

Planning Statement – Roof Terrace

R+, Reading

July 2022

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Client
Oval Properties 1601 Limited

Our reference
OVAS3004

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared by Turley on behalf of Oval Properties 1601 Limited, in support of an application for full planning permission for the incorporation of a roof terrace at R+, Reading.
- 1.2 This Planning Statement supports the application and provides additional information on the scheme in the context of the adopted development plan and other material considerations. It is supported by the following information:
- Application Forms and Certificates of Ownership;
 - Application Fee; and
 - Application Plans.
- 1.3 The remainder of this Planning Statement is structured as follows:
- **Section Two** – Site and Surrounding Area;
 - **Section Three** – Proposed Development;
 - **Section Four** – Planning Policy Framework;
 - **Section Five** – Planning Assessment; and
 - **Section Six** – Conclusion.
- 1.4 This Statement explains the purpose of the planning application and analyses its compliance with planning policy.

2. Site and Surrounding Area

The Application Site and Surrounding Area

- 2.1 The application site is located within Reading City Centre and is located within the curtilage of the R+ Reading building. The R+ Building is boarded by Blagrove Street to the south, Valpy Street to the east and Forbury Road to the western boundary.
- 2.2 In total, R+ is comprised of eight floors. The basement is occupied by a car park and locker room; floors 2-7 are primarily utilised as office spaces; and there is access to the roof which encompasses a green roof, photovoltaic panels and planting areas.
- 2.3 Vehicular access to the application site is taken from Forbury Road which leads to the car park on the basement level. The main pedestrian access point to the building is positioned along the north-east boundary where Blagrove Street and Forbury Road converge.

Statutory Designations

- 2.4 The site is subject to the following statutory designations:
- The site is situated in Flood Zone 1;
 - An area of archaeological potential;
 - Within the Abbey Quarter; and
 - Within the boundary of Reading's Central Area
- 2.5 The site has no other statutory designations

Planning History

- 2.6 This section of the Planning Statement summarises the key planning submissions relevant to the determination of this planning application:
- 10/00989/FUL – Demolition of existing office building and construction of new 6-storey office building with associated basement car park and external works – Approved 30th November 2010
 - 140109 - Non material amendment to planning permission 101300 to include alteration to ground floor level, alteration to reception design to include public art, alteration of ratio of glazing on façades and courtyard elevation, introduction of polished concrete at base and interface to adjoining buildings, enlargement of brown roof at roof level and car parking – Approved 12th March 2014
 - 140540 - Variation of condition 28 of planning application 140109. Addition of plant material to roof and external alterations. Approved 29th August 2014.

- 141927 - Non-material change to planning permission 140540 VARIAT for demolition of existing office building and construction of new 6- storey office building with associated basement car park and external works to vary condition 28 of permission 10/00989/FUL. Approved 20th February 2015.
- 151213/NMC - Non-material amendment to planning permission 101300 relating to alterations to public artwork. Approved 24th August 2015
- 151948 - Non-material amendments to planning permission 101300 including: changes in location of photovoltaics, green roofs, roof level louvre doors, basement cycle storage & gas room ; alterations to terrace balustrades and doors, entrance steps, ground floor pass door, goods lift entrance door; omission of basement smoke extract room, and associated works. Approved 27th November 2015.

3. The Proposed Development

- 3.1 This section of the Planning Statement summarises the development proposals for which planning permission is sought.

Description of Development

- 3.2 Full planning permission is sought for the following description of development:

“Use of the fifth floor roof area as a roof terrace”

Overview

- 3.3 The proposed development provides a roof terrace at the fifth floor for occupiers of the building.
- 3.4 It will be designed to designed to accommodate external amenity for the office at fifth floor, introducing green spaces, planters, meditation pods, bar corner, meeting pods, mini golf area and seating for the wellbeing of the tenants.
- 3.5 It will introduce a natural material palette with timber screens, corten looking planters, concrete benches together with a wildflower garden ensuring a welcoming outdoor area for the tenants.

4. Planning Policy Framework

- 4.1 This section of the Statement identifies the national, regional and local planning policies and guidance which are relevant to the consideration of the proposed development.

Planning Policy

- 4.2 The adopted development plan for Reading Borough Council comprises of the Local Plan Core Strategy (adopted November 2019)
- 4.3 The revised National Planning Policy Framework ('The Framework') was published in July 2021. This document sets out the Government's economic, environmental and social planning policies for England. The Framework covers a range of issues including sustainable development, building a strong, competitive economy, and achieving well-designed places.
- 4.4 The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) was published in 2014 and is updates on a regular basis as an online resource. It provides guidance to support the Framework, discussing individual topics in greater detail.

The Development Plan

- 4.5 Reading Borough Council's Local Plan was adopted in 2019 to assist in guiding development up to 2036.
- 4.6 The fundamental objective of the Local Plan is to set out where development will occur within the area until 2036, having regard to health, wellbeing and quality of life. Particular reference is made to the Council's declaration of a Climate Emergency in 2019 and how carbon neutrality can be achieved by 2030.
- 4.7 Accordingly, the Local Plan aims to *"strengthen the role of Reading as a Hub for Thames Valley, providing an accessible focus for the development of employment, housing, services and facilities, meeting the needs of residents, workers, visitors, those who study in Reading Borough, and the wider area."*
- 4.8 Paragraph 2.2.2 states that, as part of the Council's vision, *"the historic, built and natural environment of the Borough [will be maintained and enhanced] through investment and high quality design."*
- 4.9 Moreover, paragraph 2.2.2 also asserts that there is a need to *"ensure new development and existing areas are accessible and sustainable, in accordance with the sustainability appraisal objective, including reducing its effects on, and adapting to, climate change."*
- 4.10 The policies of the Core Strategy that are considered most relevant to the application are summarised in turn below.

- **Policy CC1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development.** This policy states that a positive approach to considering development proposals will be taken that reflect the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained within the NPPF. Where appropriate, the Council will work proactively with applicants jointly to find solutions which mean that proposals can be approved whenever possible.
- **Policy CC7: Design and Public Realm.** This policy states that development must demonstrate high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located.
- **Policy EN2: Areas of Archaeological Significance.** This policy stipulates that the Historic Environment Record should be consulted to identify and evaluate sites of archaeological significance. This requires an assessment of the archaeological impacts of development proposals to be submitted before the planning application is determined. Planning permission will not be granted in cases where the assessment of the archaeological impacts is inadequate.
- **Policy CR2: Design in Central Reading.** This policy specifies that development within central Reading should demonstrate:
 - (i) Development will build on and respect the existing grid layout structure of the central area, providing continuity and enclosure through appropriate relationships between buildings and spaces, and frontages that engage with the street at lower levels, and contributing towards enhanced ease of movement through and around the central area;
 - (ii) The architectural details and materials used in the central area should be high quality and respect the form and quality of the detailing and materials in areas local to the development site;
 - (iii) Development should be designed with consideration of adjacent development sites, and should not prevent or cause unreasonable burdens on the future development of those sites; and
 - (iv) Development and any associated public realm should contribute to the diversity of the central area, be capable of easy adaptation over time to meet changing circumstances, and be designed to enhance community safety.
- **Policy CR15: The Reading Abbey Quarter.** This policy states that the Council will pursue any opportunities to reinstate features of architectural or historical significance and remove features that harm the asset and its setting.

National Planning Policy Framework

- 4.11 The revised National Planning Policy Framework (the 'Framework') was adopted in July 2021. It sets out the Government's economic, environmental and social planning policies for England and requires the planning system to "*play an active role in guiding development towards sustainable solutions*" (paragraph 9). The Framework covers a

range of land issues including, transport, infrastructure, the economy, climate change and the natural and historic environments.

- 4.12 Paragraph 7 of the Framework sets out that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.
- 4.13 Paragraph 8 of the Framework reiterates that the planning system has three overarching objectives:
- **An economic objective** – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth;
 - **A social objective** – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and
 - **An environmental objective** – to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land.
- 4.14 Paragraph 10 states that at the heart of the framework is **a presumption in favour of sustainable development**.
- 4.15 Paragraph 11 sets out that, for decision-taking, this means:
- approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or
 - where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:
 - (i) the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or
 - (ii) any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.
- 4.16 Paragraph 38 of the Framework asks that Local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way.
- 4.17 Paragraph 126 of the Framework states that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable in communities.
- 4.18 Paragraph 130 asks that planning policies and decisions ensure that developments:

- (a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;
- (b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;
- (c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);
- (d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;
- (e) optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and
- (f) create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.

4.19 Paragraph 134 states that development that is not well designed should be refused, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes. Conversely, significant weight should be given to:

- (a) development which reflects local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes; and/or
- (b) outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability, or help raise the standard of design more generally in an area, so long as they fit in with the overall form and layout of their surroundings.

5. Planning Assessment

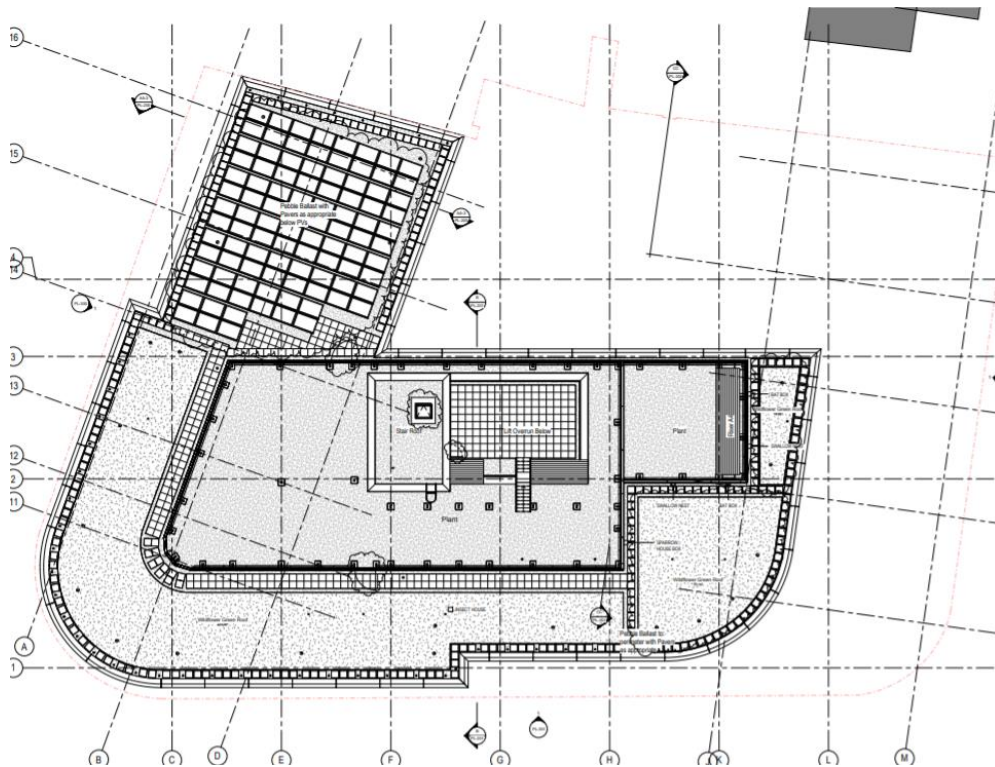
- 5.1 Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that development proposals are considered against the relevant provisions of the Development Plan, and other material considerations. Proposals are to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise
- 5.2 Accordingly, this section provides an appraisal of the proposed development against the relevant planning policy considerations and any other material considerations as set out in Section 4.

Principle of Development

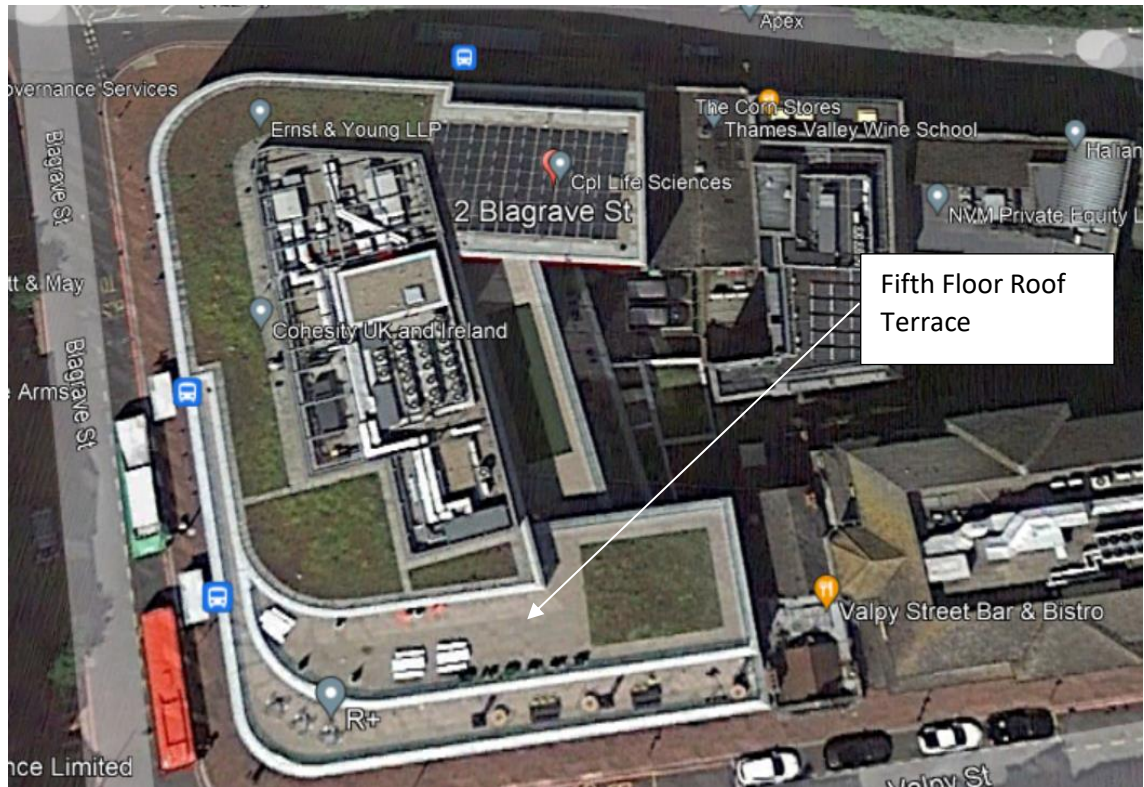
- 5.3 The NPPF states that to help achieve economic growth *“local planning authorities should plan proactively to meet the development needs of business and support and economy fit for the 21st century.”*
- 5.4 In pursuing sustainable development, the NPPF has an aim to make it easier for jobs to be created in cities, towns and villages.
- 5.5 The Site is located in Central Reading and the Office Core as defined on the Proposals Map, where the provision of employment development and development associated with such employment development is generally considered acceptable in principle.
- 5.6 Policy EM4 (Maintaining a Variety of Premises) seeks to ensure that there is a range of types and sizes of units should be present in the Borough, and proposals should maintain or enhance this range.
- 5.7 The main thrust of development plan policies is to protect the employment function of the site.
- 5.8 The owner of the building is looking at how they can make the building attractive to the market, specifically in light of competition from similar high grade offices in London and the South East and the facilities that they offer for their tenants.
- 5.9 **Appendix 3** outlines a selection of the ‘best in class’ offices in London and the south east. It is clear that all these offices offer roof terrace facilities. In order to be competitive in the market and attract the most high profile occupiers to the authority additional amenity facilities are needed as offices such as R +, Reading.
- 5.10 The proposals would:
- Assist in encouraging take up of the office space and in so doing provide a significant number of both full and part-time jobs, a benefit which both national and local policies support;
 - There is no evidence or reason why it would conflict in any way with, or compromise the day to day operations of any surrounding or nearby uses; and

- The layout can easily be adapted for this purpose.

- 5.11 The proposal does not involve the change in the use of the building or involve an increase or loss of existing floorspace. It simply seeks improvements to the usability of the building through the inclusion of a roof terrace and in turn competitive to the market.
- 5.12 In relation to the extant planning permission, condition 22 required details of green / brown roof to be submitted. The latest roof proposal was consented under non-material amendment 151948, an extract of Roof Plan PL_106_Rev D Roof Plan, is provided below:



- 5.13 The proposed use of the fifth floor roof terrace does not affect any of the green / brown roofs on the main roof as shown below.
- 5.14 Indeed, from looking at Google Earth it appears that the fifth floor roof terrace is already used on an informal basis as a break-out space. See extract of Google Earth below:



5.15 The proposed development is considered acceptable in principle.

Design and Residential Amenity

- 5.16 The design and appearance of the roof terrace has been carefully considered to respect the local context. The proposal does not change the use of the existing building and the materials selected are of high quality and the colours are sympathetic to the existing building. This accords with Policy CR2 Design in Central Reading and Policy CC7 Design and the Public Realm. This also aligns with the NPPF which emphasises that good design is essential for sustainable development and creating better places to live and work.
- 5.17 Policy CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity) sets out that development will not cause a detrimental impact on the living environment of existing residential properties or unacceptable living conditions for new residential properties. The site is not located within close proximity to residential properties and as a result there is considered to be no impact on the amenity of surrounding residents.
- 5.18 The supporting Design and Access Statement provides a number of visualisations, an extract of one of the images is provided below:



- 5.19 The proposed development forms part of the refurbishment and enhancement of the existing building improving its attractivity to the market. The choice of materials introduces a natural palette with offset slat timber fences, green walls, corten looking planters.
- 5.20 The proposed design is high quality and complements the buildings and the wider streetscape. It is considered to be in accordance with planning policy and satisfactorily overcome the constraints of the extant planning permission.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 This Planning Statement supports the submission of a full planning application for the incorporation of a roof terrace.
- 6.2 It is considered that the proposals as a whole complies with policies contained within the adopted Development Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 6.3 The proposed development seeks to incorporate a roof terrace at the fifth floor roof level to improve the amenity offer of the building and make it a competitive offer in the market place.
- 6.4 For the reasons set out within this Planning Statement, permission should be granted without delay.

Appendix 1: Comparable Office Schemes

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