

UPDATE REPORT

BY THE DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC GROWTH AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES
READING BOROUGH COUNCIL
PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE: 13th November 2019

ITEM NO. 9

Ward: Abbey

App No: 190627/FUL

Address: Gas Holder Site Alexander Turner Close

Proposal: Demolition of existing buildings and Gas Holder and the erection of new buildings ranging between 2 and 9 storeys in height, providing 130 residential units (Class C3) with associated access, car parking, landscaping and open space

Date validated: 28/05/2019

Application target decision date: 27/08/2019 Extension of time: 04/12/2019

RECOMMENDATION:

As per the main agenda report but the recommendation is no longer 'subject to' confirmation from the Council's Ecologist that the final ecological surveys have been carried out to an appropriate standard and that the proposed ecological mitigation/enhancement measures are acceptable

The following additional section 106 Heads of Terms are also proposed:

- A deferred payment mechanism for affordable housing in the form of an open book review of standard development cost and value inputs (triggered on sale or equivalent of the 90th percentile of units) to secure that any excess above a developer's profit of 18.7% of gross value is shared on a 50/50 basis (£1 for £1) between the applicant and the LPA up to the equivalent of the 30% policy cap, either in the form of additional units or a cash equivalent (at the discretion of the LPA).

The Council can also require a further viability review if substantial implementation does not occur within 21 months of an implementable consent.

- A financial contribution of £10,000 towards street lighting adjustments along Kennet Site (to reduce light-spill/glow for bats)

The following additional conditions are proposed:

50. Pre-commencement submission and approval of scheme of biodiversity enhancements (to include peregrine platform, bird and bat boxes and native and wildlife friendly landscaping). Implementation prior to occupation and retention thereafter.

51. All demolition to be undertaken outside of the bird-nesting season (mid-March to end of August) or if this cannot reasonably be avoided, a suitably qualified ecologist will check

the areas to be removed immediately prior to demolition and advise whether nesting birds are present. If active nests are recorded, works that may disturb active nests shall proceed until all young have fledged the nest and it is no longer in use.

52. Pre-commencement submission and approval of details of the river viewing platform

The following condition from the main agenda report is corrected as follows:

29. Pre-occupation pay play facilities to be submitted and approved. Pre-occupation implementation and retention thereafter.

1 Affordable Housing

1.1 Paragraph 6.12 of the main agenda report sets out at that there have been ongoing discussions between the Applicant and the Council's Principal Valuations Officer with regard to the final affordable housing offer. The on-site affordable housing provision referred to in the paragraph 6.13 of the main agenda report [15 on-site units which equates to a provision of 12%) has now been agreed. In addition to this a deferred payment mechanism has now also been agreed to ensure that the LPA would receive an equal share of any future additional profit made on the development (through savings in development costs or increases in value). The following is to be added to the section 106 heads of terms in terms of affordable housing provision:

Deferred payment mechanism in the form of an open book review of standard development cost and value inputs (triggered on sale or equivalent of the 90th percentile of units) to secure that any excess above a developers profit of 18.7% of gross value is shared on a 50/50 basis (£1 for £1) between the applicant and the LPA up to the equivalent of the 30% policy cap, either in the form of additional units or a cash equivalent (at the discretion of the LPA). The mechanism will also include the agreed existing use value as the land price input together with any financial benefits that are available and can be secured for mitigating the impact of decontamination and site related costs. The Council can also require a further viability review if substantial implementation does not occur within 21 months of an implementable consent.

2. Ecology

2.1 The recommendation on the first page of the main agenda report was subject to 'confirmation from the Council's Ecologist that the final ecological surveys have been carried out to an appropriate standard and that the proposed ecological mitigation/enhancement measures are acceptable'.

2.2 Policy EN12 (EN12: Biodiversity and the Green Network) of the Local Plan 2019 sets out that on all sites, development should not result in a net loss of biodiversity and seeks that development should protect and wherever possible enhance features of biodiversity interest on and adjacent to the application site and provide new tree

planting, wildlife friendly landscaping and ecological enhancements (such as wildlife ponds, bird and bat boxes) wherever practicable.

- 2.3 The Council's Ecologist has now reviewed the final ecological surveys and is satisfied that they have been carried to an appropriate standard. An additional condition is recommended to ensure all demolition is undertaken outside of the bird nesting season.
- 2.4 The Council's Ecologist has also reviewed the proposed scheme of biodiversity mitigation/enhancement measures, including a proposed lighting strategy. The Ecologist is satisfied that the mitigation/enhancement measures proposed (summarised in paragraphs 6.63 - 6.66 of the main agenda report) are comprehensive. An additional condition is also recommended to secure detailed information on each of the measures proposed to be submitted and approved by the LPA (and the EA) prior to the commencement of development.
- 2.5 The proposed lighting strategy has also been reviewed and the Council's Ecologist considers that this has been designed, through application of low mounting heights and warm white LED lamps, such that lighting impact on the river environment and in particular on the river channel would be minimal. However, it is identified that in combination with the existing street lighting to Kennet Side on the opposite side of the river there would be an unacceptable cumulative increase in lighting levels within the central part of the river, which is a commuting corridor for bats. To mitigate against this cumulative impact and to demonstrate a biodiversity enhancement and net gain from the proposed development a financial contribution of ten thousand pounds (£10, 000) is to be secured as part of the section 106 legal agreement towards altering of the lamp heads to the Kennet Side Street lighting which would ensure that light levels within the central part of the river would not exceed those recommended for wildlife. Subject to securing this contribution and the recommended conditions Officers are satisfied that the proposals would result in a biodiversity enhancement and would accord with Policy EN12.

3 Other

- 3.1 Paragraph 6.3 of the main agenda report which refers to Policy CR13 (East Side Major Opportunity Area) is amended (deletions shown with a ~~strike through~~ and additions in *italics*) to accurately reflect the final adopted wording of this Policy within the 2019 Local Plan:

'Development in the East Side Major Opportunity Area will:

- i) Provide a more defined urban environment than currently exists, of a medium to high density;
- ii) Contribute towards the provision of a new residential community at the eastern fringes of the central area. *Development for education will be acceptable within the site;*

- iii) Help facilitate greater pedestrian and cycle permeability, in particular east-west links through the area and links between development areas and the station, including improved crossings of the IDR and railway;
- iv) Safeguard land which is needed for mass rapid transit routes and stops;
- v) ~~Preserve the historic features in the area and enhance~~ *Conserve and enhance the listed buildings, scheduled ancient monuments and historic garden in the area* and their setting where possible;
- vi) *Give careful consideration to the archaeological potential of the area and be supported by appropriate archaeological assessment which should inform the development;*
- vii) *Demonstrate that it is part of a comprehensive approach to its sub-area, which does not prevent neighbouring sites from fulfilling the aspirations of this policy, and which contributes towards the provision of policy requirements that benefit the whole area, such as open space;*
- viii) Provide additional areas of open space where possible, particularly in the centre of the new community;
- ix) Maintain, improve and create new access along the north side of the River Kennet *to the Kennet Mouth; and;*
- x) Give early consideration to the potential impact on water and wastewater infrastructure in conjunction with Thames Water, and make provision for upgrades where required.

3.2 The above corrections do not alter the conclusions of the main agenda report.

3.3 Paragraph 6.5 of the main agenda report which refers to Policy CR13d (Gas Holder Site) is amended (deletions shown with a ~~strike through~~ and additions in *italics*) to accurately reflect the final adopted wording of the this Policy within the 2019 Local Plan:

‘This area will be used for residential development. Development should enhance the character of ~~the mouth of~~ the Kennet and should maximise the potential of the site to be a river gateway to Reading. Public access along the river will be sought. Development should be set back at least ten metres from the top of the bank of the river ~~and allow for a wildlife corridor along the river to reflect its wildlife significance.~~ Development should take account of potential contamination on the site.’

3.4 The above are typographical corrections and do not affect the conclusions of the officer report.

3.5 Paragraph 3.2 of the main agenda report incorrectly refers to Building C as being two storeys in height. Building C as proposed is three storeys in height as referred to elsewhere within the report.

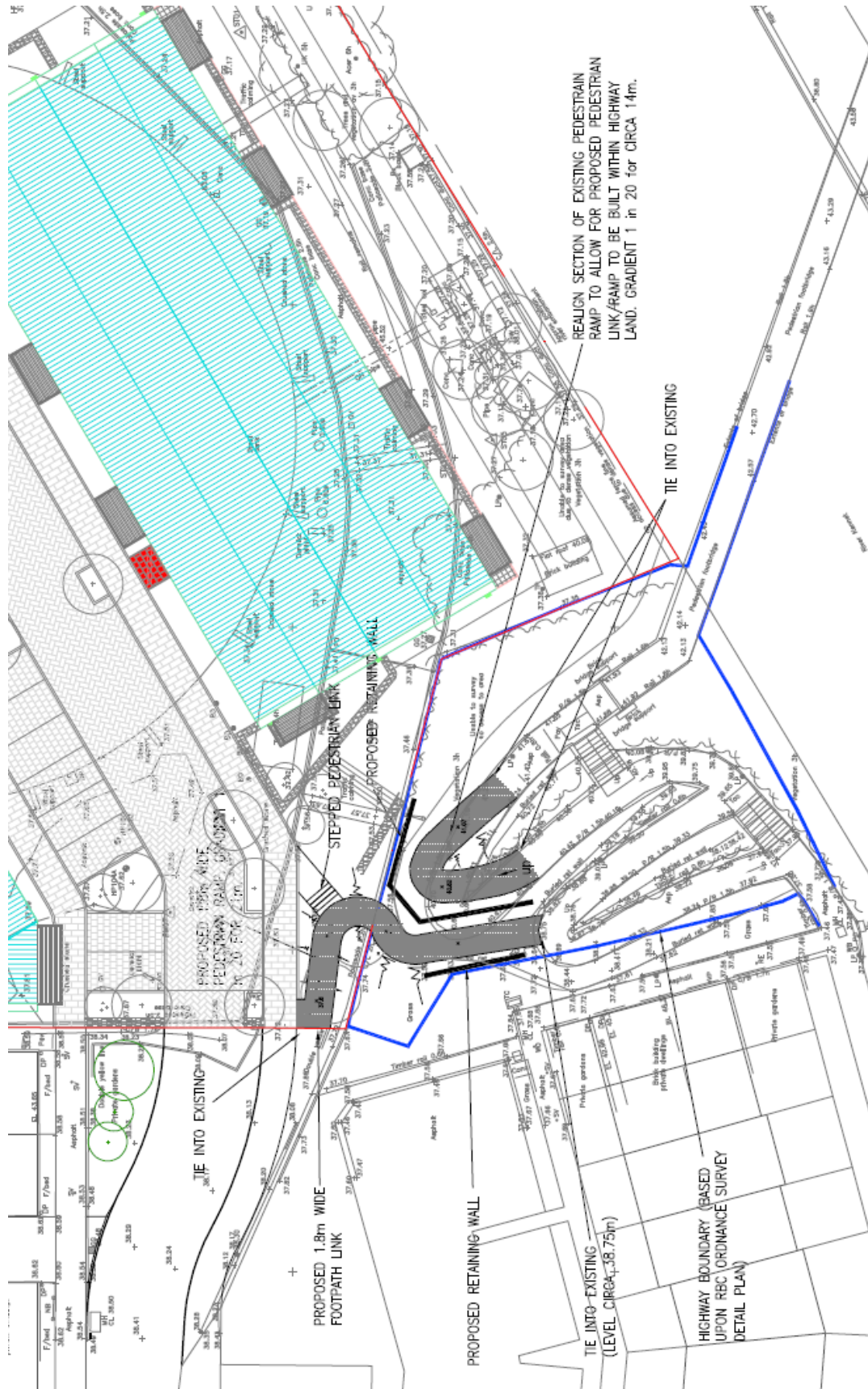
3.6 Paragraph 3.3 of the main agenda report refers to Buildings A and B having balconies. It should also be noted that Building C also has balconies to the upper floors in addition to the private rear gardens to the ground floor units.

- 3.7 Paragraph 3.5 of the main agenda report refers to the unit mix within Building B. This incorrectly refers to 2 x 2 bedroom units and should instead state 2 x 3 bedroom units.
- 3.8 Paragraph 6.21 of the main agenda report refers to engineering advice received by the applicant advising that any new building on the site of the existing gas holder should be limited to 4 storeys. It should be noted that further investigation established that a new building should be limited to 5 storeys.
- 3.9 The drawing below paragraph 6.35 of the main agenda report shows only an indicative location of the new pedestrian connection to the footbridge over the Kennet. The agreed layout of the new link is shown in the drawings at the end of this update report as well as a visual indicating the appearance of the link.
- 3.10 For clarity additional detail is also set out with regard to the detailed requirements of proposed condition no. 4 which requires a construction method statement to be submitted and agreed prior to the commencement of development:

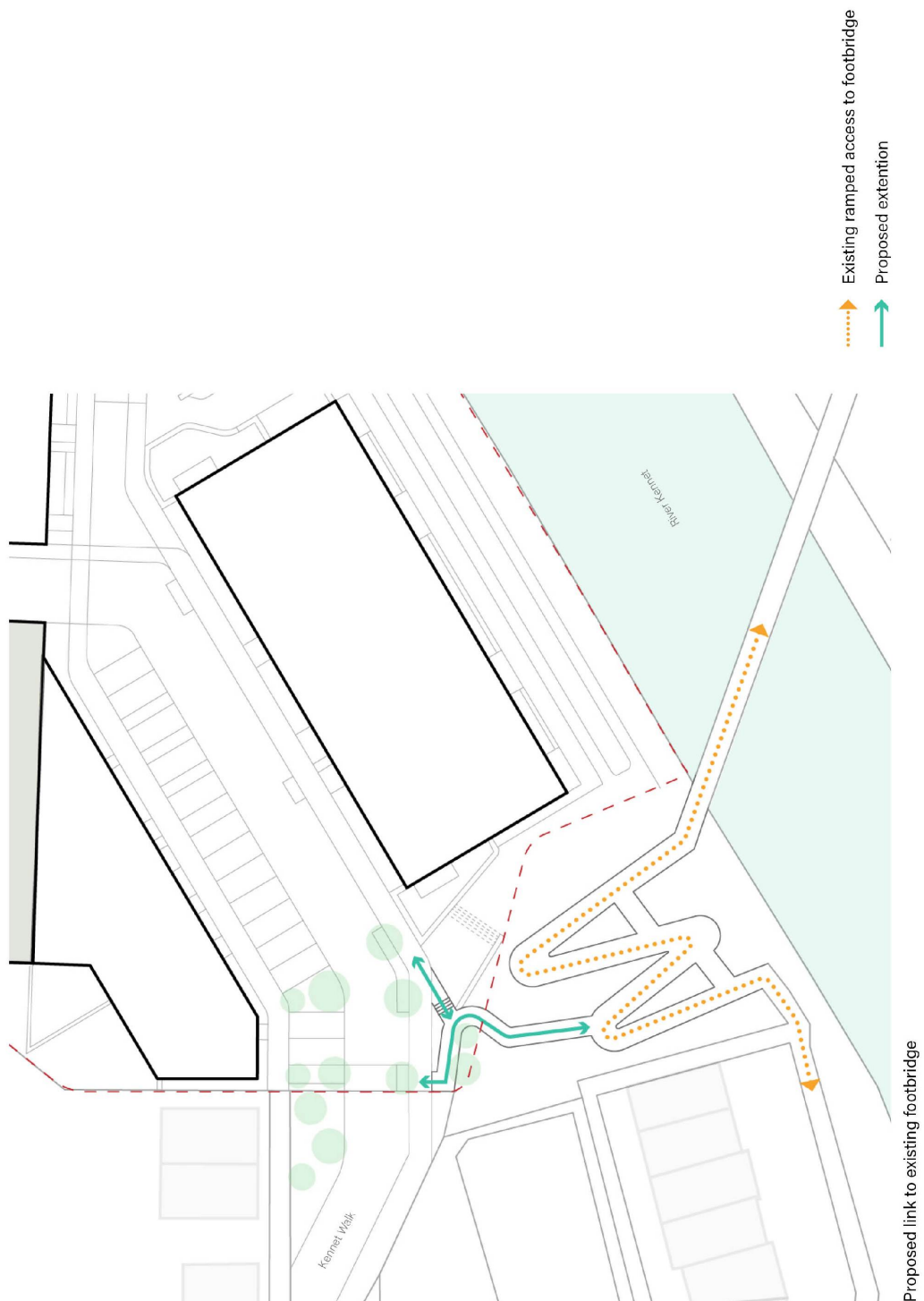
4. *No development shall take place, including any works of demolition, until a Construction Method Statement has been submitted and approved in writing by the local planning authority to provide for:*
- (A) Space on site where vehicles of site operatives and visitors can be parked with details of how site operatives and visitors will be required to make use of the parking area provided*
 - (B) Loading and unloading of plant and materials used in constructing the development.*
 - (C) Location on site for storage of plant and materials used in constructing the development;*
 - (D) The erection and maintenance of security hoarding / scaffolding if required.*
 - (E) Identification of any footpath closures or road closures needed during construction;*
 - (E) Wheel washing facilities on site*
 - (F) A scheme for recycling waste resulting from the construction works.*
 - (G) Measures for controlling the use of site lighting whether required for safe working or for security purposes.*
 - (H) Required measures to control the emission of dust, dirt and other airborne pollutants during demolition and construction;*
 - (I) Full details of pest control measures following any demolition required. Where necessary, capping of drains/sewers and baiting arrangements.*
 - (J) Traffic Management needed during construction.*
 - (K) Times, routes and means of access into and from the site for construction traffic and delivery vehicles (including the removal of waste from the site and methods of preventing deposition of materials on the public highway).*
 - (L) Emergency contact and Site manager contact details.*

The approved Construction Method Statement shall be adhered to throughout the development process unless agreed otherwise in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Officer: Matt Burns



Plan showing layout of the proposed new pedestrian connection to the footbridge over the River Kennet



Plan showing route of the proposed new pedestrian connection to the footbridge over the River Kennet



Visual of proposed new pedestrian connection to footbridge over the River Kennet