

## Donna Williams

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**Subject:** FW: 55 Vastern Rd, Reading (200188)

**From:** Markwell, Jonathan <[Jonathan.Markwell@reading.gov.uk](mailto:Jonathan.Markwell@reading.gov.uk)>  
**Sent:** 06 October 2020 18:12  
**To:** Caroline McHardy <[Caroline.McHardy@berkeleygroup.co.uk](mailto:Caroline.McHardy@berkeleygroup.co.uk)>  
**Cc:** Craig Pettit <[Craig.Pettit@bartonwillmore.co.uk](mailto:Craig.Pettit@bartonwillmore.co.uk)>  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] RE: 55 Vastern Rd, Reading (200188)

Dear Ms McHardy,

Please see some initial comments below highlighted in yellow, which I hope are of assistance to you.

I will update you further when I am able to. Please feel free to contact me to discuss any point further.

Yours sincerely,

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

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**From:** Caroline McHardy <[Caroline.McHardy@berkeleygroup.co.uk](mailto:Caroline.McHardy@berkeleygroup.co.uk)>  
**Sent:** 05 October 2020 17:58

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

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

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

Good afternoon Jonathan,

I am emailing with an update on the outstanding comments which you raised in your email on 24<sup>th</sup> September.

With regard to your Environmental Protection colleagues' comments I have split these out and responded to them below in red as well the further queries that you have raised.

#### Noise

*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?*

Please find attached a response from our consultant, 24 Acoustics. In summary, Berkeley have no control over the noise emission from the neighbouring substation and as such it cannot be controlled at the source. The site has been designed to ensure that the substation noise level is acceptable and acoustic glazing will be used in the most affected areas to ensure the comfort of future residents.

#### 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.*

This cannot yet be submitted so we appreciate that this will be conditioned and thank you for the confirmation.

#### 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 NO<sub>2</sub> concentration were recorded at the Vastern Road diffusion tube DT52 (34.6 µg/m<sup>3</sup> compared to the measured annual mean concentration of 36.8 µg/m<sup>3</sup>)*

We have reviewed the comment and can confirm that the model is over-predicting as we stated. The measured concentration at DT52 is 34.6 µg/m<sup>3</sup> and the modelled concentration at DT52 was 36.8 µg/m<sup>3</sup>. As the measured concentration at DT52 of 34.6 µg/m<sup>3</sup> was used in the model verification process, the model verification is correct and no further adjustment to the model is required. However, our previous comment should be amended to the following:

*"The final adjusted modelled concentration at DT52 in 2018 was 36.8 µg/m<sup>3</sup>. When compared to the measured 2018 annual mean NO<sub>2</sub> concentration of 34.6 µg/m<sup>3</sup>, it is evident that the model is slightly over-predicting concentrations at DT52".*

I have fed these into the Environmental Protection officer and will update you in due course.

#### Wind

We are pleased to hear that the issue C (resolution of the wind conditions around the café area) has been agreed and resolved and RWDI have updated their report to account for this agreement. In addition, RWDI have also commented on the proposed wind conditions in and around Sovereign House. They have clarified the entrance door

locations and confirmed that the existing entrance door is on the opposite side to where first believed and therefore the wind conditions for the entrance have conditions suitable for standing use or calmer. The other door is actually an emergency escape door so is not used as frequently as the entrance would be. We therefore hope that all Wind matters are now resolved.

Thank you for attaching a revised report in a later separate email today. Prior to considering this further, can you please clarify your response to "Issue B" (in short whether a full seasonal assessment to be carried out in relation to the external balcony/terrace spaces), mindful of my response to you on 24<sup>th</sup> September and noting you have not specifically referenced that in your response above?

#### Crime

Thank you for coming back to me and I can confirm we introduced the compartmentalisation as requested by Anne Chalmers at the ground floors to each building. However currently we do not have the full detail to know whether or not we will be able to achieve SBD on all aspects of our proposals. SBD does play a significant part of our design process as it is incredibly important to us that our customers remain safe. Therefore can I suggest the following condition similar to what we agreed at Kenavon Drive; *Prior to the commencement of superstructure, details of the security strategy for the development shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority. These measures shall be implemented prior to the occupation of the building to which they relate.*

I hope this can be agreed with your officer.

I have fed this into the Crime Prevention Design Advisor at Thames Valley Police and also reminded her of the wording of the conditions included as part of applications 170509 and 191234, both of which specifically referenced that the strategy shall ensure that the development shall achieve at least the minimum 'Security By Design' Award. I will update you in due course.

#### Environment Agency

Further to the email which I sent you last Wednesday which confirmed the Environment Agency's preference for a mitigation strategy to be put in place, we have developed an initial sketch which we wanted to propose for consideration with yourself/your officers and we will get engage with the EA on this proposal as well. On the development side, the proposals show the wildflower meadow and flowering lawn mix as submitted on our landscaping plans and agreed with the EA. On the River Thames side of the towpath, we believe there is an opportunity to enhance the existing verge with native planting to enhance the ecological and biodiversity of that strip of planting. In addition, we propose to fix some pre planted coir rolls to the existing river edge to enhance the amount of marginal planting along the River.

However, as advised by the EA and whilst we can put forward our suggestions they would like your view on this and commitment so they will remove their objection. We would therefore welcome a meeting with yourself and the EA to discuss the potential strategies, and what would be acceptable to both parties. Please let me know dates you are available to discuss this or meet with the EA?

In terms of the possibility of considering utilising RBC land to mitigate the impact of the proposal, I will first need to see an initially marked up site plan detail (so I know the exact extent and area of land being considered), before being able to engage a number of different colleagues internally. This is in itself a potentially complex matter. I therefore require this first prior to ascertaining whether a meeting is possible.

#### Energy

I will send separately due to the detailed response from Hodkinson on this matter. As per my email on Friday we would like a meeting early this week to review this further as we have not had that chance yet.

I am just awaiting availability from one colleague prior to being able to suggest dates to discuss this in a standalone meeting.

#### Highways

Please could you provide an update following your review of the updated Stantec information sent on the 25<sup>th</sup> September and Barton Willmore's supporting policy document? (attached again)

**This is presently under consideration by various officers and I will update you in due course.**

### Viability

I understand that our Partnerships team and Steve Hicks are trying to speak and that Andrew Jones of BPS has confirmed his availability this week. Please could I ask that you help us get a date from Steve for this meeting which we had hoped could be early part of this week.

In addition we are still waiting to be issued with a copy of the full BPS report we paid £15,000 for earlier this year, we are aware this has been concluded.

We note your comment that an application with zero affordable housing and no viability mechanism would not be considered favourably by officers. However, I hope you appreciate that until we get the opportunity to discuss this with Steve and BPS we are unable to move this forward in a more positive manner.

**I understand in dialogue with Steve Hicks earlier today that this standalone meeting is being arranged shortly.**

### Next Steps

As you will see from the above we are now getting down to the final matters but still have some matters to agree to enable you to conclude your report. If I am able to be candid, it also appears a lot of these final points are linked to the schemes viability and (lack of) affordable housing proposed. The outstanding matters we need to resolve also have significant costs associated with them if Berkeley were minded to concede on any of these points which again in turn only worsens the above viability.

Therefore I would like to take this opportunity again to ask for a meeting to go through these outstanding issues so we can get this application concluded in a positive manner for us all. I hope you will agree that our last meeting was beneficial and I think if we could at least get the feedback on the affordable this would in turn unlock a lot of these points.

My preference would be a meeting in person with limited attendees so we can social distance safely, but equally I would happily also do a zoom call if you prefer.

**There is simply no scope to meet in person during these times; all meetings would need to be via zoom or MS Teams.**

Please could you suggest some dates which would be convenient for you this week and I will make myself available.

**There are several points above which require actions from both you and I prior to a meeting being possible (aside from the standalone energy and viability meetings) and hence I will revert in due course on this.**

I hope you have a good evening and I look forward to hearing from you tomorrow.

Kind regards

**Caroline McHardy**  
Land and Development Director

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