

Memo

From: (e)Transport Development Control Floor 1 North Rear Civic Offices Bridge Street Reading RG1 2LU

To: Jonathan Markwell Jonathan.Markwell@reading.gov.uk

Date: 28th May 2020

Re: Consultation on Planning Application

Application Number: 200188

Application Type: Full Planning Approval

Address: 55 Vastern Road Reading RG1 8BU

Proposal: 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

Transport Comments

The Old Power Station on Vastern Road forms part of the former SSE office and depot. It is bounded by the River Thames to the north, retained SSE electrical transformers and associated works to the east, Vastern Road to south and residential properties fronting Lynmouth Road to the west.

The development seeks permission for the ‘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 leisure floorspace (A3 use class), together with a new north-south pedestrian link, connecting Christchurch Bridge to Vastern Road.’

Table 3.1 sets out the development schedule for the site for the proposed 209 new homes and Café.

Table 3.1 Indicative Development Schedule

Unit Type	Number of Homes
1 Bedroom Flat	60
2 Bedroom Flat	137
3 Bedroom Flat	12
Total	209

Leisure	Size (sqm)
Café	17.9 sqm

To accompany the planning application a Transport Statement has been submitted and I comment on this as follows:

Accessibility

The site is located within extremely close proximity to Reading Station and the surrounding bus interchanges that provide access to extensive public transport alternatives to the private car.

Given the excellent location of the site, walking will form a widely available and attractive method of travel for residents.

The site fronts onto Vastern Road which provides pedestrian footways on both sides connecting the Caversham Road / Great Brighams Mead roundabout to the west to the Reading Bridge roundabout to the east.

There are currently three signalised crossings along Vastern Road all of which are of a staggered arrangement providing north/south connections.

South of Vastern Road, Trooper Potts Way provides access to the northern station entrance and the pedestrian only underpass which leads to the main station entrance on the southern side and in turn the town centre.

To the north of the site, the Thames Path lines the southern side of the River Thames which leads to Reading Bridge, Kings Meadows, Tesco to the east and Caversham Bridge to the west. Christchurch Bridge is located centrally along the northern boundary of the site and provides a pedestrian connection to the northern side of the river.

The site has a range of existing cycling facilities available to the future occupiers of the site with access to local on and off road routes and the national cycle network.

Locally to the site, the northern footway on Vastern Road provides a shared footway / cycleway facility past the southern site boundary from Lynmouth Road the Reading Bridge to the east.

Norman Place to the east of the site currently provides the off-road cycle link from Vastern Road to the Christchurch Bridge over the River Thames which in turn leads to the cycle routes through Christchurch Meadows and Hills Meadow.

National Cycle Network (NCN) 5 is directly accessible from the northern boundary of the site along the Thames Path. This route connects the site with Caversham to the west via Christchurch Bridge, and Thames Valley Business Park to the east. To the east NCN 5 joins NCN 4 where the River Thames and Kennett meet. NCN 4 dissects the Reading area connecting Theale in the west through to Sonning and Charvil in the east.

The site fronts onto Vastern Road which forms part of Readings Inner Distributer Road (IDR). This section of Vastern Road is a two way dual carriageway with a 30mph speed limit. A kerbed central island separates each direction of traffic therefore requiring all vehicle access to the site to be from the west and all exiting traffic from the site required to travel east along Vastern Road.

At the western end of Vastern Road is the roundabout with Caversham Road. This junction provides the connections to Caversham to the north and west Reading and the A33 to the south. To the east of Vastern Road the Reading Bridge roundabout has five junction arms that provides access to Caversham to the north, Tesco supermarket to the east, A329 Forbury Road (continuation of IDR) to the south, and the Station Car park to the west.

The IDR links Reading town centre with the major corridors of A33, A329, A4 which in turn give access to the M4 at Junctions 10, 11 and 12.

Access and Internal Layout

Pedestrian

A key consideration of the site is to enhance the pedestrian and cycle connection between Christchurch Bridge and Reading Northern interchange, which via the Station underpass also connects the site with the Town Centre Area. This link is identified in RBC Local Plan (adopted in November 2019) as a key movement corridor, see extract below.

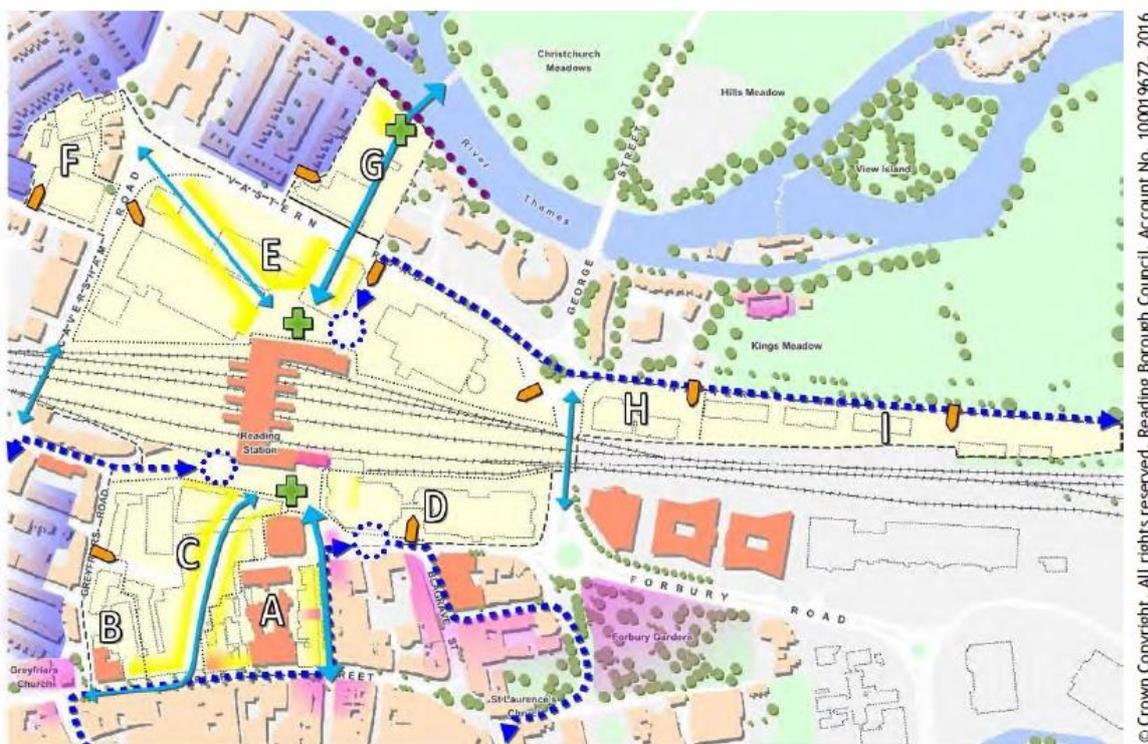


Figure 5.3: Station/River Major Opportunity Area Strategy

I also refer to Paragraph 5.4.6 of the Local Plan which states:

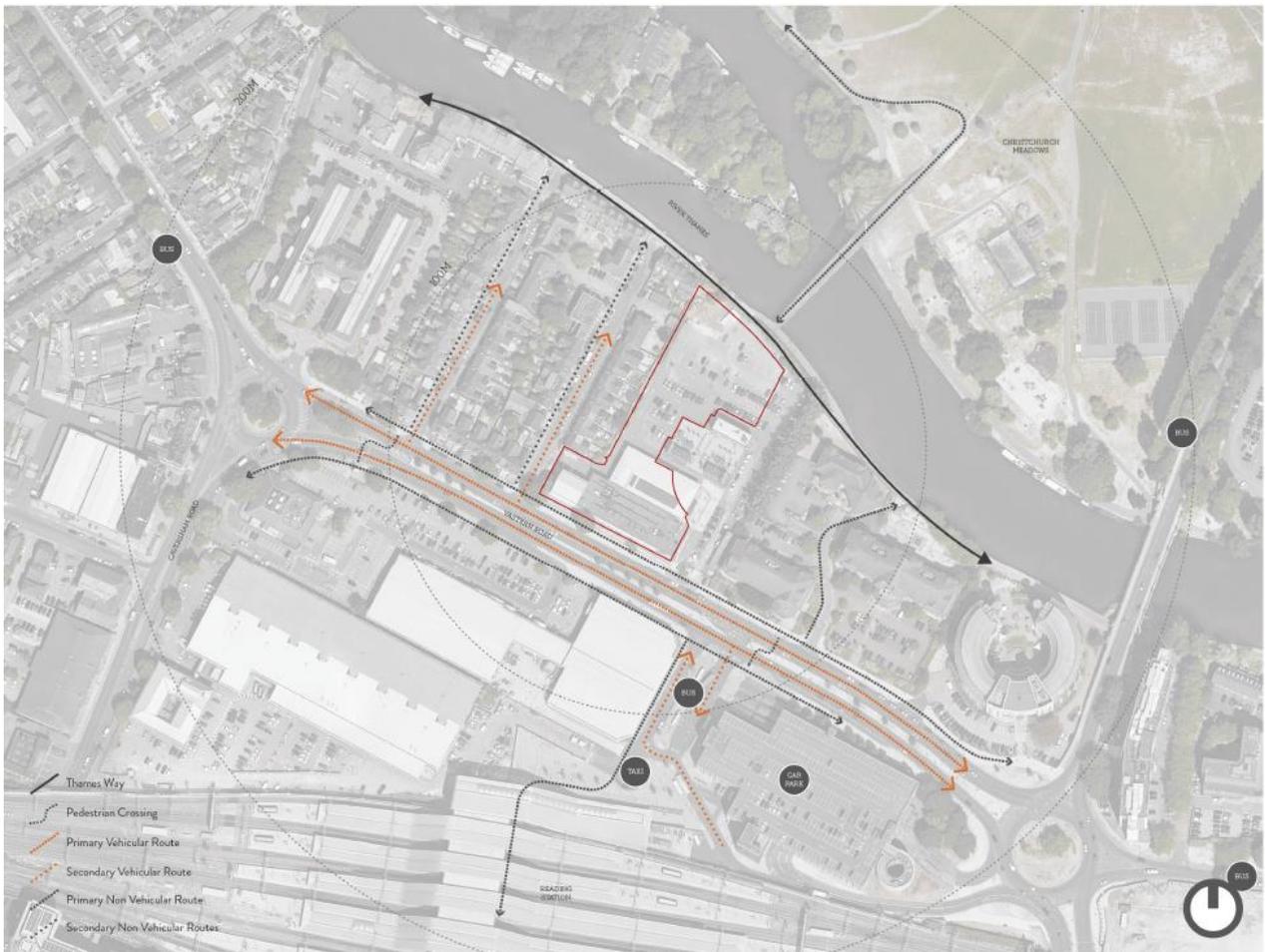
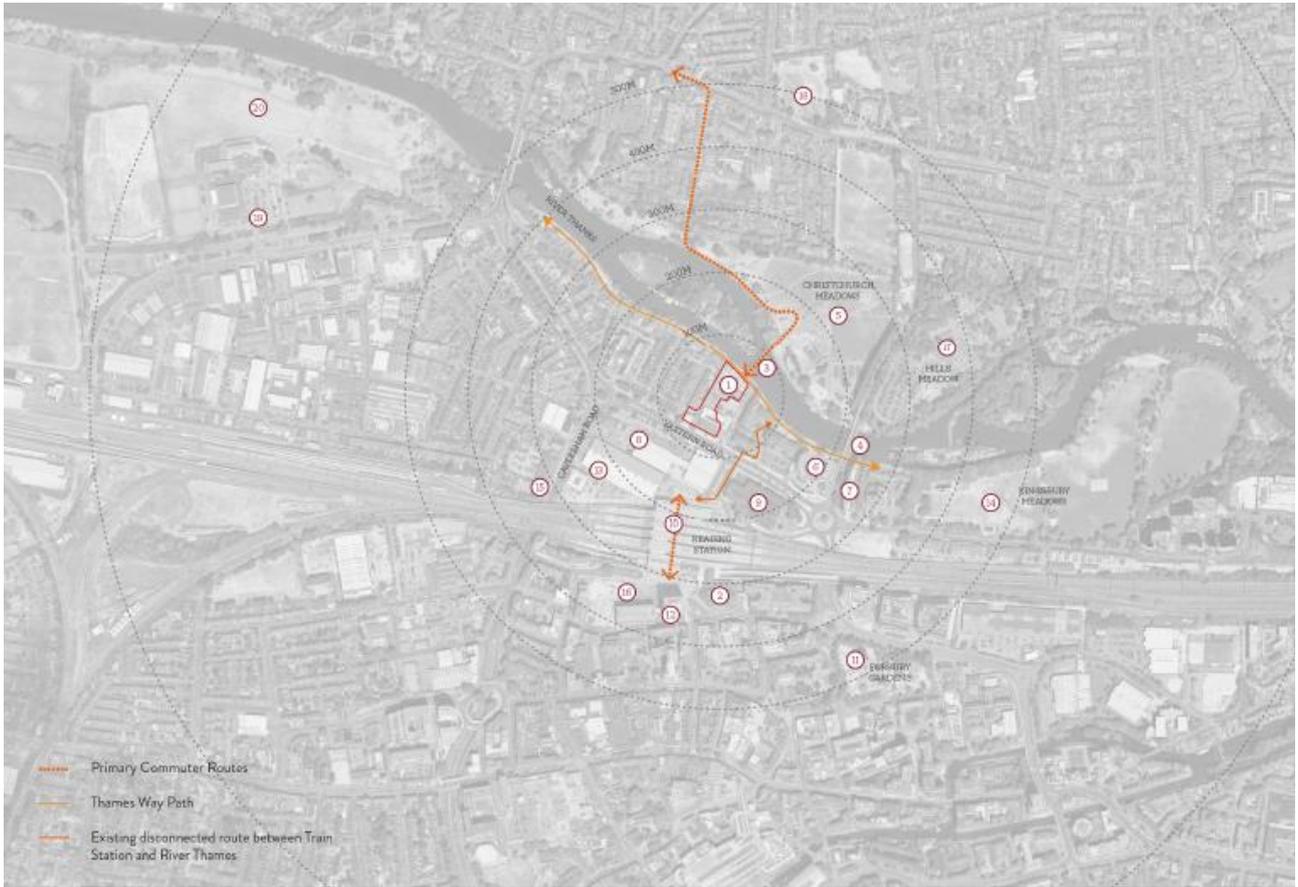
The successful development of this area hinges on improved accessibility by public transport, and improved permeability for pedestrians and cyclists. In terms of permeability, improving links for pedestrians and cyclists through the centre, particularly in a north-south direction, is one of the key principles 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.

It is therefore clear from Figure 5.3 and Paragraph 5.4.6 from the Local Plan (both above) that an acceptable design of the north south route through the site is fundamental to any development of the site.

The application scheme comprises of the following components in designing the pedestrian / cycle route through the site:

- Podium level connection to existing Christchurch Bridge across River Thames;
- A new 1:21 ramp from the podium level to the ground level of the new development;
- A 1:21 ramp allowing pedestrian access to the River Thames towpath; and
- 3.0m dedicated footway/ cycleway on the eastern side of the internal access road linking the podium ramp to Vastern Road;

However, it is clear that the proposed scheme does not provide a direct pedestrian cycle route as has been requested during the pre-application discussions. This is to ensure that the route is as clear, legible and as convenient as possible. I reference the two images below from the Design and Access Statement which in themselves highlight the importance of the route through the site.



It was also stated during the whole pre-application process that should a direct route not be provided and a switch back design be included within the scheme that a technical justification would be required as to why this would not be provided. However, this has not been forthcoming within the submitted documentation.

The Highway Authority therefore does not agree with the proposed design of the footway / cycleway and this must be revised to remove the switch back and include a more direct route through the site.

It is noted that a new route has been provided between the site and the towpath as identified during the pre-application discussions. However, it is noted that the 1:21 gradient (4.7%) would appear to be close to the maximum length of gradient and therefore it would need to be clarified through updated plans of the actual distance to ensure it complies with the Table below taken from the CD 195 Designing for cycle traffic.

Longitudinal gradients

E/3.9 Cycle track gradients shall be provided in accordance with Table E/3.9.

Table E/3.9 Maximum length for gradients

Gradient	Maximum length of gradient (metres)
2.0%	150
2.5%	100
3.0%	80
3.5%	60
4.0%	50
4.5%	40
5.0%	30

The applicant has also stated that a contribution towards a new toucan crossing on Vastern Road which provides a safe crossing point on desire lines to Reading Northern Interchange and beyond will be provided. It was explicitly stated during pre-application discussions that any submission should also accompany a crossing design that provides a direct link between the application site and the southside of Vastern Road, however this has not been forthcoming.

Opening up the route to Christchurch Bridge will create the new direct desire line and as such the crossing facility on Vastern Road must be provided to continue this desire line. As previously stated this is identified in the Design and Access Statement which highlights this route as Primary Non Vehicular Route which is continued on the southern side of Vastern Road and along Tropper Potts Way to the Station as identified from the images above. Any proposal without the inclusion of this crossing facility identified on a submitted plan and secured via a S278 Agreement would be unacceptable to the Highway Authority.

The Highway Authority are unable to comment on the suitability of the pedestrian access onto Vastern Road until a scheme for a toucan crossing has been submitted, this is to ensure that the pedestrian access is located conveniently in relation to the crossing. This must therefore be submitted.

It is noted that along the southern boundary of the Coal Drop Building an east west path is provided that circumvents the building, however this path should be extended further east to connect to the north south route given that residents will wish to use this as this will be a desire line. The scheme should be revised to provide this link.

Vehicular

The primary vehicle access to the site will be via Lynmouth Road. The existing junction which currently only accommodates vehicles exiting the site will be improved and widened to 4.8m accommodating two-way vehicle movements.

Visibility splays of 2.4m x 17m have been illustrated at the proposed junction in line with Manual for Streets (MfS) for 15mph roads which is considered an appropriate road speed for Lynmouth Road. However, as per Manual for Streets should a reduced visibility splay be proposed this would need to be evidenced by speed surveys. In this instance I would not require speed surveys as this is an existing access where the number of movements to and from the site are to reduce, the proposal is therefore not worsening the existing situation.

Vehicle swept path analysis within the following vehicles have been undertaken and include those for the following:

- Large Car
- RBC approved refuse collection vehicle (length 8.75m); and
- Heavy goods vehicle (length 10m).

Tracking diagrams have been provided that identify that two cars can pass one another however it is noted that the tracking for a refuse vehicle and a HGV would require the use of the full width of the carriageway not only through the site but also on Lynmouth Road. This is for a distance in excess of 50m whilst also negotiating two 90 degree bends, this will therefore result in conflict between cars and service vehicles as well as vehicles with pedestrians and cyclists using the north - south footway / cycleway. The proposed scheme therefore does not accord with DfT document Manual for Streets which states the following at Paragraph 7.2.2:

Carriageway widths should be appropriate for the particular context and uses of the street. Key factors to take into account include:

- ***the volume of vehicular traffic and pedestrian activity;***
- ***the traffic composition;***
- ***the demarcation, if any, between carriageway and footway (e.g. kerb, street furniture or trees and planting);***
- ***whether parking is to take place in the carriageway and, if so, its distribution, arrangement, the frequency of occupation, and the likely level of parking enforcement (if any);***
- ***the design speed (recommended to be 20 mph or less in residential areas);***
- ***the curvature of the street (bends require greater width to accommodate the swept path of larger vehicles); and***
- ***any intention to include one-way streets, or short stretches of single lane working in two-way streets.***

Given that the scheme will result in conflicting movements it would be in conflict with the NPPF which states the following:

109. Development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.

110. Within this context, applications for development should:

- a) give priority first to pedestrian and cycle movements, both within the scheme and with neighbouring areas; and second - so far as possible - to facilitating access to high quality public transport, with layouts that maximise the catchment area for bus or other public transport services, and appropriate facilities that encourage public transport use;***
- b) address the needs of people with disabilities and reduced mobility in relation to all modes of transport;***
- c) create places that are safe, secure and attractive - which minimise the scope for conflicts between pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles, avoid unnecessary street clutter, and respond to local character and design standards;***
- d) allow for the efficient delivery of goods, and access by service and emergency vehicles; and***
- e) be designed to enable charging of plug-in and other ultra-low emission vehicles in safe, accessible and convenient locations.***

The road widths on the bends should therefore be altered to ensure a continued vehicle flow through the site can be provided.

It is noted that the road markings at the entrance of the site are to be provided away from the kerb line with no justification provided. On review of the drawings it would appear that this has been provided to widen the access to allow two cars to pass one-another at the site access. This is not acceptable and the give way marking must be provided along the kerb edge and the access redesigned if it cannot accommodate the proposed movements into and out of the site.

I must remind the applicant that the access was previously an exit only and therefore as the access is now altered to accommodate two-way movements it must be designed to facilitate this.

It is also noted that no tactile paving has been illustrated on the submitted drawing, given that the proposal now takes the form of a bellmouth this must be provided.

The existing vehicle access off Vastern Road is to be retained as per its current arrangement but will be only for access to the retained SSE infrastructure adjacent to the eastern boundary of the site. This has been accepted as this allows for a separation between the uses on the wider SSE site.

The 3.0m shared footway/cycleways runs adjacent the internal road and has two crossing points to allow for vehicle access into the parking courts.

At both of the vehicle cross over points pedestrians are to be given priority through managed vehicle speeds, signage, markings and materials. The vehicle cross overs are

there to provide the required access into the parking areas and as such the vehicle trip generation is estimated to be low given the parking areas comprise of 30 spaces to the north and 13 in the southern area.

In principle this is deemed acceptable subject to the servicing comments found later in this consultation response.

Trip Rate / Traffic Impact

The applicant undertook traffic surveys when the site was occupied by SSE on Tuesday 18th October 2016. Manual classified turning counts were carried out at each of the three vehicle access points into the site for a 12-hour period between 07:00 to 19:00. In addition, the occupancy of the existing parking was recorded across the same 12-hour period. I am happy that this is an acceptable form of reviewing the existing trip generation at the site.

The resulting network peak hour vehicle trip generation for the existing site is summarised in Table 5.1 below.

Table 5.1: Recorded Site Trip Generation (Existing Passenger Car Units)

Time Period	Vehicle Trip Generation		
	Arrive	Depart	Two Way
AM Peak (08:00 to 09:00)	85	5	90
PM Peak (17:00 to 18:00)	1	64	66
Daily (07:00 to 19:00)	238	228	466

The traffic survey identifies that the existing use generated 90 and 66 two-way vehicle trips in the AM and PM peak hours respectively. Across a daily period (0700 to 1900), 466 two-way vehicle trips were recorded.

It is acknowledged that the substations and associated kit that will be retained on the SSE owned site which has approximately 20 car parking spaces. Vehicle trips associated with the remaining SSE kit will be minimal and associated with maintenance and storage only. I am therefore happy that no assessment is required to calculate the retained SSE element on the site.

The proposed trip generation has been calculated based on surveys of comparable sites within the TRICS database. Table 5.2 provides the total person trip rates and predicted people generation for the AM (08:00-09:00), PM peak hours (17:00-18:00) and Daily (07:00-19:00).

Table 5.2: Proposed Residential Total People (-OGV) Trip rates and Trip Generation (209 homes)

Time-Period	Trip Rate (per home)			Trip Generation (209 homes)		
	Arrive	Depart	Two Way	Arrive	Depart	Two Way
AM Peak (08:00 to 09:00)	0.094	0.477	0.571	20	99	119
PM Peak (17:00 to 18:00)	0.364	0.200	0.564	76	42	118
Daily (07:00 to 19:00)	2.476	2.560	5.036	515	532	1,047

Table 5.2 (above) summarises that the proposed development of 209 homes will generate approximately 119 and 118 total person trips in the AM and PM peak period respectively. Across the daily period it is forecasted that 515 arrivals and 532 departures would be generated.

As agreed during the pre-application discussions the proposed leisure trips will be predominately pass-by or/and link trips and therefore I am happy that no further analysis is required for this land use.

To understand the modal split of the development people trips the 2011 Census Travel to Work Data has been used for the 'Reading 011' E02003399 Middle Super Output Area (MSOA) which is shown on Figure 5.1.

Figure 5.1: Reading 011 MSOA

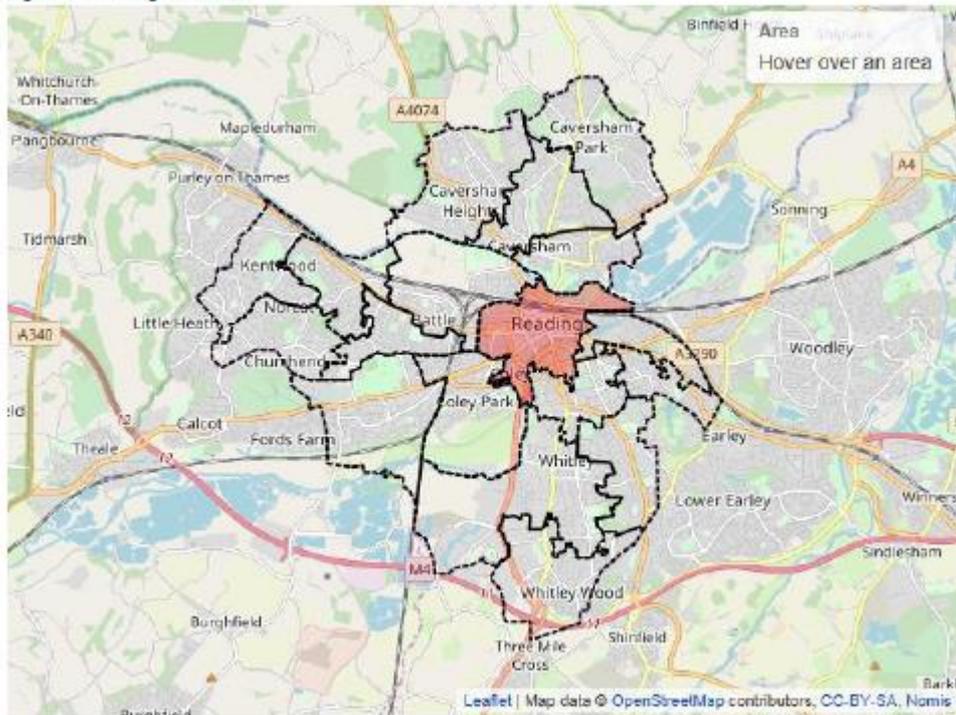


Table 5.3 (below) shows the modal split breakdown of trips generated by the proposed development.

Table 5.3: 2011 Census Modal Split and Multimodal Trip Generation

Time Period	Modal Split (%)	AM Peak (08:00 – 09:00)			PM Peak (17:00 – 18:00)		
		Arrive	Depart	Two Way	Arrive	Depart	Two Way
Underground, metro, light rail	0.4%	0	0	0	0	0	0
Train	20.4%	4	20	24	15	8	24
Bus/ Coach	11.5%	2	11	14	9	5	13
Taxi	0.3%	0	0	0	0	0	0
Motorcycle	0.4%	0	0	0	0	0	0
Driving a car or Van	30.4%	6	30	36	23	13	36
Passenger in a car or van	3.2%	1	3	4	2	1	4
Bicycle	3.5%	1	3	4	3	1	4
Foot	29.5%	6	29	35	22	12	35
Other	0.5%	0	0	1	0	0	1
Total	100%	20	99	119	76	42	118

**May be some rounding errors*

Due to the sustainable location of the site, sustainable transport modes (car share, train, buses, walking, and cycling) accounts for 68.5% of trips. Of these sustainable modes walking (29.5%) is predicted to be the most common method of travelling to work with 35 two-way walking trips to/from the site in both peak periods.

Table 5.4, below, presents the net comparison of car trip generation of the existing SSE office and the proposed residential development.

Table 5.4: Net Difference Trip Generation

	AM Peak (8:00-9:00)			PM Peak (17:00-18:00)		
	Arrive	Depart	Two Way	Arrive	Depart	Two Way
Existing	85	5	90	1	64	65
Proposed	6	30	36	23	13	36
Residual Impact	-79	+25	-54	+22	-51	-29

As summarised in Table 5.4, the redevelopment of the former SSE site is predicted to result in an overall reduction of two-way car trips across both the AM and PM peak hours and therefore the principle of the development is acceptable.

Parking

RBC’s Parking Strategy was adopted in October 2011, and contains residential parking standards, along with standards for cycle and motorcycle parking provision. The parking standards in Reading are based on RBC’s zonal scheme. The site is located within Zone 2 however on the edge of Zone 1, therefore it was agreed with applicant during the pre-application stage that Zone 1 should be used given the sites high accessibility.

Based upon the accommodation mix the required car parking provision allowed on site is 111 spaces; based on all 1 and 2 bed flats having 0.5 spaces and 3 bed flats having 1 space each.

The development is proposing a total of 55 car parking spaces which equates to a provision of 0.26 parking spaces per dwelling. Below the required standard within the SPD. However, given the parking restrictions surrounding the application site and the good alternative transport links I am happy to accept the reduction in this case. This is also subject to the development not being eligible for parking permits.

It should however be noted that the application drawings illustrate a provision of 56 spaces with the car parking layout including the provision of tandem spaces. In principle I have no objection to this subject to these spaces being allocated to a 3 bed unit. This should therefore be clarified/agreed.

In line with RBC parking standards, all developments providing up to 200 spaces are required to provide 3 disabled spaces or 5% of total capacity, whichever is greater. In accordance with this, it is stated that the development will provide a total of 3 disabled spaces. However the only submitted drawings illustrating the provision of any disabled spaces is located within the Design and Access Statement. This does not give any detail on the design of the spaces and it is noted that they are not conveniently located to the entrances to any of the residential blocks. Revised drawings are therefore required to rectify this and these should be spread through the development to ensure access is available to all blocks.

It is stated that the provision of electric parking will be in accordance with the Reading Borough Local Plan adopted in November 2019, which states the following;

□ Communal car parks for residential or non-residential developments of at least 10 spaces, 10% of spaces should provide an active charging point.”

A provision of 5 car parking spaces has been proposed to be electric charging spaces. However, the proposal should be rounded up to include the provision of 6 electric charging points (56 x 10%). It is also noted that no drawing has been provided illustrating the location of the electric charging points, this should be provided and these should be located throughout the development so that access is provided to all.

The proposed development will provide cycle parking in accordance with RBC's Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD, 2011. Based on the development schedule, it is stated that the development will provide 122 cycle parking spaces.

It proposed that 61 Sheffield stands (122 spaces) are to be provided in secure, covered and lit cycle stores within the proposed buildings, which is in excess of the Councils requirement of 105 cycle spaces.

An additional 4 stands (8 spaces) are provided adjacent to the proposed café and outside seating area for visitor use.

However, the submitted cycle stores would only be sufficient to accommodate a provision of 40 cycle spaces should Sheffield type stands be used. Having reviewed the drawings even if josta two tier cycle storage is used this would only equate to 96 cycle spaces. Both of these are below the required standard and therefore revised drawings are required illustrating the required provision of cycle spaces.

I also have concern regarding the location of two of the cycle stores, the first being that for Block D given that this is accessed from the rear of the site and is therefore not convenient or inviting. The store is also not very well overlooked and could be the subject of crime. The cycle store must therefore be relocated to a more convenient location.

The second is the smaller store at the rear of Block B / C, this is also not conveniently located and must therefore be relocated.

It should also be clarified what level of cycle parking is to be provided within each store against the number of units to which that cycle store would serve to make sure each block is provided with a sufficient number of cycle spaces.

The number, type and location of cycle parking must therefore be reviewed to ensure that cycle parking complies with the Councils requirements.

Servicing and Emergency Access

It has been stated that the delivery and servicing strategy for the proposal has been developed in accordance with RBC guidance and MfS and that all servicing and delivery requirements will be undertaken internally within the site boundary.

However, it is noted from the image from the Design and Access Statement that at least one of the refuse stores is located in excess of 10m from where a vehicle would collect. This must therefore be reviewed along with all refuse storage areas and in line with MfS all collection areas must be within 10m of a collecting vehicle.



- Refuse and recycling store
- Refuse vehicle location

In addition the turning head at the northern end of the site requires refuse and delivery vehicles to drive and reverse over the dedicated footway / cycleway. As stipulated at the pre-application stage I have concern over this movement given the importance of this pedestrian / cycle route and the potential for conflict with service vehicles. A revised turning head is therefore required that does not result in reversing over this route.

It was also requested that it would need to be clarified where any servicing will take place so as to not obstruct access to the basement car park, the turning head or the footway / cycleway. The only submitted information to accompany the application is the above plan, however it is noted that no tracking diagrams have been provided to confirm that refuse vehicles can park in the locations specified and that these do not have a subsequent detrimental impact to movement on the site. This must be clarified through additional tracking diagrams.

The below diagram also identifies the fire strategy for the site which includes the requirement of a fire tender accessing beyond the bollards to the northern section of the dedicated footway / cycleway. However, no tracking diagrams have been provided to confirm that a fire tender could actually get to the area in question, this must therefore be provided.



- Building / Core Extent
- Protected Stair Core
- Lobby / Corridor
- F Fire Fighting Lift
- Fire-fighting vehicle parking area
- Fire-fighting access to buildings

Unless amended plans are submitted to address the above points the Highway Authority will object to the proposed development.

Darren Cook
Transport Development Control Manager