

DELEGATED PLANNING APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Abbey

App Ref: 230211/FUL

Address: Abbey Gardens, 4-6 Abbey Street, Reading, RG1 3BA

Proposals: New glazed entrance and external step platform lift.

Case Officer: Nathalie Weekes

Date received (valid from): 20 February 2023

Target Decision date: 17 April 2023

1. SITE DESCRIPTION

The proposal site comprises of a large office block, next to the River Kennet in Reading town centre. 4-6 Abbey Gardens is a large seven storey office block with mostly glass window exterior, supported by concrete blocks.

The site is in a green link area, on an area of contaminated land and archaeological potential EN2. The location of the proposed lift is close to the Abbey Ruins and ancient scheduled monument.

Site visit date: 23/03/2023

Site visit photos:



2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The proposal is to improve accessibility and access for disabled persons into the building to the north side of Abbey Gardens, with a new glazed entrance and external Stannah lowriser step platform lift. The lift is designed to meet the requirements of the Equality Act, Part M of the Building Regulations which cover the requirements for

buildings to provide ease of access and use and BS8300:2018 (Parts 1 & 2) for the code of practice covering the design of an accessible and inclusive internal and external built environment and are UKCA marked and comply with BS 6440:2011, the British Standard for Powered Lifting Platforms.

No invasive ground works will be required for the platform lift as the proposed lift will sit on the current pavement with minimal ground works to widen the existing raised platform entrance by approximately 300mm, to support a glass balustrade.

Plans considered

3103 P01 Location Plan

3103 GF_SDOS P01 Existing ground floor

3103 GF_NB_EXEP2 P02 Existing entrance plan

3103 GF_EXEE P02 Existing entrance elevation

3103 GF_PSDOS P01 Proposed ground floor

3103 GF_NBPLS C02 Lift section view ground floor

3103 GF_NBPLP_1 C03 Lift plan view ground floor

3103 GF_NBPLE_1 C03 Proposed North block new entrance screen & lift front elevation

C3103 Design information/Design access statement

CIL

As received 20 February 2023

3103 Heritage statement, Abbey Gardens North Block – accessible entrance

As received 16 March 2023

3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

There have been numerous planning applications at the site.

4. CONSULTATIONS

A site notice was displayed, an advert placed in the local newspaper and the following addresses were consulted by letter.

Eastgate Court, 195-205 High Street, Guildford, GU1 3EH

Abbots House, Abbey Street, Reading, Berks, RG1 3DT

No letters of representation have been received.

Berkshire Archaeology – There are no archaeological objections to the proposal. The site is within an area of extremely high archaeological significance, however due to previous ground disturbance at the site, a watching brief would not be required.

Accessibility Officer – requested that Part M buildings regulations are met and that the lift is maintained to be in working order.

RBC Conservation and Urban Design officer – No comments received at the time of writing the report. *The Case officer will assess the impact on the nearby ancient monument and listed structures and on the historic environment.*

Historic England – In this case Historic England is not offering advice and suggests that views are sought from specialist conservation and archaeological advisers.

Equality Act 2010:

In determining this application the Council is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. However, there is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that the protected groups identified by the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular planning application. Therefore in terms of the key equalities protected characteristics it is considered there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the development.

5. LEGAL AND PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy framework (NPPF) - among them the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'. The following local and national planning policy and guidance is relevant to this application:

National Policy and Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework
National Planning Practice Guidance

Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

CC6: ACCESSIBILITY AND THE INTENSITY OF DEVELOPMENT

CC7: DESIGN AND THE PUBLIC REALM

CC8: SAFEGUARDING AMENITY

EN1: PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

EN2: AREAS OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE

EN6: NEW DEVELOPMENT IN A HISTORIC CONTEXT

EN14: TREES, HEDGES AND WOODLAND

TR3: ACCESS, TRAFFIC AND HIGHWAY-RELATED MATTERS

CR2: DESIGN IN CENTRAL READING

CR3: PUBLIC REALM IN CENTRAL READING

APPRAISAL

Design and access, heritage and accessibility

The entrance lift is a very minor proposal which is considered to compliment the building and appearance of the 4-6 Abbey Gardens and does not harm the surrounding area due to the limited scale and nature of the proposal.

The proposed development is not considered to detract from the historic character of the Abbey ruins and listed buildings in the vicinity of the proposed pedestrian lift. Berkshire Archaeology has no objections to the proposed works. The Local Authority has assessed the impact of the works, does not consider the proposal to result in any harm and has discharged their duties under the relevant section of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

It is important that the proposed lift is maintained following its installation to provide ongoing access to the building to comply with Part M building regulations and the relevant BS standards.

The proposed works are not considered to impact pedestrians or road users, a permit may be required for any works that impact a public footpath.

Recommendation
GRANT