



Town Planning Bureau

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COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Site: 138-144 Friar Street, Reading, RG1 1EX (QVS2)
Application by: The National Pub Portfolio Ltd
(Thackery Estates)
Lead Consultant: Mr Paul S Bottomley
Date: 12th August 2022
Our Ref: URB-482e-SCI-1

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 This Statement of Community Involvement (“SCI”) provides an overview the consultation process undertaken by the Thackeray Estates group comprises supporting information in respect of a planning application for the development as described at para 1.2 below.

- Applicant: The National Pub Portfolio Ltd (“the Applicant”) - owned by the Thackeray Estates
- Site: 138-144 Friar Street, Reading RG1 1EX (“the site”) - also referred to as QVS2.
- LPA: Reading Borough Council (“the Council”).

Proposal

1.2 Planning permission and listed building consent is sought for

Redevelopment of site comprising demolition of 138 to 143 Friar Street, the partial retention of The Bugle Public House (144 Friar Street), the and the erection of a ground, mezzanine and 1st to 6th floor (7 storey) hotel building with 163 bedspaces, with ancillary ground floor food and beverage.

1.3 In summary, the proposals comprise:

- The demolition of 138-143 Friar Street.
- Retention of front main body of the Bugle and part face retention of side elevation.
- Development of a 163-bedroom hotel and associated food and beverage offering.

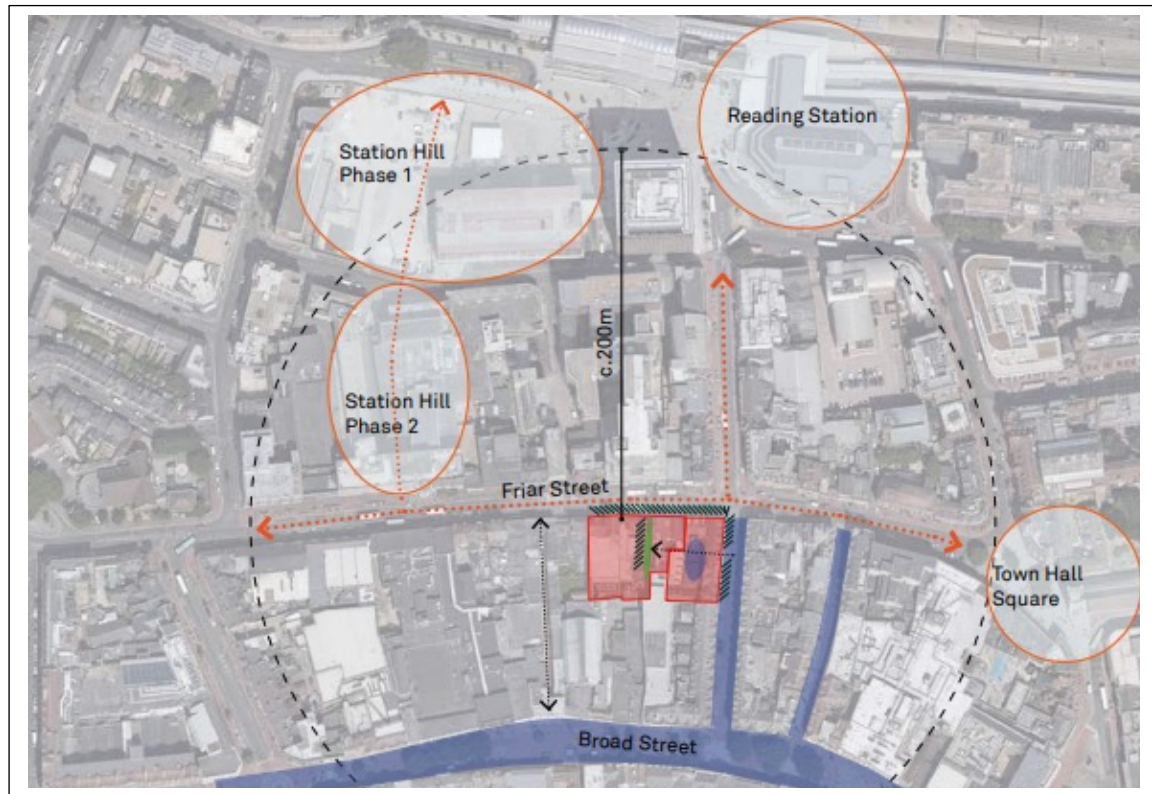
Site Context

1.4 The QVS2 site is a prominent plot located on Friar Street, with significant frontage onto the street, adjacent to the approved QVS1. Friar Street is traffic controlled with access to busses, taxis and permit holders only during the day.

1.5 The Site comprises a few premises with retail uses and a pub, The Bugle, at ground floor level with other ancillary uses (although vacant) at first floor level and above. Friar Street is a key primary retail street within the town centre and is in a highly accessible location, approximately 250m from Reading Railway Station to the north.

1.6 The site comprises the following distinct buildings:

- 138-141 Friar Street - this unit comprises a bar (formerly A4) in sui generis use.
- 142-143 Friar Street - this unit comprises and retail Class E(a) (Eyesight opticians) at ground floor with vacant floors above.
- 144 Friar Street - the Bugle building is a non-designated heritage asset, which is vacant, and comprises a public house (formerly A4) in sui generis use. For note, the upper floor is ancillary to the ground floor use with no clear separation of the uses.



Benefits of the Proposal

- 1.7 The primary benefits for Reading as a town are:
- 1.8 In addition to heritage benefits, the NPPF requires an assessment of the balance of harm against other public benefits arising from development proposals. It is clear that the repair, reinstatement and enhancement of heritage assets are in themselves of public benefit, but the proposals will also deliver the following public benefits:
- Repair and retention of the Bugle building and the architectural detailing that contributes to its significance.
 - Visual improvement to these prominent retail streets with enhanced frontages, signage and lighting, respectful to Friar Street
 - Introduction of hotel use, providing visitor accommodation, supporting the needs of, and attracting, working professionals and visitors to Reading, as well as assisting in remedying an identified under-provision.
 - Significant investment in the town centre which includes the associated local economy boost as a consequence of constructing the building.
 - Job creation during construction.
 - Job creation during operation.
 - Provision of a town centre destination that will attract visitors, shoppers and workers to this part of the town centre, enhancing the activity, vitality and viability of this part of the centre.
 - The proposals will arrest the decline of Friar Street and support and bolster the Reading economy, which is of particular importance at this current time and will play an important role in the post-Covid19 recovery of the town centre.

- 1.9 The scheme will be delivered by the Applicant's hotel partner Jury's Inn providing a much-needed high quality hotel. The vision for QVS1 and QVS2 was first presented to the Council in November 2019 and has been development in conjunction with officers and key stakeholders. Working together the scheme has evolved and will realise a shared vision and we hope will act as a catalyst for the further regeneration of Friar Street and enhancement of the public realm. The site is highly sustainable and accessible and the proposals are acceptable in planning terms that will deliver significant public benefits.
- 1.10 The scheme has built on the overwhelming positive feedback and support for QVS1.

2.0 Consultation Policy Context

NPPF

- 2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework 2018 ("NPPF") states:

"Applicants will be expected to work closely with those directly affected by their proposals to evolve designs that take account of the views of the community. Proposals that can demonstrate this in developing design of the new development should be looked on more favourably."

Reading BC

- 2.2 The Council has adopted a Statement of Community Involvement (2014) that sets out the Council's policy for involving communities in the preparation of planning proposals. It states:

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.

3.0 Engagement

Engagement

- 3.1 The scheme builds on the vision shared with the Council in November 2019 to redevelop both QVS1 and QVS2 as a new hotel quarter in the town centre.
- 3.2 The mass, bulk and height of the proposed building has been an iterative process, which the Applicant has worked with key stakeholders and the Council's planning team to present the scheme as submitted. The process comprised:
 - 3.3 Presentation of concept to senior officers (September 2021).
 - 3.4 Agreed key viewpoints with officers (October 2021)
 - 3.5 Presented massing analysis (December 2021)
 - 3.6 Presented concept and massing to Reading Civic & CAAC (January 2022)
 - 3.7 Pre-App Meeting with Officers (January 2022) (LPA ref: 211901/PREAPP)
 - 3.8 Refined massing and height submission (review of Bugle retention) (February 2022)
 - 3.9 Pre-App Meetings with Officers (February 2022)
 - 3.10 Pre-App Addendum (March 2022)
 - 3.11 Pre-App Meetings with Officers (March 2022)
 - 3.12 Presented to Reading Civic & CAAC (March 2022).
 - 3.13 Pre-App responses issued (2 x April 2022)
 - 3.14 Pre-App presentation at Council Offices (April 2022)
 - 3.15 Presented to Reading Civic & CAAC (April 2022)
 - 3.16 Public Consultation Event (June 2002)
 - 3.17 Presented to Reading Design Review Panel (May 2022)
 - 3.18 Engagement with senior officers (June 2022).
 - 3.19 Review local listing (July 2022)
 - 3.20 Further refinement and presentation to Officers (July 2022).

- 3.21 Concept: Presentation of concept to senior officers - September 2021.
- 3.22 Further, Reading Civic Society have circulated and posted on local forums and websites including Instagram and <https://readingonthames.com>.
- 3.23 Website Consultation: a website to inform has been distributed to local amenities group and also posted on relevant social media - <https://queenvictoriastreet.co.uk/>

- 3.24 Brochure Consultation: a brochure has been posted to relevant local neighbours and is available to be sent out at request.

- 3.25 Poster Consultation: a poster has been posted on site

Consultation Area

- 3.26 To understand the context of the site, please see the aerial photograph below.

Scheme Consultation

Public Engagement

- 3.27 In these changing times, as we have been cautious to unable to directly engage face-to-face at times, we needed to consider how we can reach and access relevant people and groups, including those without digital access. However, the primary focus has been digital methods, which we hope has ensured all voices have been heard.

- 3.28 We have made use of existing networks in place, with particularly acknowledgement to the help Mr Bennett of Reading Civic Society has provided.

1 to 15 Queen Victoria Street & 145 to 148 Friar Street (QVS1) & 138 to 144 Fair Street (QVS2)

We write to inform you of our two mixed use redevelopment schemes comprising:

QVS1 = Mixed Use redevelopment retail, market square and aparthotel
QVS2 = New purpose built 160 bedroom 4* hotel

The vision is to create a vibrant mixed use development in this key town centre location while protecting one of the key heritage assets of Reading for future generations. The scheme will provide a market square with enhanced retail, and visitor accommodation in the form of an aparthotel and a 4* hotel.



REVITALISED HIGH STREET
The site offers massive potential to be a destination, both as a retail hub as well as offering town centre visitor accommodation. New high quality shopfronts with consistent signage will ensure a cohesive facade and create a destination identity.
A new Market Square will maximise optimum use of the space to the rear providing its own destination and reimagining the retail experience with a mix of independent retail units.
The upper floors provide the opportunity for urban visitor accommodation.

RETAIL DESTINATION
A new Market Square will make optimum use of the space to the rear providing its own destination and reimagining the retail experience.
The Market Square will be connected to both Queen Victoria Street and Fair Street creating a retail hub and adding on two main street frontages. Some retail units will have dual aspect providing further connectivity to the Market Square behind. The square will be adaptable to multi-function uses such as community events, live screen for sporting occasions and themed markets.



RESTORATION
Central to the proposals is the restoration and re-use of the listed buildings. The buildings are in a state of disrepair and continue to deteriorate as much of the upper floors remain vacant.
The careful and much needed restoration of the main facades, cleaning and repair of the elaborate terracotta and removal of scaffold supports will be carried out in meticulous fashion to ensure this building is retained for future generations.
A series of well designed, appropriate shop fronts and signage can also be provided for the entirety of the street as has been seen in many towns with significant heritage assets.

VISITOR ACCOMMODATION
The scheme will provide 4* hotel for business and leisure travellers in the heart of Reading Town Centre in a high quality modern hotel operated by an international hotel brand.
The hotel will provide circa 160 bedrooms with a ground floor food & beverage offering.
The hotel will create employment opportunities as well as generating investment in the town centre.



For further information or to comments you can contact us on at: www.queenvictoriastreet.co.uk

Securing a beautiful listed building...

...for the future of Reading

[Further Public Engagement](#)

3.29 The methods used have been:

- Advertised on site - 'poster' that are graphical as opposed text based have been displayed on site and were affixed by a local contact.
- Newsletter - a brochure of the proposal has been distributed locally.
- Website / Social Media - provided a general overview of the proposal, notify people of website and encouraging comments.
- Engagement with established organisations/ networks, such as CAAC / Civic Society.
- Webinar presentation / Q&A online - the digital media event allows stakeholders to join and ask questions.
- Direct engagement - target relevant groups
- Engagement of amenity groups.
- Email consultation to take into account comments.
- Local press.
- Offer to speak to people without digital access via telephone, but this was not taken up.

[Response - Design Review Panel](#)

3.30 The scheme was presented to Reading's Design Review Panel, the response was really positive and is summarised as:

The proposals have the potential to provide a significant townscape benefit to this key intersection at the heart of Reading. The overall vertical hierarchy applied to the scheme is sound, with a public / civic base of 2 storeys and then functional accommodation above. The challenge that remains to be addressed is how can The Bugle be retained as more than just a shell? It's historic volume, entrance and qualities should be respected and referenced in the proposals.

The renewal of 141 - 148 Friar Street could act as a valuable catalyst to support wider improvements within this part of the Town Centre.

Response - Public

- 3.31 Reading Civic Society & CAAC: feedback has been positive and some very constructive advice, based on local knowledge was provided and all points raised, we have taken fully into account and the scheme has been improved to take account of their comments. In summary, the amenity societies comments have been positive very pleased retaining the Bugle in-situ, including interior beams. It was also confirmed the design looks good, does not lose sense of place. We were asked about the demolition of the Fife Court elevation, which a proportion is being retained. In summary, the views were positive and advised the Applicant that the scheme will improve the use of buildings in your ownership and to replace with something far better those which are contributing little to the streetscape of Friar Street (the modern block). Appendix 2.
- 3.32 Councillors: we engaged with Local Ward Councillors, those 'able' to pass comments were positive.
- 3.33 Public Comments: The feedback has been positive, the comments from the local community are also very positive - if regard is had to Appendix 1 the comments received electronically, these are tabulated.
- 3.34 Public Meeting: The Applicant presented the scheme via virtual public meeting, which was attended by over 20 members of the public. In summary, the general tone has been that the scheme would add to the vitality of the town centre and would be welcomed, but regard to the preservation of the Bugle is essential - for note the Bugle is retained.
- 3.35 Local Residents: the town centre site has limited the number of relevant stakeholders that have been inclined to comment, however, the wider residents of Reading have been positive in their responses.
- 3.36 Comments Received: a summary of the comments received is attached, we have not divulged any details of those commenting but the summary is at Appendix 1.

4.0 Conclusion

- 4.1 The consultation by the Applicant has been an iterative process, which has engaged with local groups via modern technology in a very proactive and detailed manner, which has fulfilled the requirements of both national policy and Reading BC's policy. We have therefore fulfilled the requirements of the Council and those laid out in The Localism Act 2011.

- 4.2 The engagement with key stakeholders has been a very important and beneficial exercise, we have sought to integrate the comments at all stages including at times when slightly different to officers and will continue to adjust, where necessary the scheme. In most cases, this has directly influenced the scheme that has evolved to this day.
- 4.3 As the application progresses through the planning system, we will continue to engage with stakeholders. If the Council are minded to grant consent, again we will continue to work with stakeholder post decision and during construction.
- 4.4 The Applicant is committed developing a scheme for the residents and businesses of Reading and those visiting the town.
- 4.5 The feedback to date has been overwhelming positive and level of support has been beyond the Applicant's expectations. The feedback is encouraging the speedy delivery of the scheme.
- 4.6 In summary, the engagement found that the scheme presented is a positive benefit that on the feedback received, is supported by the local community and key stakeholders.

Appendix 1

Below are the comments received during the process via email:

Looks good, restore a tired part of Reading
Thank you for including me in your zoom call. It was interesting. I think you are making a great effort to please the people of Reading, well done. Me I like Queen Victoria Street, it is one of my favorites, and I don't like change so hard to please. But if anyone makes a good job of it, I am sure it will be your company, good luck.

Appendix 2

Design Approach
The proposals have the potential to provide a significant townscape benefit to this key intersection at the heart of Reading. The overall vertical hierarchy applied to the scheme is sound, with a public / civic base of 2 storeys and then functional accommodation above. The challenge that remains to be addressed is how can The Bugle be retained as more than just a shell? It's historic volume, entrance and qualities should be respected and referenced in the proposals.
Detailing
The applicant has drawn strong reference to Reading's rich brick heritage, the Panel applaud the integration of detail and the limited diversity of palette applied to the proposals. The Panel request detailed & dimensioned bay elevations, sections and plans are provided to ensure sufficient allowance is available to deliver the aesthetic shown. At present we fear the external walls to Friar Street do not allow enough depth for the articulation / reveal steps shown.
Any further comments
Whilst outside the scope of the review, the proposals for 145 – 146 Friar Street show great promise. The renewal of 141 – 148 Friar Street could act as a valuable catalyst to support wider improvements within this part of the Town Centre. We request this scheme is returned to Panel 1 as it progresses to application stage.

Date: 14.07.22

Signed



On behalf of the Reading Design Review Panel



EXPLORE WHAT'S ON READING

Just announced

Queen Victoria Place II Reading, so what happens next?

Is time up for the Bugle & WH Smiths on Friar Street?

Mon 27 Jun, 8:26 - Thu 30 Jun, 9:30

BOOK NOW



DETAILS



Do join Reading Civic Society on 30 June at 10 am when it hosts an on line presentation from the site owners (Thackeray Group) to hear more about their ideas for the rear of W H Smiths building, the Bugle Pub, closed for some time, and the modern building next door.

Their proposals will extend their vision for the already approved restoration and reimagination of their corner site (Queen Victoria Street and Friar Street) which they have called Queen Victoria Place 1. This is their plan to extend the scheme but with the same vision to significantly improve the long neglected buildings on Friar Street.

The Thackeray Group is a property development and investment company with holdings around the UK. It owns 4 corner blocks in Reading including this group at the corner of

BOOK NOW

Queen Victoria St and Friar Street. <https://thackerayestates.com/developments>

In March 2021 we held a public consultation with the company about their plan to restore the GII Listed buildings, remove old and low buildings at the back, create a new Market Place with retail elements and potential for community uses, establish a 40+ bed Aparthotel, establish new consistent shop fronts ready for new independent retail, restaurant and cafe. Planning Application No 210223 .

The scheme received planning consent quickly and urgent restoration work has already started. Further information may be found [Queen Victoria Place website](#)

Early this year Reading Civic Society was in discussion with Thackeray Group about their vision to extend the scheme to include the Art Deco rear of W H Smiths, the Bugle pub which closed during the pandemic and the modern building beyond that.

This on line consultation has been arranged for the company to share their proposals and seek your feedback.

The presenters, Paul Bottomley of the Town Planning Bureau and one of his colleagues , will give an overview of the scheme. There will be the opportunity to ask questions of the presenters.

This event is open to all.

Please book on Eventbrite where you will find the ZOOM link.

The details of the ZOOM event the event will start at 10:00 am , please join from 9:45am.

We will encourage you give feedback to the company after the event

Also please let Richard Bennett know your reactions as this will assist the Reading Civic Society & the CAAC to formulate their comments (email: Bennettbaker@msn.com)

BOOK NOW

