

# Planning Applications Committee



22 July 2026

|                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Title</b>                           | <b>PLANNING APPLICATIONS REPORT</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Ward</b>                            | Abbey                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Planning Application Reference:</b> | PL/26/0785 FUL                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Site Address:</b>                   | Reading Central Library, Abbey Square, Reading                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Proposed Development</b>            | Installation of temporary security hoarding, mesh screens and associated security measures to the Central Library, Abbey Square, Reading, to secure the vacant building against unauthorised access, vandalism and anti-social behaviour pending determination of its future use.                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Applicant</b>                       | Property and Assets, RBC                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Report author</b>                   | Marcie Rejwerska, Senior Planning Officer                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Deadline:</b>                       | 10 August 2026                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Recommendation</b>                  | <p>GRANT PLANNING PERMISSION</p> <p>Recommended conditions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Temporary permission – all exterior works to be removed within 3 years of the date of this permission.</li> <li>2. Approved Plans</li> <li>3. Materials As Specified</li> <li>4. Scheme for decorative artwork for timber hoardings to be submitted for approval prior to installation of timber hoardings to include a timetable for implementation. Implementation in accordance.</li> </ol> |
| <b>Informatives</b>                    | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Positive and Proactive Working – approval</li> <li>2. Terms</li> <li>3. Any signage or other advertisements may require separate Advertisement Consent.</li> <li>4. Complaints about construction</li> </ol>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |

## 1. Executive summary

- 1.1 The report considers the application for full planning permission for installation of security hoarding at the now vacant Reading Central Library on Kings Road/Abbey Square. The design has been designed to minimise the impact on the street scene and the works fall under permitted development. The application is recommended for approval.

## **2. Introduction**

- 2.1 The application site comprises the recently vacated Reading Central Library on Kings Road/Abbey Square. The property is located in the central core, immediately to the east of the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area. The Holy Brook runs underneath the building and falls within Flood Zones 2 and 3.
- 2.4 The applications are required to be determined by Planning Applications Committee as Reading Borough Council is the applicant.



Figure 1: Aerial View – not to scale

## **3. The Proposal**

- 3.1 Full planning permission is sought for the proposed scheme for securing the site to prevent unauthorised access. The scheme includes internal metal mesh for all windows facing Kings Road, and external metal mesh screens for windows and external doors at the rear. Timber hoarding is proposed to enclose the canopy entrance on Kings Road. Access is to be retained along the Holy Brook at the rear of the site.
- 3.2 Information submitted on 15 June 2026:
- Design and Access Statement including Flood Risk Assessment
  - 1183-02-00 Site Location Plan
  - 1183-02-01 Block Plan as Existing
  - 1183-03-00 Ground and First Floor Existing Plan
  - 1183-05-00 Partial Elevations as Existing For Hoarding 1

- 1183-05-01 Partial Elevations as Existing For Hoarding 2
- 358 Gate Data Sheet
- 358 Additional Data Sheet
- Hoarding Data Sheet
- Metal Data Sheet
- Protek 358 Data Sheet Safesite

Information submitted on 7 July 2026:

- 1183-03-10 R2 Ground and First Floor Proposed Plan
- 1183-05-10 R2 Partial Elevations as Proposed For Hoarding 1
- 1183-05-11 R2 Partial Elevations as Proposed For Hoarding 2

#### **4. Relevant Planning History**

- 4.1 PL/89/0720 – A pair of signboards fixed back to back projecting from building on Kings Road elevation. Application refused on 4 May 1989.

#### **5. Consultations**

- 5.1 No internal consultees.
- 5.7 2x site notices were displayed, one at the front of the site and the other at the rear, on 18 June 2026 in the public interest.
- 5.8 No letters of representation were received.

#### **6. Legal Context**

- 6.1 Section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the LPA to have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of special interest which it possesses.
- 6.2 Section 72 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the local planning authority in the exercise of its functions to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.
- 6.3 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy framework (NPPF) - among them the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'. However, the NPPF does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making (NPPF paragraph 12).

- 6.4 In this regard, the NPPF states that due weight should be given to the adopted policies of the Local Plan 2019 according to their degree of consistency with the NPPF (the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the NPPF, the greater the weight that may be given).
- 6.5 Accordingly, the latest NPPF and the following development plan policies and supplementary planning guidance are relevant:
- 6.6 National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024, as amended)
- 6.7 National Planning Practice Guidance (2014 onwards)
- 6.8 Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 - Policies:  
CC1: Presumption in favour of sustainable development  
CC7: Design and the public realm  
EN18: Flooding and drainage  
CR2: Design in Central Reading
- 6.10 Local Plan Partial Update  
Local Plan (2019), the emerging Local Plan (Submission Draft 2025)
- 6.11 The current version of the Local Plan (adopted in November 2019) turned five years old on Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> 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 9<sup>th</sup> May 2025 and examined earlier this year. At the time of writing, the examination-in-public of the partial update to the local plan is in the process of taking place. Stage 1 hearings were held virtually on 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> November 2025. Stage 2 hearings took place in February 2026.
- 6.12 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. It is a matter of planning judgement rather than legal fact whether a plan or policies within it are out-of-date. This will depend on whether they have been overtaken by things that have happened since the plan was adopted, either on the ground or through changes in national policy, for example.
- 6.13 Officer advice in respect of the Local Plan policies pertinent to these applications listed above is that, other than Policy H1 (Provision of Housing) 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’.

## 7. Appraisal

7.1 The main considerations relevant to the determination of this application are:

- I. Design and appearance
- II. Flooding

### I) Design and Appearance

7.2 Policy CR2 requires proposals within Central Reading to demonstrate high quality architectural detailing and use of materials, respecting the existing character of the surrounding area. Policy CC7 (Design and the Public Realm) seeks to ensure that new development enhances and preserves the local character.

7.3 The security metal sheets are proposed to be installed internally to all windows facing onto Kings Road. This element does not require planning permission as the works are internal. This is considered an appropriate solution to prevent the works from harming the character of the building and the setting of the nearby conservation area. The proposed hoarding around the entrance is proposed to be timber boarding attached to the existing columns at full height (leaving a 50mm gap at the base for flooding reasons – see below).

7.4 At the rear, metal mesh is proposed to extend around the bay window at the ground floor level near the footbridge over the canal to prevent access to the rear of the site and to prevent climbing onto the bay pitched roof. Metal mesh is also proposed on either side of the canal immediately at the rear elevation to prevent climbing.

7.5 The case officer has discussed with the applicant if a “meanwhile” use could be considered for one of many local community groups that are in need of premises to operate from, however, it has been confirmed that the applicant is not intending to bring the interior of the property to standard suitable for this type of use.

7.6 Overall it is considered that the proposals will have an unfortunate deadening effect upon the vacant building and this effect will extend to affect the surrounding street frontages to the front and rear, including the stepped courtyard area at the rear. The proposals would have an unattractive appearance and are not considered appropriate to be kept in place for any significant length of time. The effects of the proposal will fail to *enhance* the setting of the adjacent conservation area and will result in a degree of harm (at a “less than substantial” level using NPPF terminology) to the setting of the adjacent conservation area.

7.7 In order to *preserve* the character and appearance of the conservation area in the medium to long term and to ensure the deadening qualities do not persist, it is considered reasonable and necessary to impose a condition requiring all external works to be removed within 3 years of the date of the permission. A condition requiring a scheme of artwork for the hoardings is also recommended as a means

of improving the visual quality to a degree. It is considered that the requirements of these conditions taken together would be sufficient to outweigh the heritage harm identified.

## **II) Flooding**

- 7.6 Policy EN18 states “Where development in areas at risk of flooding is necessary, it will not reduce the capacity of the flood plain to store floodwater, impede the flow of floodwater or in any way increase the risks to life and property arising from flooding. Wherever possible, development should be designed to reduce flood risk, both on- and off-site.”
- 7.7 The proposed development has been designed to have no impact on the site in the event of surface flooding. The mesh metal barriers on the entrance doors and at the rear of the site are not fixed to the ground and would not impede water flow in the event of a flood. The proposed hoarding around the entrance porch is proposed to be affixed to the existing columns to support the hoarding and will have a 50mm gap at the floor level to allow water to pass underneath. The use of the materials therefore does not increase the flood risk to the site to a harmful extent.

## **Equality implications**

- 7.24 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.
- 7.25 The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation. There is no indication that the proposal would have any impact with regard to any protected characteristics.

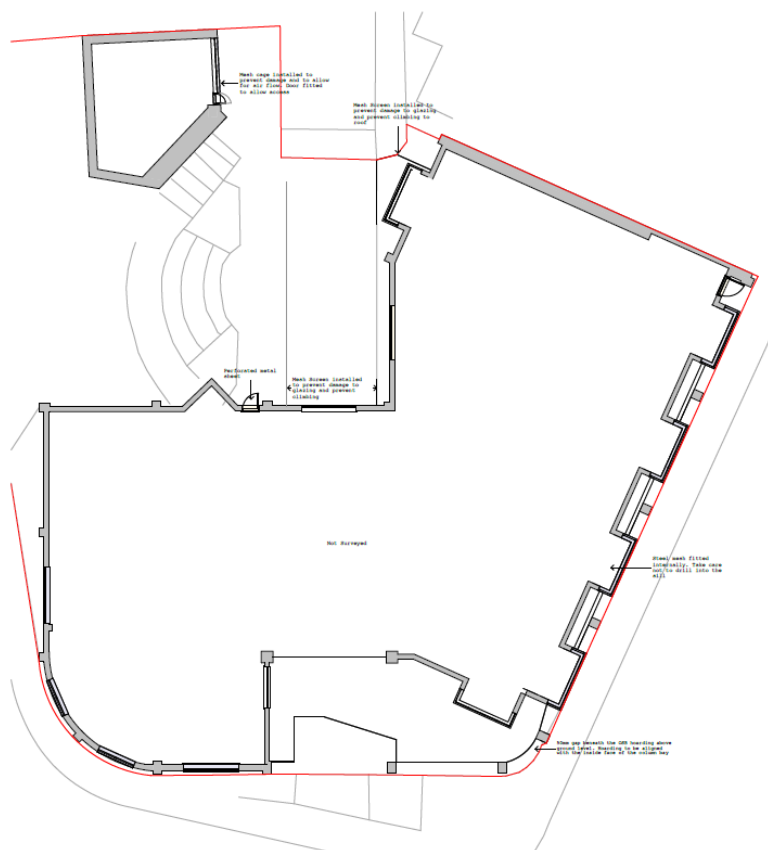
## **8. CONCLUSION**

- 8.1 The application is required to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise, as set out in Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
- 8.2 The proposed works are described by the applicant as being required to secure the vacant building to prevent damage and unauthorised access to the site. The proposals will have visual impacts on the building and surrounding public areas, including the adjacent Market Place/London Street Conservation Area to the

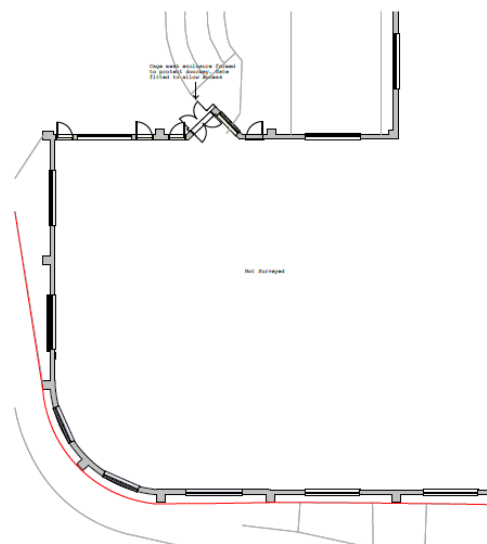
extent that permission should only be granted for a temporary period. The flooding impacts are considered acceptable. The application is therefore recommended for approval, subject to the recommended conditions.



### Plans and documents considered:

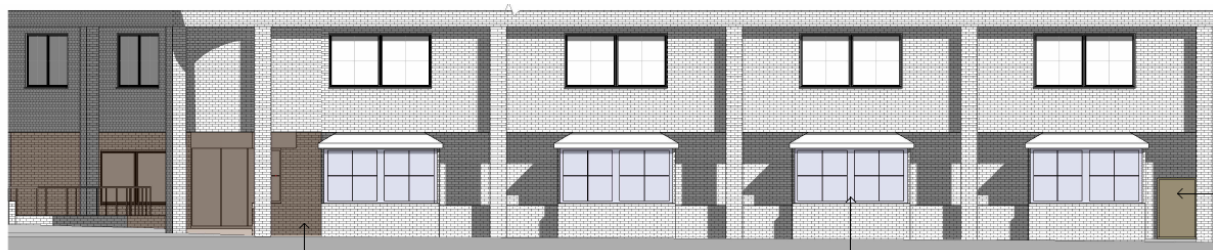


Ground Floor Plan As Proposed



First Floor Plan As Proposed

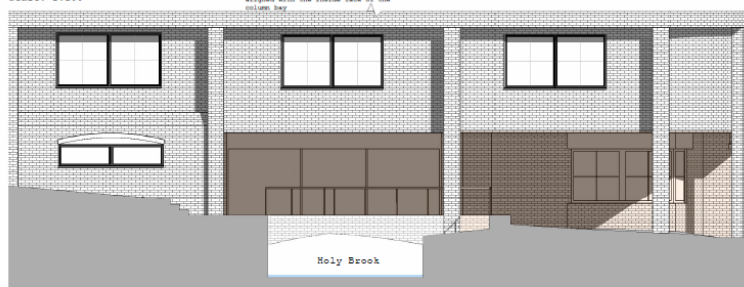
- ☐ Mesh
- ☐ Perforated metal sheet
- ☐ OSB



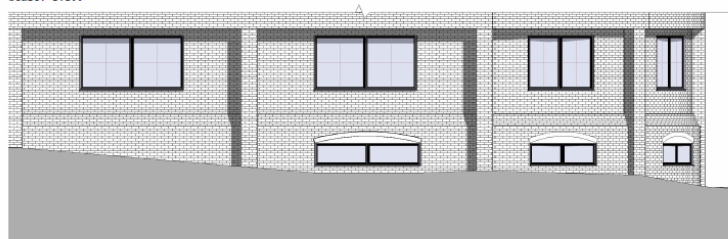
A: South Elevation  
Scale: 1:100

50mm gap beneath the CGS boarding  
above ground level. Boarding to be  
aligned with the inside face of the  
columns base.

Steel mesh fitted internally.  
Take care not to drill into the  
wall



B: South-West Elevation  
Scale: 1:100



C: North-West Elevation  
Scale: 1:100



a: South Elevation

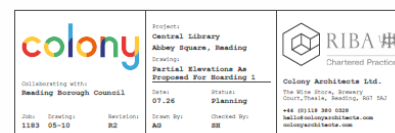
B: South-West Elevation

C: North-West Elevation

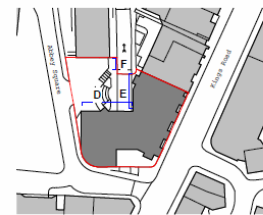
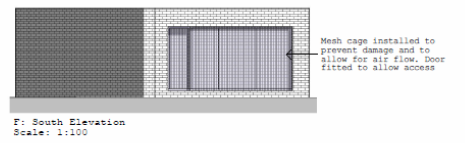
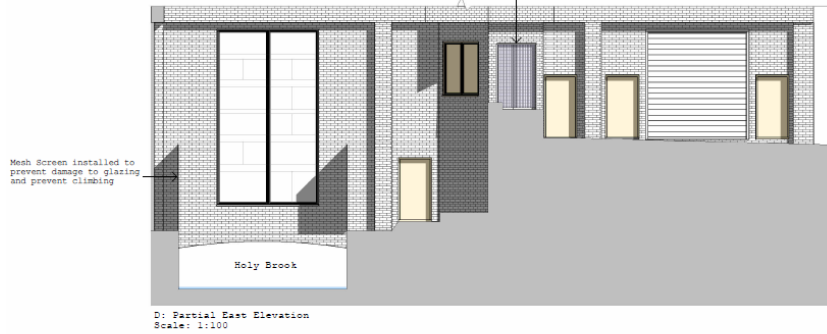
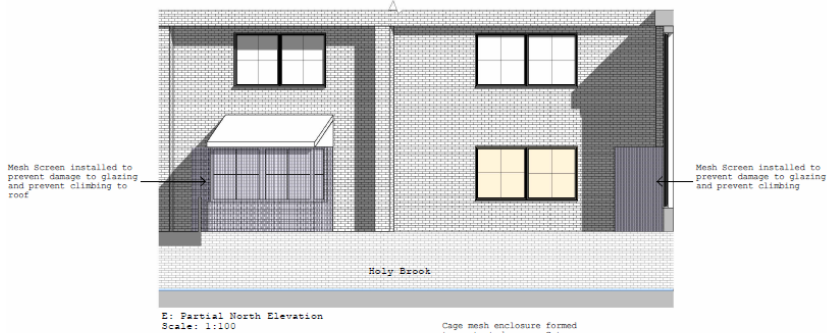


Site Plan  
Scale: 1250

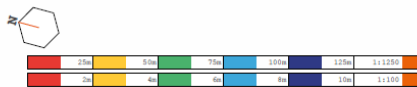
- ☐ Mesh  
☐ Perforated metal sheet  
☐ OSB







- ☐ Mesh
- ☐ Perforated metal sheet
- ☐ OSB



|                                                                       |                   |                                                                                                                                                                                 |                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>colony</b><br>Collaborating with<br><b>Reading Borough Council</b> |                   | Project:<br><b>Central Library</b><br><b>Abbey Square, Reading</b><br>Drawing:<br><b>Partial Elevations As Proposed For Boarding 2</b><br>Date:<br>07.16<br>Status:<br>Planning |                 | <br><b>RIBA</b><br>Chartered Practice<br>Colony Architects Ltd.<br>The White Horse, Brewery<br>Court, Reading, RG1 1AA<br>+44 (0)118 363 0329<br>info@colonyarchitects.com<br>colonyarchitects.com |
| Job:<br>1183                                                          | Drawing:<br>05-11 | Revisions:<br>R2                                                                                                                                                                | Drawn By:<br>AD |                                                                                                                                                                                                    |