

Memo

To: Brian Conlon, Planning

From: Sarah Hanson, Natural Environment Officer, Planning

CC: Lynne Reynolds (Leisure); GS Ecology

Date: 28 August 2019

Re: Consultation on a Pre-Application

Application No: 190513

Address: Reading Station Retail Park, Reading

With reference to the Design & Access Statement dated May 2019:

The site is subject to TPO 3/06 which includes 7 individual trees on the Vastern Road and Caversham Road frontage. This is disappointingly not mentioned in the DAS hence trees have not been identified as a constraint. This is not an acceptable approach, particularly where a TPO exists. The applicant should have a tree survey carried out to assess the trees and should aim to retain these, hence design the development around them.

The TPO reflects the importance on trees on the frontages of these two main routes; Vastern Road being a ‘treed corridor’ as defined in our adopted Tree Strategy and the site being within a 10% of less canopy cover area, i.e. tree retention and planting is a priority. As per the comments from Leisure, large canopy tree planting is required, particularly around the perimeter as has been requested on the adjacent site. Large canopy trees have multiple benefits, on this site softening and screening will be important given the residential properties opposite and pollution filtering on this main route is a necessity.

I note that space has been provided on the Caversham Road/Vastern Road corner (north and west of Block A) for tree planting, however I would suggest that the benefit of this is much reduced by the building being proposed right up to the boundary on that corner. Wholly insufficient space has been provided for tree planting on the Vastern Road frontage of Blocks B & C, so much so that the plan on the last page of the DAS indicated that the majority of the proposed trees adjacent to Block C will be outside the red line of the site? - clarification will be required on that:



On the Vastern Road side of the site, there is currently a benefical green buffer strip - the verge appears to be under RBC ownership so I assume will be retained - with existing (TPO) tree planting having space to grow over the car park:



Any future development should include similar provision by allowing a green buffer set back.

If/when an application is submitted, it will be expected that the above will be addressed and demonstration of the provision of sufficeint rooting environment for all trees be given. It will also be important to consider service routes at an early stage to avoid conflict with existing (if retained) and proposed tree planting.

On a positive note, green roofs have been incorporated and, it appears, podium planting as well as planting at ground level; albeit it is difficult to determine on the current submission the areas for private amenity and those that are effectively just walkways through the site. I also note that the layout provides a north-south link as required by the RCAAP.

Green roofs help to boost the biodiversity provision on the site - other provisions may be required such bat and bird boxes/bricks and I assume GS ecology have been consulted to give advice.

I note, in relation to light assessment, that the applicant appears to have concluded that the blocking of sunlight/daylight to the Vastern Road properties is acceptable on the basis that they 'currently enjoy a very high level of sunlight and daylight' in this 'underdeveloped urban location'. I expect you will be considering this. We will also need assessment of sunlight/daylight levels to any private amenity space on the site.

In conclusion the current layout is not acceptable and further consideration is required to allow appropriate tree planting provision on the perimeter.