



READING STATION PARK

Reading Station Shopping Park, Vastern Road, Reading



Outline Planning Application Statement of Community Involvement

Prepared by Barton Willmore on behalf of
Aviva Life & Pensions UK Limited



JANUARY 2020

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1.0 — Introduction

This Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) has been prepared by Barton Willmore Engagement on behalf of Aviva Life & Pensions UK Limited. It demonstrates the applicants' commitment to collaborative working and provides a clear record of the pre-application consultation and engagement for the proposed development carried out between April and January 2020.

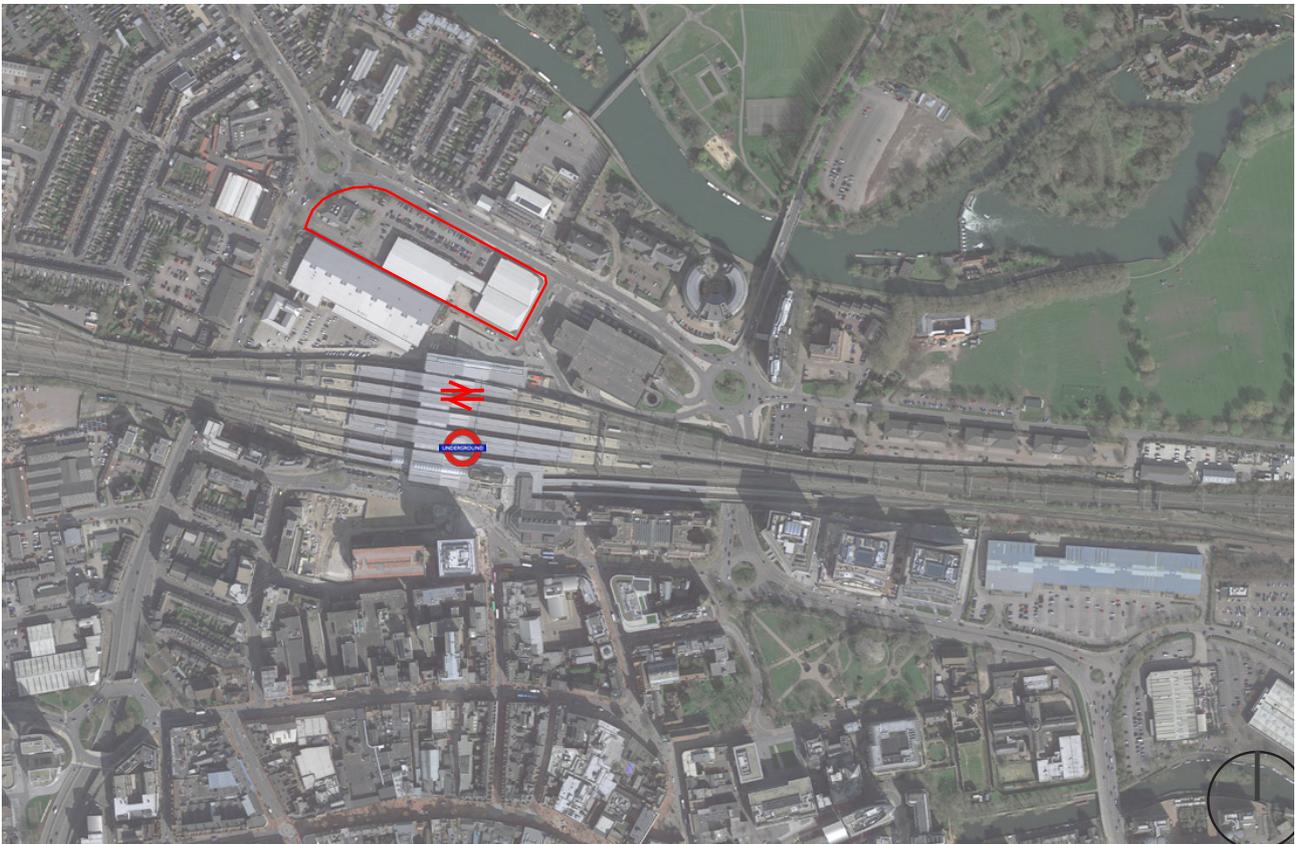
This SCI should be read in conjunction with the suite of documentation which forms the applicants' outline planning application to Reading Borough Council ('The Council') for the following proposed development at the site:

Demolition and redevelopment to comprise up to [115,000] sqm GEA in one or more land uses comprising: Residential (Class C3 and including PRS); Offices (Use Class B1(a)); development in Use Classes A1, A2, A3 (retail), A4 (public house), A5 (take away), C1 (hotel), D1 and D2 (community and leisure); car parking; provision of new plant and renewable energy equipment; creation of servicing areas and provision of associated services, including waste, refuse, cycle storage, and lighting; and for the laying out of the buildings; routes and open spaces within the development; and all associated works and operations including but not limited to: demolition; earthworks; provision of attenuation infrastructure; engineering operations. All development, works and operations to be in accordance with the approved Development Parameters Schedule and Plans.

Outline planning permission with the details of access, appearance, landscaping, layout and scale reserved for later determination.



1.1 — Location and current use of the site



- The site has a total area of 1.77 hectares (4.4 acres)
- Currently the site provides 6,969 sq m of Class A1 floorspace
- The site is located in close proximity to Reading Railway Station on the northern side of the railway, benefiting from good transport links to areas of Reading as well as to locations outside Reading
- Major vehicular routes run along the site's west and northern boundaries: Vastern Road and Caversham Road
- Pedestrian access from the Town centre, located south of the railway is enabled by a ground level passage beneath the railway tracks. Two alternative routes are placed east and west, alongside major vehicular routes
- It is surrounded by storage facilities and small retail units on the southern and western border. On the northern boundary the site is separated by Vastern Road from a row of terraced houses. The surrounding uses on the eastern boundary are mostly commercial: office spaces and parking



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1.2 — Overview of the development

For reference purposes and to aid understanding of the themes shared and discussed in this document, please see indicative masterplan below.

- 750-950 homes - studio to 3 bed apartments
- Primarily car free, with car parking provision made for blue badge holders
- Resident and visitor cycle parking
- New public realm spaces
- New pedestrian linkage between the Railway Station, underpass and Vastern Road heading towards the River Thames
- New offices, hotel, retail units/ gym/ community facilities



Road frontage

- A green fringe that provides separation between Vastern Road and the site.
- Comprises a minimum zone of 5 metres to include replacement tree planting, pedestrian routes and a dedicated cycle lane connecting the railway station to the existing cycle lane along DeMontfort Road.
- The existing trees at the site entrance along Cavendish Road will be retained and enhanced with new planting.

Secondary streets

- Provide access for building servicing and parking for blue badge holders.
- The eastern street provides access and egress to the site with a dedicated pedestrian route along the building facade, creating a link between Vastern Road and the avenue ensuring permeability through the site.
- The western street will be a shared surface with priority given to pedestrians and cyclists. A pocket park at the end of the street creates a destination space and softens the streetscene.

Linear park

- Provides a new strategic connection between the River Thames and the town centre.
- Connects the railway station to the site, providing a car free route to Vastern Road, the Thames path, King's Meadow and Christchurch Meadows.
- Provides 'greening' of the site by creating a linear park comprising new trees, shrub and herbaceous planting.
- Opportunities for both active and passive recreation and door step play.
- Provision of a range of seating spaces and seating options along the route.

The Avenue

- The avenue forms the primary route through the site for cars, delivery and people.
- It provides vehicular access for building services, deliveries, emergency services and blue badge parking.
- Creation of a tree lined boulevard incorporating large, specimen trees and blocks of structural shrub planting creates a verdant streetscene.
- Pavements will be designed to be wide enough to accommodate spill-out space for potential ground floor retail or food and beverage units.
- Opportunities for 'play on the way' and sustainable drainage features.

Hotel plaza

- Create a welcoming public plaza to the front of the hotel.
- Opportunity for specimen / feature trees within this key location.
- Bespoke seating or public art features.
- Potential outdoor cafe space.

Lobby courtyards and podium landscapes

- Provides breathing space off of the avenue, for residents entering the lobbies.
- Opportunity for greening with tree, shrub and herbaceous planting.
- Quiet and tranquil spaces to incorporate a range of seating options.
- Provides private amenity space for residents.



1.3 — Project team

For the purpose of this document, the core team members who have been involved in engaging with the community and may be referenced in this report are:

Site Owner

Ben Littman – Aviva Investors

Project Managers

Phillip Jemmison - WT Partnership

Anthony D'Amico - WT Partnership

Architects

Roy Collado - Collado Collins Partners LLP

Robert Matthews - Collado Collins Partners LLP

Veronica Popescu - Collado Collins Partners LLP

Transport Consultant

Doug Hickman - Cole Easdon Consultants

Landscape Consultant

Paul Cope - Fabrik Ltd

Community Engagement

Kate Greatrix – Barton Willmore

Lucy Yaqub – Barton Willmore

Planning Consultants

Marie Jasper – Barton Willmore

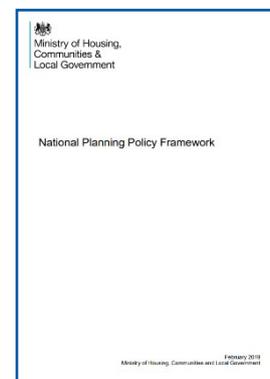
Robin Meakins – Barton Willmore

Amy Clarke – Barton Willmore



2.0 — Planning Policy Context

In order to establish an appropriate engagement strategy for the proposed development, a review of the relevant national and local planning policy guidance has been undertaken, which is set out below.



2.1 — National policy

The Government considers that pre-application engagement prior to the submission of a planning application is paramount to ensuring timely decision making, reducing delays and cost to the applicant while achieving quality outcomes. Paragraphs 39-46 of the National Planning Policy Framework ('the NPPF') refer to the role of the pre-application engagement with the community and stakeholders in further detail. In essence, it advises that:

- Early engagement has the significant potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system for all parties, and good quality pre-application discussion enables better coordination between public and private resources and improved outcomes for the community (paragraph 39).
- Local planning authorities should also, where they think this would be beneficial, encourage any applicants who are not already required to do so by law to engage with the local community and, where relevant, with statutory and non-statutory consultees, before submitting their applications.
- The more issues that can be resolved at pre-application stage, including the need
- to deliver improvements in infrastructure and affordable housing, the greater the benefits (paragraph 41).

- The participation of statutory planning consultees with an early pro-active approach will assist local authorities in issuing timely decisions, helping ensure that applicants do not experience unnecessary delays and costs (paragraph 41).
- To avoid delay, applicants should discuss what information is needed with the local planning authority and expert bodies as early as possible (paragraph 43).

As this SCI and the accompanying DAS explains, the applicants and their development team have actively engaged with the local community and its key stakeholders throughout the evolution of the outline planning application.

By virtue of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, Local Planning Authorities (LPA's) are required to prepare a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) to set out their policy on involving their community in preparing local development documents and on consulting on planning applications. The Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) also identifies the steps which LPAs must take in involving the public with planning applications.

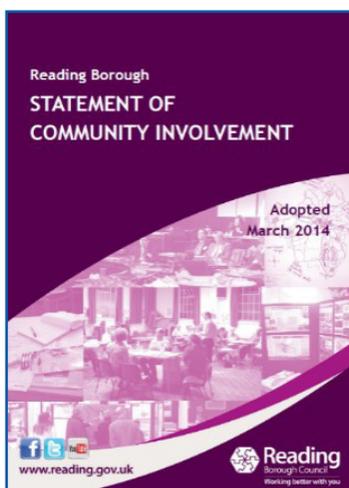
2.2 — Local policy

Under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the Council is required to produce a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). This document sets out how the authority intends to achieve continuous community involvement in the preparation of local development documents in their area. The SCI also covers how people and the community will be engaged in decisions on planning applications for major development that affect the authority's area.

The Council's SCI was adopted in March 2014 and emphasises the importance of pre-application discussions between planning officers and developers, and between applicants and local communities prior to the submission of an application, and states:

The Council agrees with this emphasis on engaging the community from the outset. It can result in an improved scheme which takes the needs of the existing community into account, and a better relationship between the developer and the community that carries through the application process and beyond. This is particularly the case for proposals that are sensitive or of a significant scale.

- Developers should prepare a project plan for pre-application involvement and consultation to be discussed and agreed with the case officer. The case officer will provide assistance in identifying and providing contact information for local representatives, groups and individuals who should be invited by the applicant to become involved in the proposals. This will include local residential and other property, representatives of community groups, including local Councillors, relevant statutory and non-statutory consultees, statutory undertakers and any other bodies or individuals to which such information is deemed relevant by the local planning authority. Where proposals relate to the historic environment, the developer will be required to consult a number of organisations with interests in these matters.
- The developer's project plan should include details of the scope of the community involvement including which stakeholders will be engaged, timescales and milestones, materials that will be made available to the community and stakeholders and the venues proposed for holding interactive events. Website development resources should also be highlighted.

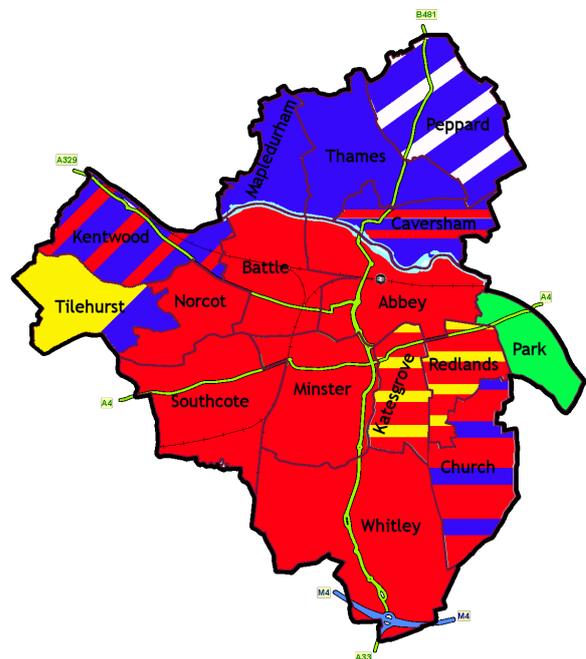


- The project plan should also discuss the need for local authority officer resources as part of the involvement process. Reading Borough Council already faces considerable pressure on planning staff resources. The Council cannot therefore guarantee to make staff resources available to assist involvement exercises or to attend public events. As a minimum, as part of pre-application discussions and correspondence, case officers from the Planning Section will: any such consultation meetings or exhibitions as it can appear that they are lending their support to the proposed development. However, there will be some schemes where the Council is working with a developer and therefore it would be appropriate for planning officers to attend the event. As for Members of the Planning Committee, the Planning Code of Conduct advises that they do not take part in discussions at any stage on any major development.
- The Council currently does not impose any charges for pre-application advice. However, should any such charges be introduced in the future, this would occur only after the publication of a scheme outlining the scale of charges.
- The policies and guidance set out in the NPPF and the Council's SCI are important considerations when engaging with and involving the wider community in the planning process and have been key to forming the applicants' engagement strategy for the proposed development.
- Barton Willmore operates a Good Practice Guide for Community Engagement as produced by Planning Aid England (see appendix 10).
 - Provide information and advice on consultees and stakeholders relevant to involvement in a particular proposal
 - Provide information and advice on potential venues for public interactive events
 - Facilitate involvement with elected members where necessary
 - Appraise and provide comment and advice on a community involvement project plan prepared by the developer/potential applicant
 - Arrange for links or material to be loaded onto the Council's website.

- Case officers will make efforts to attend events and take part in involvement exercises as observers, if time and resources allow. Where officer attendance or assistance in pre-application involvement exercises is specifically requested by a developer/potential applicant, and this is agreed on a “without prejudice” basis by the Planning Manager, any cost to the local authority will be charged to the developer/potential applicant at the Council’s standard rates for officer time and any materials.
- On the most significant or sensitive proposals, where very wide community interest is anticipated, it would be advisable to discuss community involvement arrangements with the community at the initial stage. Council officers can help to identify where this is likely to be required. Such initial approaches to the community and stakeholders should offer a range of involvement approaches and express willingness to meet groups or hold exhibitions/meetings to explore proposals. They should invite suggestions from the community and stakeholders on how involvement should take place to best meet the needs of the community. Prospective applicants should discuss with the community matters such as possible venues for exhibitions, meetings and other events, and the timing of those events to meet the needs of all in the community. This will be particularly important in involving hard to reach and specific groups within the community.
- Developers should prepare circular information on the developer/applicant’s intentions to make a planning application and develop a particular site. Developers should discuss the form and content of the information to be provided with the local planning authority. Such circular information shall be designed to include a means to feedback appropriate responses either by prompted questions or through other written and digital communication.
- Developers should widely distribute such information as may be agreed by the local planning authority by posting to household addresses and other addresses determined in conjunction with and agreed by the local planning authority.
- Developers should arrange and provide at least one interactive involvement event designed to enable all consultees to attend, receive information, participate and feedback information on their area and its community and their views on possible development or other change in the area.
- Such an event might take the form of a place check, enquiry by design event, exhibition and workshop, a planning for real exercise, public meeting or similar facilitated interactive event. The timing and arrangements for the event should be set out in the project plan. It is advisable for developers to discuss the time, location, illustrative materials, facilitation arrangements and event programme with the local planning authority. The local planning authority must be invited to send representatives to observe and, if appropriate, to participate in any event.

- Developers should provide a website of relevant information or provide digital images and information (or a suitable document such as a document in pdf format) that can be put on the planning page of the Reading Borough Council Website.
- Developers or prospective applicants will be expected to prepare a public report of community involvement for submission with a significant or sensitive planning application (as defined in this SCI), detailing the extent of the community involvement exercise carried out, reporting all views and responses and indicating the actions or changes that have been carried out or that it is proposed are carried out in order to meet the views and concerns raised by the community involvement. Where no actions or changes are proposed, the report should explain why this is the case.

In order to meet these requirements, a prospective applicant will need to allow considerable time for carrying out pre-application involvement.



3.0 — Consultation Process

The aim of our community consultation is to engage with local residents, stakeholders and other interested parties; inform them of the investment that is being made in their community, identify any significant local issues or concerns and ensure these are addressed in an inclusive manner.

3.1 — Consultation aims

The objectives throughout the process of consultation with the local community have been to:

- Research and identify all relevant interest groups and parties
- Encourage as much input as possible from the local community, including residents, interest groups, Councillors and businesses
- Provide the community with genuine and well publicised opportunities to provide feedback on the proposed scheme
- Identify and address where possible any issues or concerns highlighted by the community and stakeholders
- Be clear about what can be changed and what cannot, and explain why
- Be inclusive, accessible, transparent and engaging
- Clearly communicate all feedback from the local community to the wider project team

3.2 — Process overview

Engaging with stakeholders and the local community in a timely, appropriate and inclusive manner and seeking their involvement and feedback to the applicant's proposals has been crucial. A key element has been to conduct an open dialogue with stakeholders and local residents.

Public consultation and events on the proposed site and development began in April 2019. The process of public consultation was designed to coincide with, and inform, the key stages of design development and present the evolution of the design in a clear and informative manner that enables the community to contribute and respond in an informed way.

Two principal stages of pre-application consultation were held to discuss the site and the design proposals. The public exhibitions were delivered in September and October 2019.

Stage 1— Stakeholder and Public Consultation

Early meetings were held with Reading Borough Council officers to determine the required level of consultation. The initial stage of public consultation focused on raising awareness of the site, its potential redevelopment, and understanding any local issues or concerns. This was carried out through meetings with local stakeholder groups and a two day public exhibition. Feedback was collected to help understand residents' initial thoughts on the proposals and inform further design development and progression of the scheme.

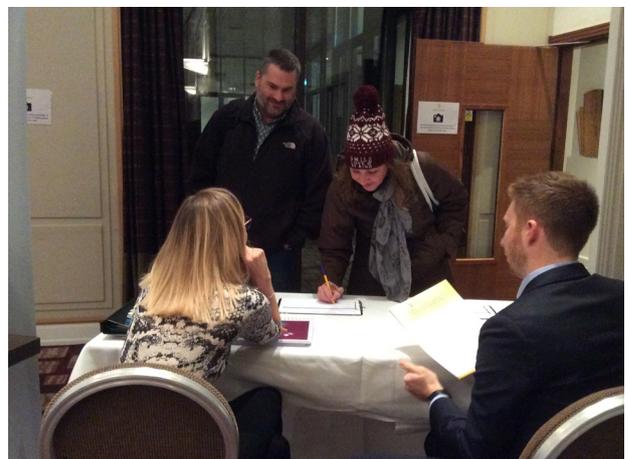
Stage 2 — Stakeholder and Public Consultation

Following the Stage 1 'raising awareness' consultation, a further two day public exhibition was held. The exhibition comprised of detailed feedback from the community from the first public exhibition and shared the revised proposals in order to seek further feedback ahead of the submission of an outline planning application.

Meetings were also held with local stakeholder groups and Reading Borough Councillors.

Future Engagement

The applicants will continue to engage with stakeholders and neighbours close to the site to further discuss any specific issues and maintain an ongoing dialogue.



3.3 — Consultation tools

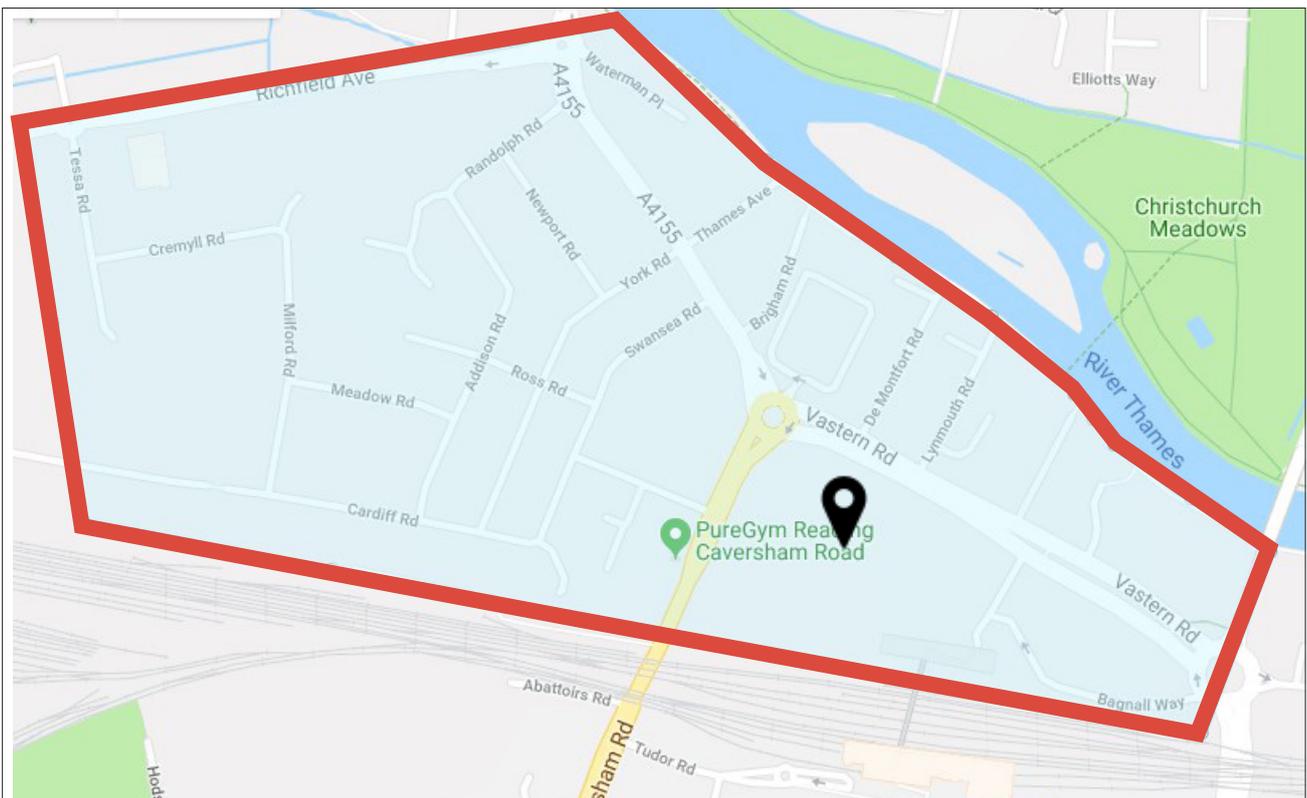
Numerous methods and tools were used to raise awareness of the project and the public exhibitions in the local area.

Consultation boundary

A consultation boundary was established in the early stages of the project. The consultation boundary comprised of 1,168 residents and businesses and was used as a basic distribution area for the consultation material.

The main streets within the boundary are listed below:

- Vastern Road
- Lynmouth Road
- DeMontfort Road
- Brigham Road
- Thames Ave
- Waterman Place
- Randolph Road
- Newport Road
- York Rd
- Swansea Road
- Ross Road
- Addison Road
- Cardiff Road
- Meadow Road
- Richfield Ave
- Milford Road
- Cremyll Road



Consultation boundary



This is Reading Facebook – posted 20/9/19

Publicity

The following methods were used to publicise the public exhibitions:

- Invitations and flyers distributed to homes and businesses within the consultation boundary
- Exhibition dates published on the dedicated project website
- Email invitations to the project contact database
- Newspaper advertisements in the Slough Express and Slough Observer
- Local community group social media channels
- Get Reading Press Coverage

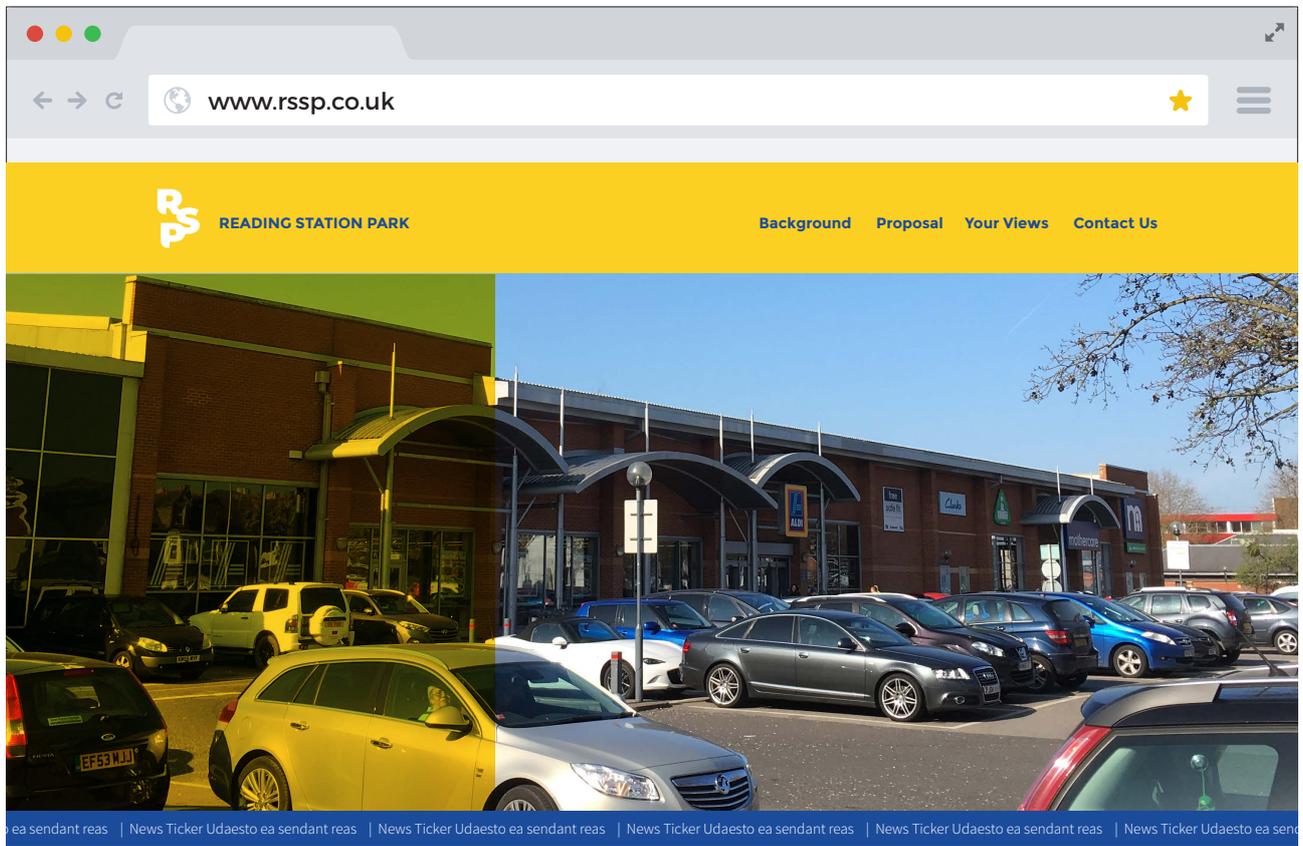


Website

In July 2019, a project website was launched, dedicated to the consultation and engagement process. The website was updated with key information on the proposals, notice of exhibitions and how to give feedback. Feedback forms were available to be completed online with a section also provided where PDF documents of all consultation material and exhibition boards could be downloaded. The website can be accessed at: www.rssp.co.uk

Email updates

Email updates have been sent to residents who signed up to be kept up to date, informing them of the progress of the project and updating them on the consultation process, to ensure anyone interested is kept fully informed of matters relating to the project.



Email

A dedicated email address RSP@bartonwillmore.co.uk was set up at the beginning of the project to provide a direct contact point for queries throughout the process.

Project phone number

A telephone number (0207 466 6837) and out of hours number (07766 086738) were set up for all queries regarding the consultation and wider project. This was staffed and managed by the applicants' community engagement team.