

## **Statement of Case**

### **Appendix 26**

Meeting notes/email  
correspondence from in relation to  
height and design

## MEETING NOTES

28876/A7/EF

16<sup>th</sup> September, 2020

### 55 VASTERN ROAD, READING

#### POST SUBMISSION MEETING WITH READING BOROUGH COUNCIL HELD ON MONDAY 14<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER, 2020

Present: Jonathan Markwell (JM) - Reading Borough Council  
Darren Cook (DC) - Reading Borough Council  
Caroline McHardy (CM) - Berkeley Homes (Oxford & Chiltern) Ltd  
Joseph Harding (JH) - Berkeley Homes (Oxford & Chiltern) Ltd  
David Taylor (DT) - Berkeley Homes (Oxford & Chiltern) Ltd  
Thomas Nicolas (TN) - Berkeley Homes (Oxford & Chiltern) Ltd  
Scott Witchalls (SW) - Stantec  
Joe House (JH) - Stantec  
Kim Cohen (KC) - Barton Willmore  
Craig Pettit (CP) - Barton Willmore  
Emily Ford (EF) - Barton Willmore

Apologies: Steve Hicks - Reading Borough Council

#### ACTION

#### 1.0 INTRODUCTIONS

#### 2.0 RBC APPLICATION FEEDBACK

##### Viability

- 2.1 CM requested that a full copy of the viability report is shared with BHOC and that a meeting is arranged to discuss areas of disagreement. JM advised that he would liaise with Steve Hicks.
- 2.2 JM noted that Steve had advised that 0% affordable housing and no review mechanism would not be supported by officers.

**RBC**

**Note**

##### Highways

##### *Response to Stantec submissions*

- 2.3 DC advised that RBC are not in a position to feedback in detail on Stantec's submission from 10<sup>th</sup> September as yet. SW summarised the content of

**ACTION**

the response, noting that it responds to issues previously raised by RBC and provides justification for the proposed scheme.

*Vehicles crossing pedestrian/cycle route*

- 2.4 SW outlined that vehicle crossings of the pedestrian/cycle route were likely to be limited with a maximum of one HGV, including refuse vehicles, anticipated at the site each day. SW advised that the vehicle crossings are therefore not a high-risk safety issue as visibility is very good and vehicle speeds will be very low. DC noted that RBC have advised during pre-application meetings that no vehicles should reverse over the route due to safety concerns. DC noted that whilst refuse collection vehicles will have people helping to reverse, other vehicles will not.

*Route and design of pedestrian/cycle route*

- 2.5 SW summarised the justification for the proposed route of the pedestrian/cycle path. DC advised that while they have agreed to a shared pedestrian and cycle facility, RBC are seeking a straight route through the site providing direct access and a legible route from Vastern Road to the River.
- 2.6 KC noted that policy requires a route through the site but does not require the route to be a straight line with no switchbacks. KC outlined that the proposals were therefore policy compliant as well as responding to the site and place-making aspirations. SW also noted that 90 degree ramps are currently present at the end of the bridge, showing a precedence within the area.
- 2.7 KC advised that the switchbacks do not prevent the route being legible and that the entrance to the site on Vastern Road is sufficiently wide for the route to be clear. KC also noted that RBC's Access Officer welcomed the switch backs. SW/DT noted that signage and public art is proposed which will assist in wayfinding from Vastern Road.
- 2.8 DC acknowledged that the design of the pedestrian/cycle route would need to be balanced with other considerations but reiterated that RBC are seeking a straight route. KC noted that, whilst the RSAF refers to a direct pedestrian route (paragraph 5.9), there is no policy requirement for a straight cycle route, which is a micro scale view. KC also reiterated that the design is supported by RBC's Access Officer.
- 2.9 DC noted that the route did not appear legible, there needs to be a clear vision of where you need to go/get to. SW noted that the route will be used by commuters who will find it once and not forget it, visitors/recreational users will expect to follow signs. DC requested that the design rationale for the proposed route be submitted for consideration alongside technical input. KC/DT advised that justification for the route had been provided as part of the original submission and the additional booklet specifically relation to the route.
- 2.10 KC queried the harm caused by the proposed route. JM/DC advised that there is potential for conflict between cyclists and pedestrians (some of whom would use the steps proposed while others would not), potential for abuse of the route by cyclists taking shortcuts, and a concern about whether the route would be attractive and well used. DC commented that

**Note****Note****Note****Note****Note**

**ACTION**

the switchbacks may limit visibility, leading to conflict between cyclists and pedestrians.

- 2.11 KC reiterated that no concern about potential conflict had been raised by RBC's Access Officer and that the length of the switchbacks ensured good visibility, given pedestrians would likely use the steps in the corner of the switch backs. SW emphasised that the route is a generous and well laid out shared space and would not provide any impairment to cycling to the station, particularly given the need to slow down to cross Vastern Road.
- 2.12 JM recommended that a note be prepared relating to the north-south pedestrian/cycle route providing the justification and rationale for the route. Note to include a policy assessment of the proposals and bring elements of submission together in one place to aid officers. BHOC/BW to prepare.

*Vastern Road crossing*

- 2.13 SW outlined that the rationale for an additional Vastern Road crossing when all sites come forward was agreed. CM advised that £50k is seen as a reasonable proportion of the cost for delivery. DC advised that RBC are of the view that BHOC should deliver the crossing in full. SW advised that the main users will be existing residents and those from adjacent sites, as well as residents of the Vastern Road site, therefore it is not technically a requirement of the development.
- 2.14 DC advised that the design and costing of the crossing would be required to justify the contribution proposed. Stantec to prepare note identifying proposed design, cost of delivery and breakdown of who will potentially use the crossing to justify proposed contribution.
- 2.15 RBC to review Stantec's submission in detail and advise of any further comments.

**BHOC/BW****Note****Stantec****RBC**Principle of Development

- 2.16 JM advised that sufficient justification had been provided for the loss of office space and that the proposed residential development is justified in principle given the site's allocation in the Local Plan.
- 2.17 JM noted no in-principle issue with the proposed café use. JM queried the use class within which Berkeley would like the café to be considered in light of the updated Use Class Order. JM noted the potential need for further assessment, given the ability for the café to change use class, if left as submitted. BHOC to review and confirm use class.

**Note****BHOC**Scale, Massing and Detailed Design

- 2.18 JM advised that RBC are relatively comfortable with proposed scale of development with the remaining caveat of the Environment Agency's/RBC Ecology's objection relating to the potential impact on the River Thames.
- 2.19 JH outlined that further engagement with the EA has taken place with a response expected from the EA w/c 14<sup>th</sup> September. BHOC to share correspondence with the EA with RBC.

**Note****BHOC**

**ACTION**

- 2.20 JM advised that officers have no fundamental concerns in terms of detailed design, noting that they are comfortable with the proposed character areas and the level of detail shown.

**Note**Comprehensiveness

- 2.21 JM advised that RBC are unlikely to resist the proposals in terms of comprehensiveness as the DAS demonstrates that adequate allowance has been made during the design process for future development on the remaining SSE land.

**Note**Energy

- 2.22 JM outlined that Element Energy are reviewing Hodkinson's submission with a response anticipated w/c 14<sup>th</sup> September. JM to share Element Energy response when available.

**RBC**Wind

- 2.23 JM noted that a response was awaited from the BRE following the submission of comments on 10<sup>th</sup> September. JM to liaise with the BRE and update BHOC accordingly.

**RBC**Daylight/sunlight

- 2.24 JM advised that the BRE have provided additional minor comments and noted that EB7's justification is largely agreed. JM advised that it was acknowledged that given the site context it was not possible to avoid all impacts on surrounding buildings and that in this regard RBC intend to take a flexible approach.

**Note**Housing Mix

- 2.25 JM noted that the proposed housing mix fully accords with policy and is therefore supported. JM advised that RBC intend to seek a planning obligation whereby any amendments to the mix through subsequent planning applications would be considered on a cumulative basis.

**Note**Layout of Units

- 2.26 JM noted that the north-facing unit on the third floor of Block B/C has a bedroom which is only served by rooflights. JM recommended that this could be better suited as a study or a dormer window should be provided if the room is to be a bedroom. JM also noted an inconsistency in the number of roof lights shown on the roof plan and fourth floor plan and requested the submission of an updated roof plan.

**BHOC**

- 2.27 JM noted some queries in relation to the 'stacking' of units in Block B. DT advised that the varied layout on the first floor is to accommodate a Part M compliant dwelling. DT outlined that the variation on the 10<sup>th</sup> floor is to make best use of the external elevations. DT to confirm justification for proposed layout in writing.

**BHOC**Other

- 2.28 JM noted that a response from Thames Valley Police was awaited and has been chased. JM to share further comments once received.

**RBC**

**ACTION**

2.29 JM advised that a further response had been received from RBC's Natural Environment Officer raising additional points of detail and requesting additional detail. JM to share with BHOC.

**RBC**

2.30 JM advised that a response from RBC's Environmental Health Officer is awaited and has been chased. JM to shared further comments once received.

2.31 CM noted the proposed open space contribution towards Christchurch Meadow. JM confirmed he would review internally with the relevant department and revert back.

**RBC****3.0 S106**

3.1 CM queried progress in identifying and agreeing S106 contributions. JM advised that he would need to discuss internally, including in relation to open space contributions.

**Note**

3.2 JM noted that contributions towards wider transport improvements may be sought in addition to those offered by BHOC as part of the application. DC to review and advise what contributions are sought.

**RBC**

3.3 JM queried BHOC's intended approach to Employment and Skills Plan, noting that submissions to date were not clear on whether the preparation of a Plan or contribution towards RBC's strategic Plan was proposed. BHOC to review and advise.

**BHOC**

3.4 JM noted that financial contributions towards offsetting carbon saving policies would be informed by the outcome of work being undertaken by Element Energy.

**Note**

3.5 JM advised that further discussion on viability was needed before agreement could be reached in relation to affordable housing provision.

3.6 JM outlined that he intends to instruct legal services once there is certainty that the application will go to Committee with a positive recommendation, although discussion on S106 Heads of Terms at this stage is welcomed.

**Note****5.0 TARGET COMMITTEE**

5.1 CP outlined that the team would welcome JM's advice on timescales for taking the application to RBC's Planning Committee.

5.2 JM advised that he was conscious that BHOC were keen to progress the application and welcomed BHOC's work to date to address matters as soon as they have arisen, thanking them for their patience. JM noted that RBC also want to progress the application as soon as possible and advised that he considered it reasonable to target the 4<sup>th</sup> November Committee.

**Note**

5.3 JM outlined that all issues need to be fully resolved as part of the committee report which must be complete two weeks prior to the meeting date. JM noted that this allows six weeks [**note:** this will be actually five weeks] for outstanding issues to be addressed, given the report deadline of 21<sup>st</sup> October.

**Note**

**ACTION**

- 5.4 CM queried whether, subject to BHOC's agreement to targeting the November Committee, a schedule of meetings could be agreed to ensure that the target is met. JM advised that RBC will seek to work with BHOC to progress the application and be flexible in terms of meetings but noted that there is a reliance on external consultants for some inputs.

**Note****6.0 NEXT STEPS**

- 6.1 CP summarised the actions arising from the meeting as follows:
- 6.2 RBC (Steve Hicks) to liaise with BPS on viability in preparation for a meeting to discuss with BHOC.
- 6.3 BHOC to advise of availability for a meeting to discuss viability with RBC during w/c 14<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> September.
- 6.4 RBC to review Stantec's submission of 10<sup>th</sup> September and advise of any further comments.
- 6.5 BHOC/BW to prepare note relating to the north-south pedestrian/cycle route providing the justification and rationale for the route. Note to include a policy assessment of the proposals and bring elements of submission together in one place to aid officers.
- 6.6 Stantec to prepare note in relation to Vastern Road crossing design and costing.
- 6.7 BHOC to advise RBC of the preferred use class for the café building following recent changes to the Use Class Order.
- 6.8 BHOC to review JM's comments on detailed design, namely the internal layout of units and their associated 'stacking', and respond accordingly.
- 6.9 BHOC to advise JM of preferred approach in terms of Employment and Skills Plan (financial contribution or provision).
- 6.10 BHOC to share copy of correspondence with the EA with RBC.
- 6.11 JM to liaise with Element Energy and BRE (microclimate) and share updates once received.
- 6.12 JM to share comments received from Natural Environment Officer and BRE (daylight/sunlight).
- 6.13 JM to liaise with Thames Valley Policy and Environmental Health to obtain final comments.
- 6.14 All to work towards November committee (4<sup>th</sup>). Interim meetings to be booked in leading up to this.

**RBC****BHOC****RBC****BHOC/BW****Stantec****BHOC****BHOC****BHOC****BHOC****RBC****RBC****RBC****ALL**