

# Memo

**From:** (e)Transport Development Control Floor 1 North Rear Civic Offices Bridge Street Reading RG1 2LU  
**To:** Brian Conlon brian.conlon@reading.gov.uk  
**Date:** 17<sup>th</sup> December 2021  
**Re:** Consultation on Planning Application

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**Application Number:** 200328

**Application Type:** Outline Planning Approval

**Address:** Vastern Court Caversham Road Reading

**Proposal:** Outline planning permission with the details of access, appearance, landscaping, layout and scale reserved for later determination. A demolition phase and phased redevelopment (each phase being an independent act of development) comprising a flexible mix of the following uses: 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), 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.”

## Transport Comments

The proposed application consists of a comprehensive redevelopment of the site including Outline planning permission for demolition and redevelopment of up to 90,850 sqm GEA. The parameters of which are as follows:

The floorspace within Use Class C3 shall not exceed 80,000 sqm GEA with the total maximum residential units not exceeding 1,000. The residential accommodation may range between studio apartments to 3 Bed dwellings.

The minimum and maximum floorspace by Use Class, by Plot (as defined on Plan PP-102\_P2), and by total will comply with Table 1 below.

**TABLE 1**

Use Class		Plot A	Plot B	Plot C	Plot D	Total GEA sqm (excluding plant)
C3 Residential units	Min	48,000				48,000
	Max	16,400	19,750	23,200	20,650	80,000
B1a Offices	Min	0	0	0	0	0
	Max	0	0	0	24,500	24,500
A1-A5, D1-D2 Retail units/ Community Facilities/ Gym	Min	2,000				2,000
	Max	7,000	7,000	7,000	7,000	7,000

Given the scale of the development the application has been accompanied by a Transport Assessment and I comment on this as follows:

### Site Location / Accessibility

The site is located adjacent the corner of the A329 Caversham Road and the A329 Vastern Road in Reading, Berkshire. It is immediately north of Reading Railway Station. The site currently operates as a retail park comprising The Range, Majestic Wine, Aldi, Mothercare, and TGI Fridays.

The site benefits from being in relatively close proximity to a vast range of important services and facilities, thus creating opportunities for journeys to be made on foot, by bicycle, and by public transport.

The site is situated within walking distance of a vast range of day-to-day services and facilities including supermarkets, schools and health facilities. A number of bus stops served by a number of high frequency services are also located adjacent the site. The site is situated in close proximity to employment opportunities available in Reading town centre, the Kings Meadow employment area and Richfield Trading Estate.

All roads in the vicinity of the site benefit from comprehensive footway provision along both sides of the carriageway facilitating convenient and safe pedestrian movement in the local area. Further pedestrian/cycle infrastructure in the vicinity of the site includes:

- Signalised pedestrian crossings to the south of the Northfield Road junction;
- Signalised pedestrian crossings at the Vastern Road arm of the roundabout adjacent the northwest corner; and
- Signalised crossings at Trooper Potts Way junction.

The Reading 'Cycle Routes in Central Reading' map shows the local cycle route network developed by RBC. A number of these routes pass in close proximity to the site and provide access to various locations around Reading. The foot / cycle way across the Vastern Road frontage of the site will also be upgraded as part of the landscaping proposals for the development.

The development will also provide cycle parking for both the residential and commercial uses, including provision for visitors.

The Station North Bus Interchange is located immediately to the east of the site comprising stops NA, NB, NC and NE. The Caversham Road Fire Station stops are located to the southwest of the site. Shelters and real time passenger information are provided at the Station Interchange Stops whilst the Caversham Road Fire Stations benefit from timetable information. Regular services operate to central Reading, Henley, Marlow, High Wycombe and Oxford.

An increased number of buses can be accessed to the South side of the Station with the central core of the Town Centre.

Reading Railway Station is located immediately to the south of the site. It is a major transport hub and is served by three train operating companies: Great Western Railway, Crosscountry and South Western Railway.

Frequent services operate to London Paddington, Swindon, Bristol Parkway and Bristol Temple Meads, Cardiff, Oxford, Birmingham New Street amongst others.

### Access

A gap between buildings C and D has been provided so that a pedestrian / cycle / landscape route can be provided which would form part of the improved north / south link identified within the Councils Local Policies.

The gap between the buildings is 23m and would be sufficient to accommodate a 5m wide pedestrian / cycle route. The drawings submitted still fail to show how this would tie in with the route to the station underpass and pedestrian crossing which is currently subject to another current planning application on the adjoining site to the south. However, the Highway Authority have reviewed this and are happy that the crossing is located centrally to the two buildings and can confirm that there is sufficient space for a pedestrian cycle route between the two plots although this will require significant alterations to the illustrative landscaping layout.

In addition to this the proposal must ensure that the building plots do not conflict with the requirement to provide a signalized crossing on Vastern Road which would link to the SSE site and Christchurch Bridge to the north. It should be noted that the SSE site to the north is currently awaiting a decision in relation to a Public Inquiry, which among other things will determine issues in relation to the direct pedestrian / cycle route through the site and line of sight through to the River.

Should the SSE site be permitted at Appeal Plot C will obstruct the direct pedestrian / cycle route and the line of sight through to the access point of the SSE Development.

It was also explicitly stated at the pre-application stage that the applicant work with the developer of the SSE site to ensure that this proposed scheme does not detrimentally impact the delivery of a pedestrian crossing facility on Vastern Road. It does not appear that these discussions have occurred given that the landscaping scheme illustrates an excessively large zebra crossing when a signalized crossing is required.

Until the Appeal decision associated with the SSE site has been issued the Highway Authority are unable to determine whether Plot C obstructs the direct pedestrian / cycle route through the site. However, given that this is an outline application that is only setting parameters of where a building could be located I am happy that this could be dealt with at reserved matters stage.

The proposal has been submitted with the design of the vehicle access and egress to be assessed at reserved matters stage. However, I do have concerns regarding the indicative vehicle exit illustrated on the landscape plan included within the original Transport Assessment and the now updated DAS. The area specified on drawing 17043 PP-101 Rev P1 is also the location where the Vastern Road carriageway changes from a two-lane carriageway to three which currently commences as an exit lane from the retail park and not as a priority junction as illustrated.

It is noted that the commencement of the current exit is located at the far eastern extremity of the area designated as the proposed egress zone if not beyond, which would conflict with approximately two thirds of Plot C. I would therefore assume that if this were to be where the access is ultimately located this would significantly reduce the developable area of Plot C.

The proposal will also now include the provision of larger service and refuse vehicles exiting from this point which would have previously exited from Trooper Potts Way. The access design would therefore need to take account of the fact that vehicles should not extend out further than the inside lane. This is therefore likely to require the retention of an exit lane in some form, similar to that currently provided.

This has not been addressed as part of the revised submission however this would not warrant a reason for refusal at this stage and would be for the reserved matters stage.

May I also make reference to the comments made at pre-application stage regarding a proposed site access arrangement. I had concern over the access reducing the distance to the Caversham Road / Vastern Road roundabout which does experience queuing back to the existing site egress and also reduces the availability for vehicles heading east given that there is less carriageway length to get into the right hand lane after exiting the site. It was stressed that these points would need to be addressed as part of any safety audit and assessment of the junction at an application stage. Although the access design is not to be considered at this outline application stage the impact of the development on the surrounding Highway network cannot be assessed at this time. This must be undertaken at the Reserved Matters stage.

In relation to the access point on Caversham Road it has been discussed with the applicants of this proposal and that of the Royal Mail site located adjacent to the south, which is also currently being determined under planning application 182252, that a shared access between the two should be provided. It was therefore requested that Drawing PP-101 should be updated to extend the access zone further south to take account that the access could be taken from the adjacent site. This has not been undertaken, a revised plan should therefore be submitted or confirmation received that access is to be gained via the existing access only.

It is also noted that drawing 17043PP-100 Rev P1 illustrates a 5m wide strip around the northern boundary of the site to facilitate a 3m wide cycle lane and landscaping. However, it does specify that the scheme will preserve the zone for highway improvements, this is accepted from a Highways perspective but may result in a reduction in the landscaping that can be provided. The exact widths will however be determined through the reserved matters applications.

#### Trip Generation / Traffic Impact

The applicant has stated that traffic and pedestrian/cycle surveys were carried out at the existing retail park on 30<sup>th</sup> April 2019, where the vehicle, pedestrian and cycle flow entering and exiting the site were recorded. The results are summarised within Table 6.1 below, which has been taken from the TA. The applicant has stated that the survey data is enclosed within Appendix 6 of the TA however this Appendix only provides survey data for vehicles and not pedestrian and cycles. The only data that can therefore be accepted is that associated with vehicles.

Irrespective of this as can be seen, the retail park generates a significant number of trips both during peak hours and daily, the latter representing over 3,300 two-way vehicle movements. The survey results form the baseline traffic survey data, against which the impact of the proposed development is assessed.

Table 6.1: Surveyed Weekday Trip Generation

Mode	AM Peak 0800-0900		PM Peak 1700-1800		Daily 0700-2330	
	Arrivals	Departures	Arrivals	Departures	Arrivals	Departures
Vehicles	53	37	112	136	1,676	1,678
Pedestrians and Cyclists	128	130	277	228	2,148	2,090
Total	181	167	389	364	3,824	3,768
Total Trip Rate/100sqm.*	2.60	2.4	5.60	5.24	55.1	54.2

\*based on existing GIA of 6,949.2m<sup>2</sup>

The proposed development has been assessed based on the following mix as stipulated at Paragraph 7.1 of the TA.

- 700 residential units (private);
- 300 residential units (affordable);
- 29,000m<sup>2</sup> office space (use class E(g)(i); and
- 7,000m<sup>2</sup> retail/commercial space (use classes E(a) and E(b)).

It should firstly be stressed that this mix is not accurate given that the proposed development proposes no affordable housing and that the office floor space is to be a maximum of 24,500m<sup>2</sup>. However, having reviewed the information presented both of the inaccuracies actually represent a worst case scenario which would lead to an increased level of trips and therefore I am happy for them to be utilized.

The applicant has also undertaken a further robust assessment by including all of the proposed uses at their maximum amounts, given that a maximum amount of 90,850m<sup>2</sup> floor space is proposed it would not be possible for this to occur. The Highway Authority are therefore happy with this approach.

I have however reviewed the trip rates provided and I comment on these as follows:

#### *Office Trip Rates*

The office trips rates have been obtained from the Trip Rate Information Computer System (TRICS) which is the national standard system of trip generation and analysis in the UK and Ireland, and is used as an integral and essential part of the Transport Assessment process. It is a database system, which allows its users to establish potential levels of trip generation for a wide range of development and location scenarios, and is widely used as part of the planning application process by both developer consultants and local authorities and is accepted by Inspectors as a valid way to ascertain likely trip generation. The Highway Authority therefore happy with this methodology.

I have reviewed the sites selected from the TRICS database and I can confirm that two of the sites are not comparable as they have extensive levels of car parking on the site in relation to their floor area. These therefore cannot be included within any assessment. These are sites EX-02-A-03 and WK-02-A-01.

In addition the applicant has utilized travel to work census data to establish the modal split however, this would only be sufficient on residential uses and not for commercial purposes

as the data reflects how people travel from their place of residence to their place of work and not visa versa.

However, the Highway Authority have undertaken a separate assessment utilizing the TRICS modal share data and this requires a greater level of assumptions to ascertain the final trip generation. In this instance I am therefore happy that the data presented is acceptable.

*Retail / Commercial Trip Rates*

The trip generation associated with the proposed retail space has been based on actual survey data undertaken at the site to which the principle is accepted. This has however been reduced to take into account the significantly reduced car parking provision and the Highway Authority are happy with this approach.

*Residential Trip Rates*

The applicant has provided a set of residential trips rates for total people trips that have been deemed acceptable. As I have stated above they do include the provision of affordable housing trips but these are in actual fact higher than the private housing trip rates, given that no affordable housing is to be provided on the site this has been accepted as this represents a robust assessment.

2011 Census Travel to Work data has also been used to obtain the multi modal travel data for the residential units. This approach is deemed acceptable for residential as it represents the home location for the residential units.

Overall the Highway Authority are happy that the proposed residential trip rates are acceptable.

*Overall Trip Rates*

Overall the proposed impact by the development will be in accordance with the table presented below.

**Table 7.21: Net Change in Vehicular Trips**

Mode	AM Peak (08:00-09:00)		PM Peak (17:00-18:00)		Daily (06:00-22:00)	
	Arrivals	Departures	Arrivals	Departures	Arrivals	Departures
Existing Retail Uses	53	37	112	136	1,676	1,678
Proposed Uses (Table 7.19)	35	47	38	35	490	496
Difference	-18	10	-74	-121	-1,186	-1,182
	-8		-101		-2,368	

The above demonstrates that the proposal will have a positive impact on the vehicles flows in the AM, PM peak and the daily trips given that reduction in vehicle flows are identified in each, the Highway Authority are therefore happy that the development is acceptable.

*Impact on Bus and Train Services*

The applicant has undertaken an assessment of the bus and train usage and how this will change following the completion of development and this has identified that there would be minimal impact on services across the Borough. It should be stressed that the

assessment undertaken has assumed no use for the existing retail units on the site and as such the assessment undertaken is robust.

## Parking

### *Car Parking*

The proposed development is considered car-free, except for the provision of disabled car Parking. It has been stated that this would be in accordance with the standards contained within the Reading Revised parking Standards and Design document however the Councils standards require a provision of disabled parking as a percentage of standard spaces. The applicant has stated that they are not proposing standard spaces and therefore the level of disabled spaces is proposed at the applicant's discretion.

This is detailed as being one disabled parking space per 5% of the residential units provided. The maximum number of residential units has been identified as being 1,000 which would equate to a provision of up to 50 spaces and is deemed acceptable. This is accepted given the parking restrictions that surround the application site that would ensure that long stay overspill parking could not occur and that no permits would be issued to residents of the development.

The proposed retail use is to be between a range of 2,000m<sup>2</sup> and 7,000m<sup>2</sup> which is significantly different to what was presented at the pre-application stage. This was presented as a maximum of 3,269m<sup>2</sup> to which the Highway Authority had no objections to given smaller scale units would be ancillary shops, coffee shops, etc. and unlikely to result in dedicated trips in their own right. However, a retail offer of 7,000m<sup>2</sup> will result in dedicated trips and subsequently the requirement for car parking. It was previously stated that should the proposal retain the maximum of 7,000m<sup>2</sup> then a car accumulation assessment should be undertaken based on the survey results presented in the Transport Assessment to establish what parking should be provided. However, this has not been undertaken by the applicant. As such I have reviewed the data at Appendix 6 and this identifies that a parking provision of 114 spaces would be required.

Although the surrounding area is restricted through parking permits these do allow 2 hour parking between the hours of 8am and 8pm and therefore the Highway Authority cannot support a development that will result in an increased demand for on street parking. It is evident from the applicant's own trip rate analysis that the retail use will generate vehicle trips, based on this assessment a floor area of 7,000m<sup>2</sup> would equate approximately 3,300 vehicle movements a day.

Given the above the Highway Authority would not be able to support a retail offer with no parking based on the upper parameter included however this will need to be dealt with by way of a condition with the parking requirements assessed as each reserved matter is submitted.

The proposed development will provide a provision of electric charging points on the site in line with the Councils standards and these will be secured through appropriate conditions.

Please note I am happy for the layout of the car parking to be dealt with at the reserved matters stage once the design and layout evolves.

The applicant has stated that Car Club parking bays will be provided at street level within the site. I am happy that this can be secured through the S106 and include the requirement that 2 car club spaces are provided that are funded for a period of 5 years.

I am happy that the car club scheme will be developed during the course of the reserved matters application.

### *Cycle Parking*

The development will provide cycle parking for all of the various uses in accordance with the minimum standards set out in the Reading Revised parking Standards and Design document. It is also stated that the cycle parking will be provided through a mix of Double Stackers, Sheffield Stands and Oversized Cycle Stands.

Given that it has been confirmed that the cycle parking will be in accordance with the Councils minimum requirements this is deemed acceptable. I am also happy that the layout of the cycle parking be developed at the reserved matters stage.

### *Servicing*

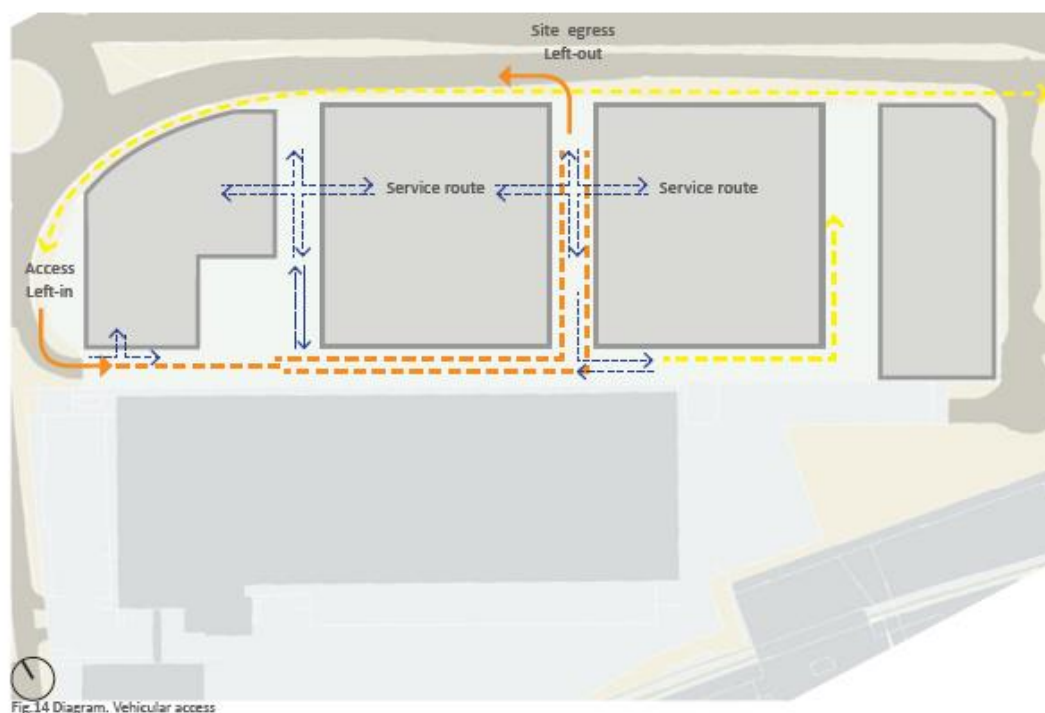
The applicant has stated that the proposals will incorporate facilities to enable a comprehensive servicing strategy with all servicing to be undertaken on site through dedicated loading bays and servicing yards. It concludes that a Delivery and Servicing Management Plan (DSMP) with appropriate swept path analysis will be provided as part of the detailed application.

I do have some comments on the servicing arrangements to date for the applicants information and these are as follows:

- The proposal includes servicing routes that go under the buildings themselves as a shared access to the undercroft parking courts. It should be noted that to facilitate access to these undercroft areas a minimum head height of 5m would be required.
- Dedicated loading bays should be provided to ensure that vehicle access routes are not obstructed.
- It is noted that Plot D is to be served from Trooper Potts Way and requires the provision of a new loading bay which would result in the removal of the existing footway on the Public Highway, which is contrary to the Transport Statement which states that all servicing would be from within the site. In addition, no plans have been provided that identify a relocated footway between Plot D and the loading bay, this would need to be provided and included as a footway to be adopted. This will need to be addressed as part of the first reserved matters stage so that it feeds into the required Highway Works schedule for the development which will include the provision of realigned footway around any new loading bay.
- It would also need to be ascertained how access to the proposed loading bay on Trooper Potts Way would be gained given that the site provides no through route and no turning facility is provided on Trooper Potts Way itself. The only way to access this bay would be to utilize third party land via Bagnell Way which is a bus only route except for station access.
- It is proposed to serve Plot A via an access located in the north east corner of the building which will result in vehicles having to reverse along the pedestrianized route that leads to the existing signalized crossing on Vastern Road. This would be detrimental to Highway safety and cannot be supported. The proposal must therefore provide separate vehicle and pedestrianized areas not only adjacent to the loading area but along this north south route. This may be a secondary route but it will still play an important role in providing pedestrian and cycle access to the north.
- I note the fire strategy identified at 6.11 of the DAS which identifies the extension of the central street to the east so that it runs along the southern boundary of Plot C



and connects to a temporary access onto Trooper Potts Way. However, this should will need to be clarifies in more detail at reserved matters stage. In addition to this point I note paragraph 3.4 of the Design Code and in particular Figure 14, included below. These identify the provision of a controlled two-way service route along the southern boundary of Block C, this again would need more clarification and detail as to how this would be controlled, who would have access and how vehicles would turn so that vehicles are not reversing along a pedestrianized route as this will result in a fundamental objection.



- Main Vehicular access/ egress
- - - Routes with flexible location
- - - Service routes - controlled access
- - - Pedestrian / cycle route

Overall the Highway Authority are happy that the servicing of the site can be dealt with by way of a condition that requires specific servicing strategies for each phase as it progresses.

Draft S106 Heads of Terms  
*Highway Works*

3.1 Stipulates that the applicant is to enter into a S278 agreement and that works are to be confirmed. This is accepted but the Highway works must be determined when access is considered at reserved matters stage, which should be at the first reserved matters stage.

3.2 The same applies in relation to the proposed schedule, this will need to be provided at the first reserved matters stage.

*Footpath/Cycleway Enhancements on Vastern Road/Caversham Road*

The suggested S106 heads of terms have identified a clause relating to Footpath/Cycleway Enhancements on Vastern Road / Caversham Road with the proposed wording:

To safeguard the land potentially required for RBC's footpath and cycleway improvements from development (area of land to be defined by a plan) and if required transfer this area of land to RBC free of charge.

Given that the extent of this land cannot be agreed until access is determined the Highway Authority are content that the extent of land to be transferred until reserved matters stage when access is considered.

*Car Parking, restrictions on parking permits, provision of car club spaces*

6.3 The car club strategy should ensure that the car club is funded for a minimum of 5 years and includes the provision of two vehicles.

*Travel Plan and Monitoring*

7.2 / 7.3 The residential travel plan should be submitted to and approved within 5 months of the first occupation of each phase.

7.4 The residential travel plan should be monitored for a period of 5 years after the final phase has been delivered.

A travel plan will also be required for any proposed office use and this will again need to be submitted within 5 months of first occupation but it will need to be monitored for the lifetime of the development.

*S106 for the underpass*

The underpass works have been subject to an initial feasibility assessment and includes various options all of which equate to a cost in excess of £200k. The works entail removal of the existing roof structure with replacement at a higher level to facilitate cycle movements within the underpass. The improvements to the underpass are simply a case of providing suitable access in much the same way as you would commonly expect for motor vehicles - except in this case the focus is on sustainable modes. This is necessary and site specific.

It is the Highway Authorities view that the railway represents a barrier to north-south movement and effectively blocks cyclists from travelling to and from the south, this would include future residents, staff and customers of the development. Having reviewed the latest Transport Assessment the proposal includes a provision of an additional 724 cycle movements and although not all of these would utilise the underpass it is anticipated that the majority would do so.

Please find attached the 2019 cordon data for pedestrian cycle movements and the classified count data, which includes the additional on carriageway cycle data for Trooper Potts Way. This combined data confirms that there are currently 612 cycle movements in and around Trooper Potts Way with the vast majority likely to be utilising the underpass. Given that the proposal is expected to generate over double the amount of cycle movements above this baseline flow the development should contribute £200k towards the proposed improvements to facilitate cycle movements through the underpass.

*S106 towards the Vastern Road crossing*

The proposed development will be required through planning policy to provide a section of the direct route between Reading Station and the River Thames, which will require an additional crossing facility on Vastern Road. The proposed development as stated above will generate a provision of 724 cycle trips a day as well as 7318 pedestrian trips. A proportion of these will wish to travel north to the River Thames, Christchurch Meadows and further afield into Caversham. As such the proposed development should contribute £75,000 towards the delivery of the crossing.

#### Conditions

Subject to the revised plan referenced above being submitted illustrating / confirming access from the adjacent development the Highway Authority have no objections subject to the following conditions.

#### PHASING

Before submission of all reserved matters pursuant to Condition 2, a phasing strategy for the comprehensive approach to the sub-area of the CR11 allocation based on the approved parameters plans shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Phasing Strategy will define:

- i) The development to be delivered within each sub-phase of the approved development;
- ii) Timescales;
- iii) Details of the coordination of access and junction infrastructure delivery including triggers for delivery and the arrangements to prevent interruption of delivery across sub-phase and phase boundaries within the CR11E allocation.

The information to be provided shall include the following onsite access infrastructure:

- a. The coordinated delivery of primary and secondary roads within the CR11E allocation;
- b. Improvements to existing highways including new/improved access junctions, crossings, station underpass and upgraded pedestrian and cycling infrastructure;
- c. Footpath and cycle links within the site and connecting to the external network;
- d. Coordinated means of treatment of hard surfaces areas for crossover between north-south spine road and east west vehicular route and the north station square.

The development to be delivered under i) shall be carried out in accordance with the approved Phasing Strategy.

REASON: To ensure comprehensive planning of the site within the CR11E Strategic Development Location, to ensure the timely delivery of facilities and services and to protect the amenity of the area in accordance with XXXX

#### DETAILS OF ACCESS

No development of each phase shall commence on site until full details of the vehicle access and egress serving the development in accordance with condition XXXX (phasing condition) has been submitted to an approved in writing by

the Local Planning Authority. The vehicle access shall thereafter be constructed in accordance with the approved details prior to first occupation.

REASON: In the interests of road safety in accordance with Policy TR1 and TR3 of the Reading Local Plan 2019.

#### Car Parking

The reserved matters for any phase of the development shall include details of car parking in accordance with the council policies at the time of the reserved matters application and the relevant approved parameter plans and/or design code for that phase and the development site as a whole.

No building shall be occupied until the vehicular accesses, driveways, parking and turning areas to serve it have been provided in accordance with the approved details.

#### Servicing

The reserved matters for any phase of the development shall include details of servicing and access arrangements in accordance with the council policies at the time of the reserved matters application and the relevant approved parameter plans and/or design code for that phase and the development site as a whole. No building shall be occupied until the vehicular accesses, turning and servicing areas to serve it have been provided in accordance with the approved details.

C2 CONSTRUCTION METHOD STATEMENT (TO BE SUBMITTED)

DC10 ACCESS CLOSURE WITH REINSTATEMENT

DC20 PARKING PERMITS 1

DC21 PARKING PERMITS 2

DC24 EV CHARGING POINTS

**Darren Cook**

**Transport Development Control Manager**