

8 October 2025



Reading
Borough Council
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Title	PLANNING APPLICATION REPORT
Ward	Abbey
Planning Application Reference:	PL/24/0173
Site Address:	Broad Street Mall, Reading
Proposed Development	Part-demolition of existing retail units, car park and service areas, demolition and rebuild of car park ramp, and construction of a residential-led, mixed-use development fronting Queens Walk and Dusseldorf Way, including all necessary enabling and alteration works required.
Applicant	McLaren (Broad Street Mall) Ltd and UREF III LP
Report author	Richard Eatough
Deadline:	N/A
Recommendations	Agree (to add this alternative access option as an additional clause in the s106 agreement).
Conditions	N/A
Informatives	N/A

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 This report relates to the recent application for redevelopment of the Broad Street Mall (BSM) for which PAC has already resolved to grant planning permission (subject to completion of the s106) but where permission has not yet been issued. The application is being referred back to Committee to advise of and seek your agreement to an updated, alternative transport arrangement. The recommendation of the Highway Authority is that this alternative arrangement is also acceptable and it raises no obvious environmental concerns and accordingly, officers are recommending that this alternative is included within the s106 agreement.

2. Introduction and site description

- 2.1 This report should be read in conjunction with the two BSM reports (attached), where members will recall, the application was referred to your meetings on 2 and 30 April, and where at the latter meeting, PAC resolved to grant planning permission, subject to satisfactory completion of the s106 legal agreement. The report introduces a new consideration which requires a PAC decision, for the reasons explained below.

satisfactory completion of the Section 106 agreement. The drafting of this agreement and the associated planning conditions are underway. The relevant reports are attached for information.

- 2.2 This matter is being re-reported to you meeting as it is considered to result in a more than minor change to a pending planning application. As the current status of the application is that the Committee has Resolved to grant planning permission subject to completion of the s106 legal agreement, RBC Legal Services advises that it is necessary for the Committee to consider these changes too.

3. The Proposal

- 3.1 This matter concerns the detailed highway arrangement in the basement level access to the proposed development. The existing situation is long-established and involves access to BSM from the IDR either from Castle Street, or from the Chatham Street roundabout and egress via the southbound slip-road from BSM, which connects to the Castle Street roundabout.
- 3.2 The proposed access arrangement which was approved in April, was agreed with the Highway Authority following several revisions. Whilst ultimately acceptable to the Highway Authority, the applicant has since advised that they also wish to introduce an alternative arrangement, also to be approved by the Local Planning Authority, thereby allowing them to choose which version to implement. The reason for this is a risk in relation to access rights, which is discussed in more detail within the Consultations and Appraisal section below.
- 3.3 The details of this alternative arrangement are set out in the following document (report and plans) produced by the applicant's transport consultant: Stantec Technical Note ref. BSMR-STN-BSM-XX-TN-TR-0109, dated 30/07/2025.

4. Relevant Planning History

- 4.1 See attached reports.

5. Consultations

RBC Transport Strategy

- 5.1 The comments of the Highway Authority to this proposal are as follows:
- 5.2 Post approval at planning committee and during the S106 preparations it has been identified by the applicant that undertaking works to provide the re opening of the roundabout at basement level which is located within third party land would create a ransom opportunity for the third party land owner. As a result the applicant has proposed that should negotiations with the third party landowner not be successful that the access to the multi storey car park be taken solely from the slip road located along the IDR to the west of the Broad Street Mall.
- 5.3 This access to the car park already exists albeit it would be seen as a secondary access as a result the applicant has undertaken a review of traffic flows to ascertain what impact this change will have. With regards the Friar Street / Chatham Street roundabout junction the assessment has identified that the proposal will have a negligible impact on the roundabout with only a minimal increase in traffic flow within

in the AM and PM peak periods. Although the Castle Street roundabout would have a minimal increase in traffic in the AM peak the PM does result in a reduction in trips which is mainly associated with the reduction in the car park capacity and the resulting associated trips.

- 5.4 Please note that all trip generation and assessment has incorporated the reduced trip rate for the Multi storey car park as a result of the reduction in parking proposed by way of the development proposals and also that the redistributed vehicle trips for the 100 residential parking spaces included within the scheme have been over estimated to make sure the assessment is robust. As a result the Highway Authority have no objections to the impact on the surrounding junctions.
- 5.5 The applicant has confirmed that there are no formal rights of way through the BSM land for the Penta Hotel who would currently require to utilise the BSM land for egress from their loading facility at basement level. Should this be the case then the land owner of the Penta Hotel would be able to provide their own dedicated egress point via the roundabout arrangement BSM had initially proposed given that this land is completely within their land ownership.
- 5.6 Should the access arrangements for the car park be altered to provide a singular access point from the IDR slip road then the associated signage and road markings around the BSM car park will require revision by the applicant which will need to be undertaken by way of a S278 agreement secured within the S106 agreement.
- 5.7 Should the scenario to access the site via the IDR slip road be implemented then the applicant would be required to enter into a S278 Highway Agreement to undertake revisions to the signage and road markings associated with the BSM multi storey car park. With an obligation that all works are completed prior to the re opening of the multi storey car park.

RBC Valuers

- 5.8 The Council's Valuation Team has been consulted due to the area in question involving RBC-owned land and additionally involves access arrangements which are affected for the Hexagon Theatre (the theatre has been separately consulted). No response at time of writing.

RBC Environmental Protection

- 5.9 Consulted due to possible additional issues of noise and air quality issues to residents from the alternative arrangement. No response at time of writing but any response received will be reported to your meeting.

Public consultation

- 5.10 The below methods of public consultation have described this matter for reconsultation, which has been described as follows:

"Proposed alterations to the basement area access/egress arrangements. This arrangement is an alternative road layout and vehicle routing for the operational

phase of the development only to that arrangement already consulted on, and in the event of this alternative arrangement also being approved, the applicant would have the option to implement either arrangement”.

5.11 Limited public re-consultation has been undertaken in relation to this matter. Site notices have been displayed for 14 days near to residential developments on the alternative access route as follows:

- On the IDR pedestrian guardrail, near to Chatham Place
- On the pedestrian gate to the podium amenity area, Chatham Place
- On the northern side of the Chatham Street IDR roundabout; and
- On Weldale Street, outside the new ‘Domain’ development.

5.12 In addition, letters were sent to other major landowners in the immediate area:

- Penta Hotel, Oxford Road
- Hexagon Theatre, Queens Walk
- Thames Valley Police, Castle Street
- Magistrate’s Court, Castle Street
- Aparto Queens Court student accommodation, Queens Walk
- Reading Buses, Great Knollys Street

5.13 No representations have been received at the time of writing, but any which are received will be reported to your meeting.

6. Legal context

6.1 See attached reports.

Local Plan policies and the Partial Update

6.2 The current version of the Local Plan (adopted in November 2019) turned five years old on Tuesday 5th November 2024. The Local Plan was reviewed in March 2023 and around half of the policies in the plan are considered still up to date. However, the rest need to be considered for updating to reflect changing circumstances and national policy. The submission draft of the Local Plan Partial Update was submitted on 9th May 2025.

6.3 There have been no notable changes to planning policy as set out in the attached reports. The key adopted planning policies relevant to this matter are:

TR1 (Achieving the Transport Strategy)
TR3 (Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters)
CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity; and
EN15 (air Quality)

6.4 Although there is a five-year period for carrying out a review of a plan after it is adopted, nothing in the NPPF or elsewhere says that policies automatically become “out of date” when they are five years old. Officer advice in respect of the Local Plan policies pertinent to this application and listed above is that they remain in accordance with national policy and that the objectives of those policies remain very similar in the draft

updated Local Plan. Therefore, they can continue to be afforded weight in the determination of this planning application and are not considered to be 'out of date'. Supplementary Planning Documents and other relevant documents remain unchanged also.

7. Appraisal

Introduction

- 7.1 This report is concerned with this transport matter only and should be read in conjunction with the previous reports attached.
- 7.2 As set out in the RBC Transport Strategy (Highway Authority) comments above, the matter of a potential ransom strip by the adjoining landowner, Penta Hotel means that the applicant is being advised that in the event that the Penta hotel owner/operator declines to allow the agreed/designed layout (which requires their agreement), an alternative sub-surface layout and traffic circulation route will be needed and the developer requests this to be considered as an equally valid alternative option.
- 7.3 The main issues raised by this revised (alternative) access arrangement are:
- (i) Suitability in terms traffic circulation and highway safety; and
 - (ii) Any additional disturbance issues caused by the changes
- (i) Suitability in terms traffic circulation and highway safety
- 7.4 The Highway Authority has examined the Technical Note and conforms that they are content with the alternative proposals, should they become necessary. This would mean that the currently agreed proposal of 'improving' the basement circulation, by providing a mini-roundabout to allow northbound traffic from Castle Street being able to turn right (using the roundabout) into the development would not be undertaken. However, the option of traffic continuing to the next roundabout north, U-turning and then taking the BSM slip-road, is considered to be a satisfactory alternative arrangement. As set out in the Highway Authority's comments above, this alternative arrangement, although more convoluted/longer, is also suitable.
- 7.5 The main issue for examination has been the junction capacities of the two respective IDR roundabouts affected and the Highway Authority identifies minimal impact overall on either of these roundabouts, although the effect on other junctions has also been assessed.
- 7.6 The alternative arrangement would need to be attached to an additional clause (obligation) in the s106 agreement which is currently being drafted. It is suggested that the precise wording of the clause would be for officers to propose in consultation with the signatories of the agreement (ie. all those with an interest in the application land, not just the applicant) and is likely to involve certain 'notice periods' being given to the Council as to which arrangement is being taken forward. The advantage, though, is that BSM and the hotel could achieve completely separate access arrangements if that becomes necessary.
- 7.7 Specific highway signage would also be needed if the alternative routing is required. This would need to be provided within a s278 agreement and such is again already being drafted in association with the s106.

- 7.8 With no additional adverse highway issues being presented, the alternative arrangement is considered to be suitable in terms of Local Plan policies TR1 and TR3.

(ii) Any additional disturbance issues caused by the changes

- 7.9 The Technical Note indicates that there is a very minor/modest increase in traffic flow around the Chatham Street roundabout as a result of the alternative arrangement. It is therefore advised that the nearest affected residential properties be consulted. Due to the negligible increases in traffic flow, a consequent concern in terms of noise and air quality is not anticipated at this time; but the response from RBC Environmental Protection will be reported to your meeting and a comment in relation to the Local Plan environmental policies will be provided.

8. Equality implications

- 8.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:
- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 8.2 The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation. It is considered that there is no indication or evidence that the protected groups have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this alternative transport arrangement which is being reported to you.

9. Conclusion & Planning Balance

- 9.1 The alternative proposal is considered to be a suitable 'back-up' arrangement should the original arrangement not be achievable by the applicant. This alternative does not alter the planning balance as set out in the attached reports. Being an arrangement which is suitable in traffic and environmental terms it is recommended that you agree to its inclusion within the s106 which is currently being drafted.

