence the YHP2 development given they estimate that as a minimum it is likely to take circa. 3 ½ years to complete YHP1 from commencement of the development. As such, if both developments were to be implemented in the sequence and timeframes set out by the applicant then it would appear likely that, if granted, the YHP2 permission would lapse before the YHP1 development is completed. In this specific instance, given the ordering and phasing of the developments indicated by the applicant, officers are recommending the timeframe for implementation of YHP2 is changed to 5 years from date of issue of the planning permission. This amended condition is shown in the Recommendation box for the YHP2 application at the top of this report.

4.3 There is of course no reason why the applicant could not carry out minimal works as necessary to 'commence' the YHP2 development within the standard 3 year period for commencement but there is risk to such an approach that this leaves behind unsightly construction works or incomplete development for an unknown period which officers do not consider would not welcome within such a prominent riverside setting. As such it is considered reasonable to facilitate the 5 year period for commencement of YHP2 in this instance which could assist in avoiding this eventuality.

4.4 In the event that the Committee resolves to refuse planning permission for YHP1 but grant planning permission for YHP2 then it is recommended that the time frame for implementation of development condition for YHP2 reverts back to the standard 3 year time period.

5. Highways matters

5.1 As set out in the main agenda report both proposed developments would be car free. Each proposed development would provide 11 wheelchair accessible dwellings and it has been brought to officers' attention that future occupiers of these dwellings could have a 'blue badge' that would allow them to park within nearby pay and display bays, such as those along Mill Lane and London Street, free of charge and for an unrestricted time limit. This could result in overspill parking that utilises these nearby parking bays given the

developments would be car free Therefore, it is considered necessary that each application should demonstrate that it would not have a detrimental impact on the Highway network as a result of overspill parking from the developments filling up these on-street bays.

5.2 The applicant has proposed to provide that blue badge parking spaces, which would need to be dedicated for the proposed developments, within the existing car parks at The Oracle (The Holybrook Car Park for YHP1 and The Riverside car park for YHP2). The exact location of these spaces within the car parks and how these are to be accessed still needs to be determined and agreed with officers. It should be noted that this may require the applicant to regularise any changes to the existing customer parking provision at The Oracle, provision of which is currently secured by historic planning permissions, via (a) separate planning application(s). In the event that the Committee resolves to grant planning permission for either or both developments, officers seek delegated authority from the Committee to resolve this issue with the applicant post-committee and before a decision is issued. An additional obligation has also been added to the section 106 Heads of Terms for each application, to require submission and approval of the blue badge parking strategy prior to commencement of each development, in order to secure implementation of measures necessary to provide the blue badge parking prior to first occupation of any residential dwelling within each development.

6. Nationally Described Space Standards

6.1 Paragraph 7.7.31 of the main agenda report discuss level of compliance of both the YHP1 and YHP2 proposals within the Nationally Described Space Standards (NDSS) for new residential dwellings. Since publication of the main agenda report the applicant has provided more detailed information as to the level of compliance of both proposed developments with these standards.

6.2 The information clarifies that whether or not an individual dwelling complies with the NDSS depends on the occupancy assumption for each unit. For example, for a 2 bedroom unit, NDSS figures allow for either 4 person occupancy (i.e. 2 couples sharing a 2 bed flat or 2 adults & 2 children) with a minimum recommended unit size of 70m2 or 3 person occupancy (i.e. 2 single adults renting A bedroom each or 2 adults and 1 child etc) with a minimum recommended unit size of 61m2.

6.3 The full level for compliance with the NDSS is shown in the tables below:

# Bedrooms	Area of Home (m2)	# Homes	NDSS Area m2 (1 bed 2 person)	% Compliance 1bed 2 person	% Compliance 1 bed 1 person (39 sqm)
1	43.5	93	50	13% below	12% in excess
	47	1	50	6% below	21% in excess
	48.3	1	50	3% below	24% in excess
	46.9	8	50	6% below	20% in excess
	58	8	50	16% above	32% in excess
		111		0%	

# Bedrooms	Area of Home (m2)	# Homes	NDSS Area m2 (2 bed 4 person)	% Compliance 2 bed 4 person	% Compliance 2 bed 3 person (61 sqm)
2	63.5	31	70	9% below	4% in excess
	66.5	30	70	5% below	9% in excess
	66.8	21	70	5% below	10% in excess

	67.8	12	70	3% below	11% in excess
	70	2	70	equal	15% in excess
		96		0%	

# Bedrooms	Area of Home (m2)	# Homes	NDSS Area m2 (3 bed 5 person)	% Compliance 3 bed 5 person	% Compliance 3 bed 4 person (74sqm)
3	80.3	8	86	7% below	9% in excess
	87.3	3	86	2% in excess	18% in excess
		11			
		218			

YHP2

# Bedrooms	Area of Home (m2)	# Homes	NDSS Area m2 (1 bed 2 person)	% Compliance 1 bed 2 person	% Compliance 1 bed 1 person (39 sqm)
1	40.6	35	50	18% below	4% in excess
	42.2	21	50	16% below	8% in excess
	44.4	5	50	11% below	14% in excess
	45.4	2	50	9% below	16% in excess
	46.4	10	50	7% below	19% in excess
	48.6	12	50	3% below	25% in excess
	48.7	8	50	3% below	30% in excess
	49.9	1	50	equal	28% in excess
	50.5	2	50	1% in excess	30% in excess
		96			

# Bedrooms	Area of Home (m2)	# Homes	NDSS Area m2 (2 bed 4 person)	% Compliance 2 bed 4 person	% Compliance 2 bed 3 person (61 sqm)
2	63.6	21	70	9% below	4% in excess
	64.57	34	70	8% below	6% in excess
	64.6	46	70	8% below	6% in excess
	66.25	10	70	6% below	9% in excess
		111			

# Bedrooms	Area of Home (m2)	# Homes	NDSS Area m2 (3 bed 5 person)	% Compliance 3 bed 5 person	% Compliance 3 bed 4 person (74sqm)
3	77.9	1	86	9% below	5% excess
	79.3	5	86	8% below	7% in excess
	83.2	5	86	3% below	11% in excess
		11			

6.4 As shown in the above tables, if considering the lower occupancy level, all of the proposed dwellings are NDSS compliant. Under the higher occupancy rate, it is noted

that a number of the proposed dwellings fall below the NDSS figure, but this is primarily within a 10% range of under provision of floor area and where this is the case all the habitable rooms within these units are compliant with NDSS minimum room dimensions. The applicant explains that the divergence from NDSS relates to the absence of internal corridors within the units.

6.5 Overall, this information does not change the conclusions of the main agenda report in respect of both applications. Although officers consider that the reduction in internal circulation space will make these dwellings less attractive to some potential occupiers (for instance medium-sized families), it is advised that compliance with the National Standards is not required by Policy H5 for new dwellings in the Central Area.

7. Affordable Housing Deferred Payment Mechanism (DPM)

7.1 Since publication of the main agenda report terms of the DPM have been agreed and are outlined within the recommendation box for both applications at the top of this report.

Case Officer: Matt Burns