

Donna Williams

From: Caroline McHardy
Sent: 30 September 2020 15:26
To: Markwell, Jonathan (Jonathan.Markwell@reading.gov.uk)
Cc: Craig Pettit
Subject: RE: 55 Vastern Rd, Reading (200188)
Attachments: [EXTERNAL] RE: Vastern Road

Dear Jonathan,

Further to the below I was wondering whether it would be a good idea for us to have another zoom catch up early next week? I hope you agree the last meeting we had was really helpful and having a fixed date will help focus both our teams as we get closer to your deadline for having all matters resolved? For instance I still don't believe my affordable team have heard from Steve Hicks.

Whilst writing I have also attached the latest response we have had back from the EA this afternoon. As you will see from their comments as long as we agree some appropriate mitigation and improvements to the marginal planting along the river bed they do not feel we need to review the height of our proposed buildings but would welcome your view and a meeting between the three of us. I will ask my ecologist and landscape team to draw up some suggestions but I would welcome your thoughts on this and when you are available to discuss this matter with us and the EA?

I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards

Caroline McHardy
Land and Development Director

Berkeley
Designed for life



Berkeley Homes (Oxford and Chiltern) Ltd
Berkeley House, Farnham Lane, Farnham Royal, SL2 3RQ

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From: Markwell, Jonathan <Jonathan.Markwell@reading.gov.uk>
Sent: 28 September 2020 09:23
To: Craig Pettit <Craig.Pettit@bartonwillmore.co.uk>
Cc: Caroline McHardy <Caroline.McHardy@berkeleygroup.co.uk>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] RE: 55 Vastern Rd, Reading (200188)

Dear Mr Pettit,

Thank you for your email. An extension of time until 5th November is confirmed. The remainder of your email will naturally take a bit of time to consider, so I will revert in due course on those matters. In particular, I have sought energy and viability updates and will respond on these matters as soon as I am able to.

I trust that this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,

Jonathan Markwell
Principal Planning Officer
Planning Section | Directorate for Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services

Reading Borough Council
Civic Offices,
Bridge Street,
Reading,
RG1 2LU

07971 015 688

[Website](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#) | [YouTube](#)



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From: Craig Pettit <Craig.Pettit@bartonwillmore.co.uk>
Sent: 25 September 2020 10:26
To: Markwell, Jonathan <Jonathan.Markwell@reading.gov.uk>; Caroline McHardy

<Caroline.McHardy@berkeleygroup.co.uk>

Subject: RE: 55 Vastern Rd, Reading (200188)

Good morning Jonathan,

Firstly thank you for your email below and the information provided. Responding to your comments regarding the extension of time, I have spoken to my client and your position is understood. Through the successful engagement that is ongoing we are hopeful of a favourable recommendation at Committee and we will continue to work with you towards this date to ensure you have everything you require. My client has advised that they are able to agree an extension of time to 5th November, thereby allowing time following Committee for a revised extension of time to be put in place to allow for post Committee actions. We are of course happy to engage with you immediately following Committee, to ensure any additional extensions are agreed swiftly; likely to be as a result of a brief email exchange. We trust that this is acceptable and satisfies your previous concerns. I would therefore be very grateful of your confirmation that an extension of time to 5th November is agreed.

Following our meeting and the actions arising, I attach to this email the following:

- Strategic Shared Cycle Footway booklet (433.LAND.RP.001) – serving to more clearly explain the proposed route
- An additional Highways Response, prepared by Stantec (47500-TN06) and accompanying plans:
 - 47500-5500-005A (internal turning head swept path analysis)
 - 47500-5500-SK030 (Proposed Crossing)
- The following amended plans:
 - 448.PL.D.300.A (annotated cycle storage)
 - 448.PL.BC.100.C (Block B and C Ground Floor Plan)
 - 448.PL.D.100.B (Block D Ground Floor Plan)
- North-South Route Policy note, prepared by Barton Willmore (28876 A3 EF CP)

For clarity, I have included below the table supplied previously, which I have updated to include the attached.

In terms of the detail in your email below, this is currently being considered by the relevant parties and we will revert as soon as possible.

Echoing my clients comments below, the outstanding matters which we have not yet had the benefit of a response to are, viability matters and the report awaited from Element Energy. Whilst we note your comments in relation to both below, I would be grateful if you could please chase up on these and advise accordingly.

I trust the above is clear, however do let me know if there are any queries.

Many thanks

RBC (Steve Hicks) to liaise with BPS on viability in preparation for a meeting to discuss with BHOC.	RBC	Urgent
BHOC to advise of availability for a meeting to discuss viability with RBC/BPS during w/c 14 th and 21 st September.	BHOC	Sent – awaiting RBC response
RBC to review Stantec’s submission of 10 th Sept and advise of any further comments.	RBC	Received 15th Sept
BHOC/BW to prepare note relating to the north-south pedestrian/cycle route providing the justification and rationale for the route. To include a policy assessment of the proposals. Note to bring elements of submission together in one place to aid officers.	BHOC/BW	Included above 25th Sept
Stantec to prepare note in relation to Vastern Road crossing design and costing.	Stantec	Included above 25th Sept
BHOC to advise RBC of the preferred use class for the café building, relevant to recent changes to the Use Class Order.	BHOC	Confirmation provided above (16th Sept)

BHOC to review JM's comments on detailed design and respond accordingly, namely the internal layout of units and their associated 'stacking'.	BHOC	Partial response above (16 th Sept) Further response (plans) included above 25 th Sept
BHOC to advise JM of preferred approach in terms of Employment and Skills Plan (financial contribution or provision).	BHOC	Being considered
BHOC to share copy of correspondence with the EA with RBC.	BHOC	Enclosed above (16 th Sept)
JM to liaise with Element Energy and BRE (microclimate) and share updates once received.	RBC	Received 24 th Sept
JM to share comments received from Natural Environment Officer and BRE (daylight/sunlight).	RBC	Received
BHOC to review Natural Environment Officer comments following issue and respond as necessary.	BHOC	Being considered
JM to liaise with Thames Valley Police and Environmental Health to obtain final comments.	RBC	Received 24 th Sept

Craig Pettit

Planning Associate



DDI: 0118 943 0107

M: 07807866091

W: www.bartonwillmore.co.uk

The Blade, Abbey Square, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 3BE

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From: Markwell, Jonathan <Jonathan.Markwell@reading.gov.uk>

Sent: 24 September 2020 11:49

To: Caroline McHardy <Caroline.McHardy@berkeleygroup.co.uk>; Craig Pettit <Craig.Pettit@bartonwillmore.co.uk>

Subject: RE: 55 Vastern Rd, Reading (200188)

Dear Ms McHardy,

Thank you for your email.

In terms of the extension of time, whilst the agreement to cover the 4th November committee is welcome, to only extend the extension of time until the actual day of the committee meeting is respectfully considered to be impractical. I'm not sure if you are aware, but committee meetings begin

at 6.30pm, so sometimes meetings last until 10pm or beyond. Should the resolution be positive, it leaves no time to practically enable the necessary agreements to be put in place (and I would also imagine that members will be somewhat confused as to why the date has only been agreed until the date they are considering the proposals). Alternatively, should the resolution not be positive for whatever reason, you are effectively requiring the decision to be issued immediately after the meeting; again, this is unrealistic. As such, I would once again ask you to revert to my previously suggested extension of time approach and await your further response.

In terms of viability matters, I understand that my colleague Steve Hicks was discussing this with BPS yesterday afternoon. As such, Steve will contact your Affordable Housing Director shortly to set up a meeting to discuss this further.

With regard to the further comments from the Crime Prevention Design Advisor at Thames Valley Police Anne Chalmers, she has confirmed the following:

I refer to Minutes of meeting 10th June 2019 Item 6.0., and email dated 12th July -where I wrote that I had concerns that compartmentalisation may not be fully achieved within each block, The proposed design (open fire egress stairwell / lack of pedestrian pass door to carpark) or a secondary fire escape could allow individuals access onto and between all the residential floors within a block. The possibility free movement (excessive permeability), will not only negatively impact on the privacy of residents – by create opportunity for crime, ASB and raise the fear of crime.

The option to move freely between floors combined with the lack of natural surveillance within the core areas increases the need to maintain ownership of these areas via physical security measures. These areas can become problematic in terms or ASB.

*For large Town Centre developments such as this it is critical that the design and layout of each block supports the implementation of robust access control). **This is a fundamental concern.** To ensure that the opportunity to create a safe and sustainable community is not missed I respectfully request that the following (or a similarly worded) condition be placed upon any approval for this application. Such a condition will help to ensure that the development achieves the highest standards of design in terms of safety and security, safe guarding future residents. Creating 'Safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime will not undermine quality of life or community cohesion'. **and I ask that the following condition be applied:***

Condition:

Prior to commencement of works above slab level, written details as to how the development will achieve the Secured by Design Award shall be submitted to, and approved by the authority. The development (and subsequent access control system) shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details, and shall not be occupied or used until confirmation of that said details has been received by the authority.

To aid the applicant I have provided the following as an aid to achieving this condition; Ref Secured by Design

The system must provide compartmentalisation of each floor within the development, and from the parking level, and cover each of the following;

External Communal entrance: All external and internal Communal entrance doors should meet the requirements of the minimum physical security requirements of LPS1175 SR2 access controlled via the use of electronic remote release locking systems with audio/visual link to each apartment. The system must record and store images for a minimum of 30 days.

Secure communal lobbies: Any internal door sets should meet the same specification as above.

Bin and cycle store doors and external sliding doors and roller shutters: These must be robust and secure, meeting the same standards LPS1175 SR2.

Car parks that aren't secure, are extremely vulnerable to criminal activities. They can attract anti-social behaviour, criminality and ASB associated whilst providing a place for the homeless to sleep or shelter. The crime, anti-social behaviour and the fear of such crimes can result in the occupants abandoning the parking facilities. Poor access control, surveillance and management practices can facilitate criminal activity in specific sites. I strongly recommend that access to the basement car park be made secure through the inclusion of electronic gates or shutters (LPS1175 SR2 or equivalent). These measures must incorporate an access control system that allows the driver to operate the system without leaving the vehicle. .

The underground parking facility will incorporate communal entrance doors for the residential cores.. Access to private residential dwellings must be made secure. I would ask that that parking facility communal entrance doors meet the requirements of the minimum physical security requirements of PAS24:2012 and include electronic remote release locking systems with audio and visual intercom link to each apartment, capable of recording and capturing images of individuals using the door entry panel

Anne Chalmers | Crime Prevention Design Advisor for Berkshire | Local Policing | Thames Valley Police

I would welcome your response to Anne's suggested approach?

Turning to the outstanding observations from my Environmental Protection colleague Rebecca Moon, these have now been received too, as follows:

I have the following observations/additional comments:

- *I agree for the condition re the odour assessment to be amended as requested*
- *I agree for the condition re validation report to be pre occupation - however, there is an additional risk on the developer as a result, because if something is not satisfactory it won't be identified until a late stage*
- *It is disappointing that the site cannot be designed with the noise from the transformers controlled at source or the site layout adjusted so that the noise from the transformers does not meet the 10 dB below background criterion or even a more conservative 0 dB above background. Can the applicant clarify whether any adjustment has been made for tonality in the assessment and if so how much? What is the rating level prior to adjustments? I note that the occupants most affected have been provided with acoustic glazing and ventilation, however, it would be much more preferable if they were also able to open their windows, and the noise is constant. Is there really no options for reducing the noise at source?*
- *Ground gas - Section 9.3.1 of the submitted Geo-Environmental Site Assessment states that further ground gas monitoring is underway therefore the condition is required, unless this can be submitted prior to the application being determined.*
- *Air quality - it is stated that the model is over predicting. This needs to be clarified, as to me it sounds as if it is under predicting as the modelled concentration is lower than the measured one. Does the model need further adjustment in that case? (The response states: Slight over-predictions of NO₂ concentration were recorded at the Vastern Road diffusion tube DT52 (34.6 µg/m³ compared to the measured annual mean concentration of 36.8 µg/m³)*

Accordingly, there are some further clarifications required and the position regarding other matters has been clarified. As such, I would welcome your responses to the points of additional clarification sought and any comments on the other matters detailed.

With regards to microclimate matters, I have discussed this with BRE, who has provided the following response in relation to issues A, B, and C. For full transparency, I include their substantive comments in relation to the three issues in full:

Issue A) We were unaware that the main doorway is located on the East façade of the Sovereign House south hemi-spherical extension. Given this main doorway location, we agree with the RWDI comments about this doorway, and we also think a comment in their report would be appropriate to clarify this matter. As well as this matter there is a small location to the south of the aforementioned extension which is shown as red (unsuitable for walking and all other more sedentary activities). Our concern is

that this location is not suitable for any pedestrian activity and should be mitigated. The discussion of the windy area outside Sovereign House is only relevant to Configuration 3.

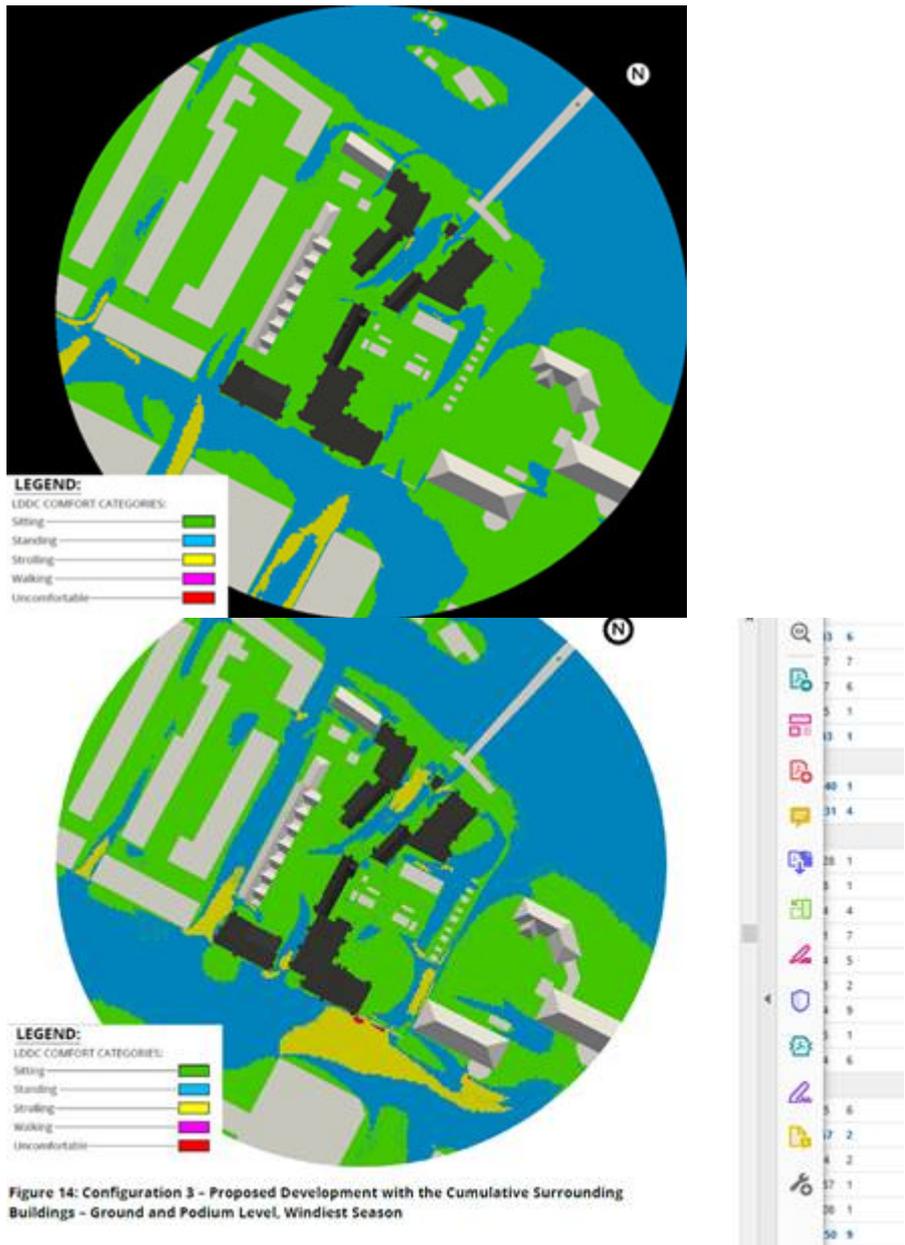


Figure 14: Configuration 3 – Proposed Development with the Cumulative Surrounding Buildings – Ground and Podium Level, Windiest Season

Configuration 3
(Report dated 19th May, reviewed by BRE)

Configuration 4

- Configuration 4: Proposed Development with Cumulative Surrounding Buildings (including 182252 - 80 Caversham Road and 200328 - Vastern Court Schemes).

As can be seen from the image above, if the development is as per configuration 4 then there are no wind issues at this location. Furthermore, if Configuration 3 is built first followed by Configuration 4, then the Configuration 3 windy areas (shown above) would only exist temporarily until Configuration 4 is constructed.

We think that this issue should also be commented upon by RWDI in their report and if Configuration 3 will be built then it should be demonstrated that the proposed mitigation measure will ameliorate the windy conditions at the 'red' location near Sovereign House.

Issue B) The fact that “[the RWDI] approach has been widely accepted by numerous London boroughs and peer reviewers” does not make it correct. A precedent being set should not thereafter be used to justify the unjustifiable.

I personally agree with RWDI “that occupants at height would be expected to be more tolerant of windier conditions due to the exposure this location inherently incurs. Additionally, the use of the balcony will also be constrained by the prevailing weather conditions on any given day and would therefore be expected to be used when appropriate weather conditions prevail.”, because I think people will trade good views for windy conditions. But this is not the point. The purpose of a wind microclimate assessment is just that - i.e. to identify windy conditions and to bring them to the attention of the LPA. Using this information, the LPA then makes an informed decision based upon that information. To repeat a point, we (BRE) believe that as a minimum requirement, the wind conditions on balconies should be suitable for long-term sitting during the summer months. RWDI clearly disagrees with our opinion, as they are entitled to do.

The issue about balconies being used as amenity space is important, because amenity space is a material consideration of the planning process. Each LPA might not have the same amenity space requirements as RBC. As I understand it RBC requires amenity space locations to be suitable throughout the year - this requirement therefore means that those locations must be suitable in winter. In this regard RBC require more onerous restrictions than other LPA's. There is nothing wrong nor untoward about this. Nevertheless, if this is an RBC requirement, then RBC should tell the Applicant (and RWDI) in clear English that this is a requirement (a “requirement” is not an aspiration, nor a vague wish, nor an intention) for planning approval to be granted. If RBC require that balconies should have conditions suitable for long-term sitting in summer, then that is what should be assessed. It needs to be stated that there is no guidance given by Lawson (which is the assessment criteria that RBC want used). Therefore it is a matter of judgement whether the conditions are suitable or not. Looking at the RBC planning requirements for not creating unpleasant wind conditions, etc, it is our opinion that these balconies that are unsuitable for sitting in the summer fail this test. Nevertheless, it is up to RBC to make the final decision.

Issue C)

The café is at podium level overlooking the river but the mitigation is at ground level. Previously RWDI just stated that the ground level mitigation measures would be adequate - it is this unjustified statement which is what we were disagreeing with. RWDI have now stated that a wall and balustrade to provide wind mitigation will be incorporated. We are happy for professional judgement to be used now that they have specified mitigation measures. Therefore we consider that the windy café area has been resolved because of proposed mitigation measures.

Summary:

The only outstanding matter of dispute between relates to the windy balconies/roof terraces. We have laid out the arguments, and we have provided RBC with our opinions and position; having done this, we believe that this matter is now down to RBC to resolve with the Applicant.

BRE has also clarified that from their perspective, they do not think a meeting is necessary as they have detailed their thoughts in full above; I concur with BRE on this from their perspective at this point in time.

Officers have carefully considered the further response from BRE. Whilst issue C is now resolved, issue A is close to being fully resolved (I would welcome your clarifications in line with BRE's remaining queries), issue B is the remaining unresolved matter. My view is that lockdown has only gone to emphasise the value and importance to be placed on individual balconies, external terraces or wider upper level communal amenity spaces within blocks of flats, in assisting the overall quality of accommodation for future occupiers (and the need to ensure that the development will not cause unacceptable living conditions for new residential properties, in line with Policy CC8). Accordingly,

officers recommend for a full seasonal assessment to be carried out in relation to the external balcony/terrace spaces and the results presented, to enable further consideration and analysis of this by the local planning authority. Naturally, you will be able to comment on wider factors (e.g. typical behaviour of people, as you have touched on in your responses to date) as part of your analysis to accompany the results, to assist in presenting an overall viewpoint of a) the results and b) the wider context, in order to c) present your reasoned final conclusion on this matter (with c) not being possible without a) and b) both being provided by you). At present, the limited seasonal approach applied is considered to be insufficient to demonstrate compliance with policy and hence more information is required to be submitted by you. It may be the case that the wider context factors ultimately override any possible concerns, but to arrive at such a point a clear presentation of the conditions at the balconies/terraces during all seasons needs to be presented to allow a well-reasoned justification to be provided.

I will naturally await the further response from you on this, prior to progressing this further. It may be the case that officers require further input from BRE to help interpret the future information requested, which if this is the case would require a future financial input from you to cover BRE's involvement (as before). This will be clarified once additional information has been submitted and an initial review of its nature/extent has been undertaken, but I thought it would be beneficial to advise you of this possibility at this stage.

Finally, for the moment, in terms of the energy review, whilst an initial draft report has been received from Element Energy, this requires comment from the Sustainability Manager, who himself is in the process of conferring with various colleagues too about this. I hope to be in a position to update you (including the Element Energy report) early next week.

I trust that these updates are of assistance to you and look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Jonathan Markwell
Principal Planning Officer
Planning Section | Directorate for Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services

Reading Borough Council
Civic Offices,
Bridge Street,
Reading,
RG1 2LU

07971 015 688

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From: Caroline McHardy <Caroline.McHardy@berkeleygroup.co.uk>
Sent: 23 September 2020 18:09
To: Markwell, Jonathan <Jonathan.Markwell@reading.gov.uk>
Cc: Craig Pettit <Craig.Pettit@bartonwillmore.co.uk>
Subject: RE: 55 Vastern Rd, Reading (200188)

Dear Jonathan,

As you have noted yourself we have been incredibly patient with the timescales to date and further to my email below I am pleased to confirm we are willing to grant an extension of time to November 4th to enable the application to be heard by committee as planned.

We hope that the application will be heard positively at the 4th November committee and then extra time to resolve the S106 could be agreed at this juncture to still enable a decision prior to Christmas.

I did not receive a response to the below but I trust now you are receipt of this email that we can get your officers to carry out their actions as agreed last week?

We are still seeking a copy of the BPS report, a meeting to review the Wind, and feedback on the energy report submitted.

We will be issuing in the morning our Highways response including policy support for the cycle footway.

Have a good evening and we look forward to hearing from you tomorrow.

Kind regards

Caroline McHardy
Land and Development Director



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Berkeley Homes (Oxford and Chiltern) Ltd
Berkeley House, Farnham Lane, Farnham Royal, SL2 3RQ

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From: Caroline McHardy
Sent: 18 September 2020 12:33
To: Markwell, Jonathan (Jonathan.Markwell@reading.gov.uk) <Jonathan.Markwell@reading.gov.uk>
Cc: 'Craig Pettit' <Craig.Pettit@bartonwillmore.co.uk>
Subject: FW: 55 Vastern Rd, Reading (200188)

Dear Jonathan,

I am sorry to hear that but as I explained in my email I need to discuss this with SSE and the person I need to speak to is on leave until the 23rd. Under our current agreement I can grant an EOT until the 30th September, therefore can I offer this for agreement with the intention that next week once I have spoken with SSE we can agree an EOT to allow us to reach a favourable position and get to the Nov 4th committee as agreed on Monday.

I hope this is welcomed in the spirit of working towards a positive outcome. Aside from the above I would hope that outstanding reports that have been funded by Berkeley can be forwarded on for our benefit so we can continue working productively over the next few days regardless of your view on my suggestion, in particular the BPS report which is long overdue and the Energy response?

Kind regards

Caroline McHardy
Land and Development Director

Berkeley
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Berkeley Homes (Oxford and Chiltern) Ltd
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Registered in England and Wales Number 2843844



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From: Markwell, Jonathan <Jonathan.Markwell@reading.gov.uk>
Sent: 17 September 2020 13:52
To: Caroline McHardy <Caroline.McHardy@berkeleygroup.co.uk>
Cc: Craig Pettit <Craig.Pettit@bartonwillmore.co.uk>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] RE: 55 Vastern Rd, Reading (200188)

Dear Mr McHardy,

Thank you for your reply. I have been advised by my managers that I cannot continue discussions, to enable the application to hopefully be in a position to be progressed positively, without an agreed extension of time being in place. I would therefore welcome your confirmation as soon as possible please.

Yours sincerely,

Jonathan Markwell
Principal Planning Officer
Planning Section | Directorate for Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services

Reading Borough Council
Civic Offices,
Bridge Street,
Reading,
RG1 2LU

07971 015 688

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From: Caroline McHardy <Caroline.McHardy@berkeleygroup.co.uk>
Sent: 17 September 2020 12:02
To: Markwell, Jonathan <Jonathan.Markwell@reading.gov.uk>
Cc: Craig Pettit <Craig.Pettit@bartonwillmore.co.uk>
Subject: FW: 55 Vastern Rd, Reading (200188)

Dear Jonathan,

Thank you for your email.

We have contractual arrangements with SSE and I will need to update them fully before I can respond. Given the delay from the target date which was back in June, I specifically need to update them on our progress and the timescales we discussed moving forwards.

As you will see I have just requested a date again from your Housing Officer and BPS. Getting more confirmation and certainty on dates for key meetings with the outstanding consultees will aid me in my discussions with SSE regarding the EOT.

Anything you can do to help would be appreciated and if you are able to give me a call I would be more than willing to discuss further.

Thank you

Kind regards

Caroline McHardy
Land and Development Director



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From: Markwell, Jonathan <Jonathan.Markwell@reading.gov.uk>
Sent: 17 September 2020 09:20
To: Craig Pettit <Craig.Pettit@bartonwillmore.co.uk>
Cc: Caroline McHardy <Caroline.McHardy@berkeleygroup.co.uk>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] RE: 55 Vastern Rd, Reading (200188)

OFFICIAL

Dear Mr Pettit,

Thank you for your email; there is obviously quite a bit to reflect on here, so I will revert in due course to you. On first glance however, it does not appear that you have responded to my suggested extension of time for the determination of the application until 4th December, as per my email after our meeting on 14th September - I would therefore reiterate my request for your response on this matter as soon as possible please.

Yours sincerely,

Jonathan Markwell
Principal Planning Officer
Planning Section | Directorate for Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services

Reading Borough Council
Civic Offices,
Bridge Street,
Reading,
RG1 2LU

07971 015 688

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From: Craig Pettit <Craig.Pettit@bartonwillmore.co.uk>

Sent: 16 September 2020 17:07

To: Markwell, Jonathan <Jonathan.Markwell@reading.gov.uk>; Caroline McHardy <Caroline.McHardy@berkeleygroup.co.uk>

Cc: Cook, Darren <Darren.Cook@reading.gov.uk>; Kim Cohen <Kim.Cohen@bartonwillmore.co.uk>; Emily Ford <Emily.Ford@bartonwillmore.co.uk>; joseph.harding@berkeleygroup.co.uk; Sophie Haslum <Sophie.Haslum@berkeleygroup.co.uk>

Subject: RE: 55 Vastern Rd, Reading (200188) - transport

OFFICIAL

Good afternoon Jonathan,

Thank you for your email below, which we will consider and revert on.

Further to our meeting, please find attached our drafted minutes of the meeting, which I would be grateful if you could confirm are an agreed and accurate representation of what was discussed.

Within the meeting you requested confirmation from us on certain elements:

Café use class – we consider it is most appropriate for the café to be considered as A3, as is currently written within the application.

Correspondence with the Environment Agency – please see attached correspondence between Berkeley and the EA. For clarity, we did send you our response in July (dated 15th July 2020 and re-attached for reference). However, I have also attached the EA’s response dated 6th August 2020 (PDF) together with our further response on 3rd September, seeking to agree clarification on the ecology buffer (including the landscaping/planting). We are awaiting their feedback (due by 18th September) on the revised shadowing and sunlight assessment EcoConsult/eB7 provided to the EA.

Comments on the layout and ‘stacking’ of the apartments – on the Velux window’s point for the top floor of Block C, we are currently reviewing this to see whether we can incorporate a dormer window or alternatively, create a study.

Clarification on internal changes to apartments:

Alterations to a number of apartments have been made in order to provide the requisite quantum of enhanced Approved Document M dwellings. In some instances, given the movement and turning space requirements, this has led to a handing in the apartment layout from other floors. The affected properties are:

- Southern elevation mid apartment within block B at ground floor (drawing 448.PL.BC.100) and first floor (drawing 448.PL.BC.101)
- 5no. dwellings on the courtyard elevations (north and east elevations) within block B at first floor (drawing 448.PL.BC.101)
- 3no. dwellings on the street elevation (west elevation) within block B at first floor (drawing 448.PL.BC.101)

The south-eastern apartment within block B (drawing 448.PL.BC.109) hands from the floors below in order to make use of the additional external “skin” of the building at this level and provide dual-aspecting to this apartment.

As we turn to other elements I will confirm our response to you in writing.

Actions list

Further to the above, attached and actions contained within the minutes of the meeting, please see below a table of action points, which we thought useful as a tracker. I have updated this, including the submissions within this email. As below, we now await updates in relation to the Element Energy response, BRE availability for a call and final comments from Thames Valley Policy/Environmental Health, from you. Additionally we are awaiting feedback from Steve Hicks, having provided meeting availability for a call with BPS. I would be grateful therefore if you could keep us updated with these points.

Many thanks and do let me know if there are any queries.

RBC (Steve Hicks) to liaise with BPS on viability in preparation for a meeting to discuss with BHOC.	RBC	Urgent
BHOC to advise of availability for a meeting to discuss viability with RBC/BPS during w/c 14 th and 21 st September.	BHOC	Sent – awaiting RBC response
RBC to review Stantec’s submission of 10 th Sept and advise of any further comments.	RBC	Received 15th Sept
BHOC/BW to prepare note relating to the north-south pedestrian/cycle route providing the justification and rationale for the route. To include a policy assessment of the proposals. Note to bring elements of submission together in one place to aid officers.	BHOC/BW	Being prepared

Stantec to prepare note in relation to Vastern Road crossing design and costing.	Stantec	Being prepared
BHOC to advise RBC of the preferred use class for the café building, relevant to recent changes to the Use Class Order.	BHOC	Confirmation provided above (16th Sept)
BHOC to review JM's comments on detailed design and respond accordingly, namely the internal layout of units and their associated 'stacking'.	BHOC	Partial response above (16th Sept)
BHOC to advise JM of preferred approach in terms of Employment and Skills Plan (financial contribution or provision).	BHOC	Being considered
BHOC to share copy of correspondence with the EA with RBC.	BHOC	Enclosed above (16th Sept)
JM to liaise with Element Energy and BRE (microclimate) and share updates once received.	RBC	JM to advise (target w/c 21st)
JM to share comments received from Natural Environment Officer and BRE (daylight/sunlight).	RBC	Received
BHOC to review Natural Environment Officer comments following issue and respond as necessary.	BHOC	Being considered
JM to liaise with Thames Valley Police and Environmental Health to obtain final comments.	RBC	JM to advise (target w/c 21st)

Craig Pettit

Planning Associate



DDI: 0118 943 0107

M: 07807866091

W: www.bartonwillmore.co.uk

The Blade, Abbey Square, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 3BE

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From: Markwell, Jonathan <Jonathan.Markwell@reading.gov.uk>

Sent: 15 September 2020 16:25

To: Craig Pettit <Craig.Pettit@bartonwillmore.co.uk>; Caroline McHardy <Caroline.McHardy@berkeleygroup.co.uk>

Cc: Cook, Darren <Darren.Cook@reading.gov.uk>

Subject: FW: 55 Vastern Rd, Reading (200188) - transport

OFFICIAL

Dear Mr Pettit / Ms McHardy,

Further to our meeting yesterday, please see below from my colleague Darren Cook in specific response to the transport note submitted last week in advance of the meeting. I trust that these comments are of assistance to you and help clarify some points as you draw together the various information, as discussed yesterday.

Yours sincerely,

Jonathan Markwell
Principal Planning Officer
Planning Section | Directorate for Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services

Reading Borough Council
Civic Offices,
Bridge Street,
Reading,
RG1 2LU

07971 015 688

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From: Cook, Darren <Darren.Cook@reading.gov.uk>

Sent: 15 September 2020 12:47

To: Markwell, Jonathan <Jonathan.Markwell@reading.gov.uk>

Subject: FW: 55 Vastern Rd, Reading (200188) - Agenda and attachments for meeting on Monday 14th September

OFFICIAL

Hi Jon,

Further to our meeting yesterday morning I thought it best to get some comments to you quickly for the applicant to address.

Internal Vehicle Access Arrangements

I still have concerns regarding the turning facility provided within the application site. I would re-emphasise my comments from the meeting that I have no objection to vehicles crossing the footway / cycleway but it is the need for vehicles to reverse over the route that I specifically have concerns about. I reference the following points from Manual for Streets below, to which the application would be at odds with.

6.8.8 Reversing causes a disproportionately large number of moving vehicle accidents in the waste/recycling industry. Injuries to collection workers or members of the public by moving collection vehicles are invariably severe or fatal. BS 5906: 2005 recommends a maximum reversing distance of 12 m. Longer distances can be considered, but any reversing routes should be straight and free from obstacles or visual obstructions.

7.10.3 Routeing for waste vehicles should be determined at the concept masterplan or scheme design stage (see paragraph 6.8.4). Wherever possible, routing should be configured so that the refuse collection can be made without the need for the vehicle having to reverse, as turning heads may be obstructed by parked vehicles and reversing refuse vehicles create a risk to other street users.

I appreciate that the number of servicing movements maybe low but the interaction of vehicles reversing over the pedestrian / cycle route which would be utilised by commuters and leisure users including children would be detrimental to highway safety and cannot be supported.

The applicant has also referred to the development of Colliers Way as a comparison to this application however, the servicing arrangements for that site did not include any reversing movements over the pedestrian / cycle route and a dedicated off carriageway turning head within the development car park was provided.

New Pedestrian/Cycle Route through site / Justification for Northern part of the proposed cycle/footway

I note from the document submitted in advance of the meeting, and as discussed in the meeting, that the applicant does not believe that there is a Policy requirement for a direct route and has referred to Paragraph 5.9 below, of the Reading Station Area Framework.

5.9 A major 'city spine' - a direct pedestrian route - is proposed through the historic core, the Station Area and through to the Thames. This spine is based on the north-south link which is the most significant movement corridor in the RCAAP, and is vital to the success of development in this area. The spine will extend across the Thames with a new footbridge(s) and new riverside parks, which can act as amenity space for new residents. The spine will include enhancements including wider pavements and greater pedestrian priority in Station Road. North of the railway, the spine will incorporate a 'green link' towards the river. Buildings will face onto the spine rather than away from it, and, on all parts of the spine south of Vastern Road, the frontages will be enlivened with active uses including retail and leisure.

However it should be stressed that this section relates to Public Realm and would not feature the requirements of cycling. I would however draw the applicants attention to the Transport section of the Reading Station Area Framework and in particular Paragraph 11.10, which explicitly refers to a direct route for pedestrians and cyclists, see below.

11.10 High-density mixed-use development in the Station Area will maximise the potential for local walking and cycling trips. The framework will help to secure high quality pedestrian and cycle facilities to include routes that are direct, well lit, naturally surveilled and safe.

I would also reiterate the comments made within my previous written statement that referred to Local Transport Note 1/20 Cycle Infrastructure Design dated July 2020, which provides guidance on proposed cycle facilities, see extracts below:

18) *Cycle routes must flow, feeling direct and logical.*

Users should not feel as if they are having to double back on themselves, turn unnecessarily, or go the long way round. Often, cycling schemes - when crossing a main road, for instance - require cyclists to make a series of ninety-degree turns to carry out a movement that a motor vehicle at the same location could do without turning at all. Schemes should be based on a proper understanding of how people actually behave rather than how they might be expected to behave.

4.2.2 *When people are travelling by cycle, they need networks and routes that are:*

a Coherent;

a Direct;

a Safe;

a Comfortable; and

a Attractive

4.2.7 *Directness is measured in both distance and time, and so routes should provide the shortest and fastest way of travelling from place to place. This includes providing facilities at junctions that minimise delay and the need to stop. Minimising the effort required to cycle, by enabling cyclists to maintain momentum, is an important aspect of directness. An indirect designated route involving extra distance or more stopping and starting will result in some cyclists choosing the most direct, faster option, even if it is less safe.*

It is appreciated that the route would be shared with pedestrians but this would not detract from the basic design principles that should be adhered to when designing the proposed route through the site. In addition and as I highlighted at the meeting the pedestrian bridge is already accessed via straight ramps on either side of the river albeit that the ramp turns 90° on the southern side heading east to west. The Highway Authority are unaware of any speeding cyclists, issues or conflicts along the existing route and therefore do not believe that any conflicts would arise from providing a direct / straighter route within the site.

It was stated within the meeting that the development will increase the density of pedestrian movements given residential flows attributed to the development. However, Local Transport Note 1/20 Cycle Infrastructure Design states the following on shared use design:

6.5.9 Research shows that cyclists alter their behaviour according to the density of pedestrians - as pedestrian flows rise, cyclists tend to ride more slowly and where they become very high cyclists typically dismount. It should therefore rarely be necessary to provide physical calming features to slow cyclists down on shared use routes, but further guidance on this, and reducing conflict more generally, is given in Chapter 8, section 8.2.

As I alluded to within the meeting there could be other design features that could aid reduce speeds if this was necessary including the alignment of the route on the podium in the same way as the 90° turn does on the southern side of the bridge.

Overarching all of the above is Paragraph 5.4.6 of the Local Plan which states:

The successful development of this area hinges on improved accessibility by public transport, and improved permeability for pedestrians and cyclists. In terms of permeability, improving links for pedestrians and cyclists through the centre, particularly in a north-south direction, is one of the key principles for the spatial strategy of the centre, along with removing barriers to access within the centre. If visual links are also provided, this will help change the perception of the area north of the station as a separate entity. The opening of the underpass under the station and the provision of a new pedestrian and cycle bridge over the Thames have recently helped to achieve this vision, but further improvements can still be made. Ensuring active frontages along these routes will assist these to become attractive links, as will the provision of new areas of open space. This is particularly important on the route between the shopping core, the station and the Thames. **In particular, on the Riverside site (CR11g), achieving this north-south link is the main priority for the site, and this should be given substantial weight in development management.**

Given the above it is clear through Policy and design guidance that the development must include a direct north south route and that this is the main priority for the site.

Design of Access to Southern Towpath

The Council have commenced the process that would permit cycling along the towpath and although this may not have reached a conclusion the scheme should ensure that suitable design standards are included within the site as this would form part of the desirable route to and from the town centre. The route will also become the desire line to NCN Route 5 to the east of the site, as previously identified within previous comments.

The Highway Authority therefore does not agree with the comments provided.

Waste Collection Strategy

The submitted information address the concerns regarding Bin store No. 4 but as per previous comments other bin stores were located in excess of 10m which is the design recommendation and the distance to which RBC refuse collection team work to. It would therefore need to be confirmed what arrangements will be put in place for all refuse stores that exceed the distance to ensure that bins are not left obstructing the surrounding footways.

Disabled Parking Bays

In principle I am happy that the location of the disabled bays are acceptable but the development must include locations where pedestrians can access the surrounding footways and this should be included on revised plans.

Cycle Store Design

It has been stated that in addition to the 2.35m headroom that is provided at Building D, there is an additional 0.5m headroom provided as part of the service area. At the location of the cycle store this will remain clear and as such provide an overall headroom of 2.85m and suitable for the josta style racks. I am happy that this would be acceptable but section drawings should be provided confirming this.

I must also stress that access locations for Blocks C and D are still to be addressed.

If you have any questions regarding the above please let me know.

Kind regards,

Darren Cook
Transport Development Control Manager
Transport | Directorate for Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services (DEGNS)

Reading Borough Council
Civic Offices
Bridge Street
Reading
RG1 2LU

0118 937 2612 (72612)

[Website](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#) | [YouTube](#)



From: Markwell, Jonathan
Sent: 10 September 2020 13:41
To: 'Craig Pettit' <Craig.Pettit@bartonwillmore.co.uk>
Cc: 'Caroline McHardy' <Caroline.McHardy@berkeleygroup.co.uk>
Subject: RE: 55 Vastern Rd, Reading (200188) - Agenda and attachments for meeting on Monday 14th September

Dear Mr Pettit,

Thank you for your email. I can confirm that I will be joined by Darren Cook at the meeting on Monday. It was hoped that Steve Hicks / the consultant from BPS would be in a position to attend too, but I have been advised on Steve's return from leave this week that the consultant is actually on leave this week, so they won't have had an opportunity to both view/assess/discuss the viability response you submitted last week (as at least one of them has been on leave since your submission); as such, this matter will need to be discussed at a later separate date. Steve will make contact with BPS next week to discuss this and we will be in touch to arrange a separate date for this.

In terms of the highways based information just submitted, based on my first glance this appears quite substantial in nature and will be likely to require some time to consider (both from a pure transport perspective and then with wider officers as well as to the wider impacts on the proposals). Before even forwarding the information onto Darren Cook, I doubt whether there is sufficient time for it to be fully assessed prior to the meeting on Monday morning. I presume your thought process was to submit this now for you to then elaborate / explain further at the meeting, and then allow officers to consider matters further in greater detail subsequent to the meeting? I would welcome your clarification.

Turning to the microclimate responses, I will forward on this commentary to BRE and seek whether they are content for this to be discussed further via an initial conference / zoom / teams call and the logistics / procedures around this.

In terms of the energy review, Element Energy advised me (subsequent to receipt of further information from your consultant on 4 September) that their report would be anticipated to be completed during w/b 14 September.

I hope that these initial responses are of assistance to you and look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Jonathan Markwell
Principal Planning Officer
Planning Section | Directorate for Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services

Reading Borough Council
Civic Offices,
Bridge Street,
Reading,
RG1 2LU

07971 015 688

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From: Craig Pettit <Craig.Pettit@bartonwillmore.co.uk>

Sent: 10 September 2020 12:38

To: Markwell, Jonathan <Jonathan.Markwell@reading.gov.uk>; Caroline McHardy <Caroline.McHardy@berkeleygroup.co.uk>

Cc: Kim Cohen <Kim.Cohen@bartonwillmore.co.uk>; Emily Ford <Emily.Ford@bartonwillmore.co.uk>; joseph.harding@berkeleygroup.co.uk; Sophie Haslum <Sophie.Haslum@berkeleygroup.co.uk>; David Taylor (Oxford) <Dave.Taylor@berkeleygroup.co.uk>

Subject: 55 Vastern Rd, Reading (200188) - Agenda and attachments for meeting on Monday 14th September

This is an EXTERNAL EMAIL. STOP. THINK before you CLICK links or OPEN attachments.

Good morning Jonathan,

Ahead of our meeting on Monday, please note for your consideration the following:

1. Proposed agenda (attached)
2. Highways – response prepared by Stantec and accompanying revised tracking drawing (attached)
3. Wind – commentary following comments received by BRE (please see below in body of email)
4. Energy – further to my email on 4th September confirming that our client's energy consultants Hodkinson had supplied the requested cost data to Element Energy, no further dialogue has been received. I have attached the cost data again for clarity.

Regarding the attached highways response, the main change which has been made is to move the location of the refuse collection vehicle from overhanging the footpath when collecting the bins from Block D, to now parking parallel to the building. This will mean that the vehicle will fully cross over the foot/cycleway, however this will only be for a matter of seconds. With the previous approach, the front end of the vehicle would overhang whilst the bins were being collected. We trust that this approach is seen as positive and better than making any changes to the 'direct' nature of the foot/cycleway and/or any unnecessary intrusions onto it.

Regarding wind, our client's consultants RWDI have reviewed the document provided by BRE. The document highlighted three concerns that were considered to be unresolved by the reviewer as follows:

- A. Walking use wind conditions west of the existing Sovereign House entrance in the context of the cumulative surrounding buildings;
- B. Standing use conditions on private balcony spaces; and
- C. The lack of quantitative evidence of mitigation for an area of standing use conditions in the café seating space.

In response to the above identified points, please see the below commentary:

- A. For clarity on point one, the area being referenced is to the western side of the entrance foyer (Figure 1 - attached) for the existing Sovereign House, east of the Site on Vastern Road. In the context of the cumulative schemes (excluding 80 Caversham Road and Vastern Court schemes), wind conditions in this area are predominantly suitable for strolling use (yellow contours in Figure 2 - attached), with a small area of walking use conditions (pink contours in Figure 2). BRE's comments are accepted where it is stated that these conditions would be windier than suitable for an entrance location and made windier by the interaction of the Proposed Development with cumulative schemes, however, the entrance is located some metres further east in an area of sitting use conditions (green contours in Figure 2) that would be considered suitable for an entrance location. The area west of the entrance foyer would not be an area reasonably expected to be frequented by pedestrians (we consider that the only entrance in this location is an emergency exit door, where for this use wind comfort is not a key concern) and therefore has not been considered an entrance or pedestrian thoroughfare. Additionally, existing landscaping in this area has not been accounted for within the assessment and would be expected to shelter this area from the effects of the Proposed Development – it is anticipated that with the planting of the scale seen in this location will result in a drop of one comfort category would be seen in these areas. In the context of the existing surrounding buildings and in the context of the cumulative schemes including 80 Caversham Road and Vastern Court, wind conditions in this area would be calmer. While this has been raised with the reviewer, RWDI would be happy to highlight this in more detail in the report to remove any suggestion that this has been overlooked.
- B. Point two is one of a difference of opinion between RWDI and BRE and RWDI note that their approach has been widely accepted by numerous London boroughs and peer reviewers. The justification for standing use conditions on balconies is that occupants at height would be expected to be more tolerant of windier conditions due to the exposure this location inherently incurs. Additionally, the use of the balcony will also be constrained by the prevailing weather conditions on any given day and would therefore be expected to be used when appropriate weather conditions prevail. Large outdoor amenity spaces are assessed more strictly as these spaces may be expected to be suitable for amenity use regardless of the prevailing weather conditions and being located at ground level.
- C. As discussed with the reviewer, where there are no instances of strong winds it is commonly accepted practice to assess the likely suitability of wind mitigation measures using professional judgement based on experience of similar development. RWDI therefore reaffirm their assessment that the proposed landscaping scheme and the border treatment incorporating a wall to the west of the café space and balustrade formed of dense railings to the north of the café space, would constitute an appropriate level of wind mitigation for the highly localised area of standing use conditions at the north-eastern corner of the spill-out space.

In RWDI's experience a verbal discussion with the reviewer may be a beneficial and positive approach to resolve these remaining areas of concern. I would be grateful therefore if you could please share the above with BRE and subsequently arrange a call with them, so that our client's consultants RWDI can have a detailed discussion on these elements.

Having considered my commentary above and the attachments I have included, I would be grateful if you would please consider who should attend the meeting from the Council's perspective. In terms of viability we would request the attendance of Steve Hicks, as this is a key discussion and we would welcome Steve's updated thoughts on this matter as well as Darren Cook, RBC Highways, following submission of our revised highways comments.

Many thanks and I look forward to hearing from you.

Craig Pettit

Planning Associate



DDI: 0118 943 0107

M: 07807866091

W: www.bartonwillmore.co.uk

The Blade, Abbey Square, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 3BE

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From: [Macpherson, Kirsty](#)
To: [Caroline McHardy](#); [Joseph Harding](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] RE: Vastern Road
Date: 30 September 2020 13:12:14
Attachments: [image001.png](#)
[image002.png](#)
[image003.jpg](#)
[image004.png](#)
[image005.png](#)
[ENVPAC1THM00406 Environment Agency advice 127978-02.pdf](#)

Dear Caroline, Joe,

Please find attached our advice.

Let me know if you have any questions.

Best regards

Kirsty Macpherson

Planning Specialist | Sustainable Places | Thames Area

Telephone: +44 (0)2030256243

From: Caroline McHardy [mailto:Caroline.McHardy@berkeleygroup.co.uk]

Sent: 29 September 2020 15:37

To: Macpherson, Kirsty <Kirsty.Macpherson@environment-agency.gov.uk>; Joseph Harding <Joseph.Harding@berkeleygroup.co.uk>

Subject: RE: Vastern Road

Hi Kirsty,

Thank you for the update and it looks like we can have a discussion regarding some appropriate mitigation.

We look forward to your full response but any other questions just let me know.

Kind regards

Caroline McHardy

Land and Development Director

BerkeleyUR-signature



Berkeley Homes (Oxford and Chiltern) Ltd

Berkeley House, Farnham Lane, Farnham Royal, SL2 3RQ

Telephone| 01753 784400 |Direct Dial 01753 784436| Mobile 07917520742

www.berkeleygroup.co.uk

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From: Macpherson, Kirsty <Kirsty.Macpherson@environment-agency.gov.uk>

Sent: 29 September 2020 15:33

To: Caroline McHardy <Caroline.McHardy@berkeleygroup.co.uk>; Joseph Harding <Joseph.Harding@berkeleygroup.co.uk>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] RE: Vastern Road

Hi Caroline, Joe

I spoke to Lesley this morning. We will be able to provide our advice by COP tomorrow as previously mentioned. In summary, it looks like there will be some impact to the vegetation and river and a mitigation plan will be required. Extra planting and possible in-river hessian bollards for planting may be an option. The situation is not bad enough for us to suggest you decrease the height of the building. More details will follow in our official response.

Best regards

Kirsty Macpherson

Planning Specialist | Sustainable Places | Thames Area

Telephone: +44 (0)2030256243

From: Caroline McHardy [<mailto:Caroline.McHardy@berkeleygroup.co.uk>]

Sent: 29 September 2020 15:25

To: Macpherson, Kirsty <Kirsty.Macpherson@environment-agency.gov.uk>

Cc: Joseph Harding <Joseph.Harding@berkeleygroup.co.uk>; Sophie Haslum <Sophie.Haslum@berkeleygroup.co.uk>

Subject: FW: Vastern Road

Hi Kirsty,

I hope Leslie has made a recovery but further to the below we really do need to understand your position on the site as we are hoping to get to planning committee next month and this is one of the outstanding points?

As we discussed last week happy to discuss anything prior to issue?

Thanks

Kind regards

Caroline McHardy

Land and Development Director

BerkeleyUR-signature



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From: Sophie Haslum <Sophie.Haslum@berkeleygroup.co.uk>

Sent: 18 September 2020 15:34

To: Caroline McHardy <Caroline.McHardy@berkeleygroup.co.uk>; David Taylor (Oxford) <Dave.Taylor@berkeleygroup.co.uk>

Cc: Joseph Harding <Joseph.Harding@berkeleygroup.co.uk>; Thomas Nicolas <Thomas.Nicolas@berkeleygroup.co.uk>

Subject: FW: Vastern Road

FYI, response form the EA below. Delay of another week..

Sophie Haslum MRICS

Assistant Land Manager

Berkeley_Berkeley



Berkeley Homes (Oxford & Chiltern) Ltd

Berkeley House | Farnham Lane | Farnham Royal | SL2 3RQ

Telephone: 01753 784 400 | DD: 01753 784406 | Mobile: 07786113119

Email: sophie.haslum@berkeleygroup.co.uk www.berkeleyhomes.co.uk

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From: Macpherson, Kirsty <Kirsty.Macpherson@environment-agency.gov.uk>
Sent: 18 September 2020 15:30
To: Sophie Haslum <Sophie.Haslum@berkeleygroup.co.uk>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] RE: Vastern Road

Hi Sophie,

Sorry to say there is going to be a bit of a delay in our response. Lesley fell badly last weekend and is off with broken ribs. I only just found out. She has started her review but did not finish. She should be back at work next week so we will hopefully have something for you by next Friday 25th September.

Best regards

Kirsty Macpherson

Planning Specialist | Sustainable Places | Thames Area

Telephone: +44 (0)2030256243

From: Sophie Haslum [<mailto:Sophie.Haslum@berkeleygroup.co.uk>]
Sent: 18 September 2020 09:54
To: Macpherson, Kirsty <Kirsty.Macpherson@environment-agency.gov.uk>; Sproat, Lesley <lesley.sproat@environment-agency.gov.uk>
Cc: Caroline McHardy <Caroline.McHardy@berkeleygroup.co.uk>; Joseph Harding <Joseph.Harding@berkeleygroup.co.uk>; David Taylor (Oxford) <Dave.Taylor@berkeleygroup.co.uk>
Subject: Vastern Road

Good morning

Apologies if this has already been sent and I have missed it, but I believe you are due to be sending another response to our latest submission for Vastern Road to my colleague Joe Harding today. Joe is on annual leave and returning to the office on Tuesday, so please can you ensure your response includes myself and Caroline McHardy (cc'd) so we can follow up on this matter in Joe's absence.

Please do give me a call on the details below if you have any queries.

Kind regards

Sophie Haslum MRICS
Assistant Land Manager

[Berkeley_Berkeley](#)

Berkeley Homes (Oxford & Chiltern) Ltd

Berkeley House | Farnham Lane | Farnham Royal | SL2 3RQ

Telephone: 01753 784 400 | DD: 01753 784406 | Mobile: 07786113119

Email: sophie.haslum@berkeleygroup.co.uk www.berkeleyhomes.co.uk

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Mr. Dave Taylor
Berkely Homes LTD
Farnham House Farnham Lane
Farnham Royal
SLOUGH
SL2 3RQ

Our ref: WA/2020/127978/02-L01
Agreement No. ENVPAC/1/THM/00406
Your ref: 200188
Date: 30 September 2020

Dear Mr. Taylor

Advice on biodiversity objection to: Demolition of existing structures and erection of a series of buildings ranging in height from 1 to 11 storeys, including residential dwellings (C3 use class) and retail floorspace (A3 use class), together with a new north-south pedestrian link, connecting Christchurch bridge to Vastern Road

55 Vastern Road Reading RG1 8BU

Thank you for accepting our offer to provide detailed planning advice. The advice detailed below is intended to inform your development proposal. It is not our statutory response to a planning application consultation.

We have reviewed the following documents:

- Email from Joseph Harding (Berkeley Group) dated 03 September 2020 and the documents attached relating to the sunlight assessment.

We are providing this advice under Agreement No. ENVPAC/1/THM/00406. Please note we have taken 13.5 hours in total to review and provide our advice on you development and you will be invoiced accordingly.

Please note that we are only providing you with our advice on the matters as outlined in our amended offer as requested.

Summary

In summary, we would be unable to remove our objection to this application, as it stands, due to the impact of shading on the footbridge mitigation planting and the riverbed habitat. A mitigation strategy is required to address these impacts.

Cont/d..

Environment Agency Advice

Sunlight and shadowing assessment

Having reviewed the additional information supplied relating to the transient shadow paths from March-September, the issue of shading of the river and the marginal planting along the river bank adjacent to the development has been clarified.

Comparing the shading between the existing situation and the proposed development it would appear that there would be a significant reduction in sunlight reaching this area, from our interpretation. With no development, it would appear that this area receives 6 to 7 hours of sunlight per day, but with the proposed development, this would be reduced to between 2 and 3 hours, which is likely to reduce the vigour of this planting and may result in the loss of some species.

As discussed at our initial meeting, this planting was agreed and installed as mitigation for the footbridge construction and is included in the drawings listed under Condition 2 of the planning permission for application number 131234. Conditions/requirements of one planning permission cannot be eroded by another application.

At this time, we would be unable to remove our objection with regard to the shading impact of the proposed development. It would not be acceptable for it to go ahead in its present form without mitigation, particularly due to the fact that there is very little marginal habitat through this section of the Thames.

One way of preventing this would be to reduce the height of the buildings and/or set them back further from the river. This has been raised previously. The usual rule of thumb would be to have the building set back from the bank top the same distance as the height of the building to prevent shading of the river and river bank. While this is the best option for preserving the footbridge mitigation planting and riverbed habitat, we do realise this may not be the preferred option. You should consult the LPA on this matter as it is their mitigation planting area, a condition discharged under their planning obligations, and they may have biodiversity net gain goals that this planting area may contribute to.

An alternative option would be to carry out long term monitoring of the existing vegetation and, should there be a reduction in vigour, installing replacement planting at an alternative location in this river reach where it would not be subject to shading. This, however, introduces an element of uncertainty and an ongoing commitment for the developer to carry out monitoring and mitigation.

Our preference, therefore, would be to see additional marginal planting installed as a combination of mitigation and ecological enhancement in recognition of the impact of shading. We would also like to see shade tolerant plants added to the footbridge compensation planting area to allow for succession to a shadier environment.

There are a number of locations that could be explored for this additional marginal planting on either side of the river. Ideally, upstream between the footbridge and Caversham bridge. We believe that much of this land is under the ownership/control of Reading Borough Council and so any discussions regarding this should include the relevant Reading BC representative. A site visit may be appropriate to identify the areas that would be most suitable.

Landscape and Planting Proposals

We note the amendments and clarifications relating to the landscape and planting proposals. We note too, that you wish to discuss further the potential to enhance the planting and ecological value between the proposed development and the River Thames. We would welcome the opportunity to include this discussion in the conversation with Reading BC as to the possible location of the additional mitigation planting.

Next Steps

Please provide a mitigation strategy for the impacts to the marginal planting and riverbed habitat. We recommend that a meeting is organised to discuss the options with Reading BC. Their preference may be to reduce the building height or set it back from the river.

Final comments

Once again, thank you for contacting us with your enquiry. Our comments are based on our available records and the information as submitted to us.

I hope the above advice is helpful. If there is any further work you anticipate needing our detailed advice on in relation to this project, please let me know so it can be incorporated into this charging agreement.

Disclaimer

Please note that the views expressed in this report by the Environment Agency, is a response to a pre-application enquiry only and **does not represent our final view in relation to any future statutory consultations made in relation to this site**. We reserve the right to change our position in relation to any such application.

We have only provided advice in relation to the environmental constraints as outlined in our offer as requested. However, we will comment on all environmental constraints within our remit in our statutory response.

You should seek your own expert advice in relation to technical matters relevant to any conditions before submission.

Please quote our reference number in any future correspondence. If you have any queries please feel free to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Kirsty Macpherson
Planning Specialist

Direct dial 02030256243
Email Planning_THM@environment-agency.gov.uk