

**Soane Point,
3-10 Market Square,
Reading,
RG1 2EG**

**Statement
of Community
Involvement**

On behalf of Tene Living (Reading) Ltd.

September 2022

Contents

1. Executive summary	2
2. Requirements of the consultation	3
2.1 Reading Borough Council's Statement of Community Involvement	3
2.2 Responding to social distancing	3
3. Responding to the consultation requirements	5
4. Public engagement.....	6
5. Political engagement.....	7
6. Summary of feedback	7
7. Conclusion	8
Appendix A – Newsletter	9
Appendix B – Distribution map	10
Appendix C – Online Presentation	11

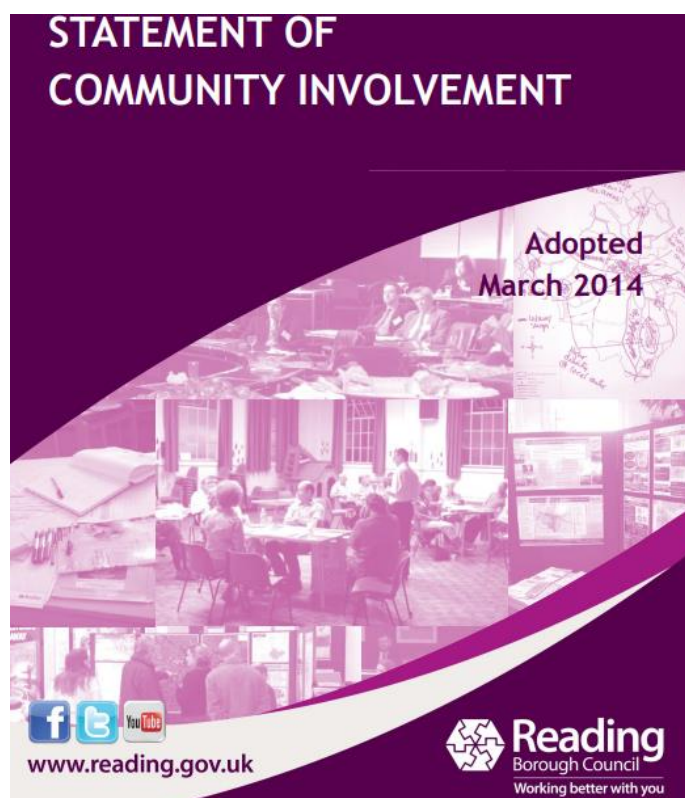


1. Executive summary

This Statement of Community Involvement sets out the strategy undertaken for consulting the local community regarding Tene Living (Reading) Ltd's proposal for an additional 38 apartments to an existing building, through an upward extensions and conversion of part of the ground floor, along with external improvement works to improve the appearance of the building.

This document demonstrates that the Applicant has actively informed and involved the local community in the plans, in accordance with both Reading Borough Council's (RBC) Statement of Community Involvement and the National Planning Policy Framework.

The Applicant is committed to stakeholder engagement and wanted to ensure the community was made aware of the proposed development prior to the submission of this planning application. This Statement of Community Involvement gives an overview of all consultation activity undertaken prior to the finalising the proposals and also explains how the plans have sought to respond to feedback provided throughout the process from the local community.



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

National Planning Policy Framework



2. Requirements of the consultation

Community involvement is at the forefront of national planning policy and is noted in the updated version of the adopted National Planning Policy Framework (July 2021). The NPPF states that; *“Early engagement has significant potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system for all parties. Good quality preapplication discussion enables better coordination between public and private resources and improved outcomes for the community.”* (para 4.39).

2.1 Reading Borough Council’s Statement of Community Involvement

RBC adopted its current Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) in March 2014. It applies to both the preparation of local planning policy documents and to planning applications. Section 7 of the SCI contains information with regard to what is expected of applicants by way of consultation and community engagement for significant planning applications. Section 7 requires developers to consult local communities and stakeholders before submitting their planning application. Section 7 states:

“Developers should arrange and provide at least one interactive involvement event designed to enable all consultees to attend, receive information, participate and feedback information on their area and its community and their views on possible development or other change in the area. Such an event might take the form of a place check, enquiry by design event, exhibition and workshop, a planning for real exercise, public meeting or similar, facilitated interactive event.

Developers or prospective applicants will be expected to prepare a public report of community involvement for submission with a significant or sensitive planning application detailing the extent of the community involvement exercise carried out, reporting all views and responses and indicating the actions or changes that have been carried out or that it is proposed are carried out in order to meet the views and concerns raised by the community involvement.”

2.2 Responding to social distancing

On 23 March 2020, the UK Government introduced guidance on social distancing in response to the Covid-19 public health crisis, banning all gatherings. Whilst these restrictions have begun to be lifted across 2021 and 2022, the team, working with the Applicant, adapted the consultation process to ensure that local residents and stakeholders would continue to have the opportunity to engage with the proposals without feeling uncomfortable about attending in-person events and risking the spread of COVID 19.



This included an online presentation and communication methods such as newsletters, providing an email address, telephone number and freepost address, ensuring that those without easy access to the internet could be involved with the process. The Applicant will continue to be led by Government guidelines.

**MINISTRY OF HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT – PLANNING UPDATE
NEWSLETTER 2020**

Following the introduction of social distancing measures, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (now the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities) released updated guidance for public consultations, which encouraged applicants to use online platforms rather than face-to-face events.

“We ask you to take an innovative approach, using all options available to you to continue your service. We recognise that face-to-face events and meetings may have to be cancelled but we encourage you to explore every opportunity to use technology to ensure that discussions and consultations can go ahead.”



3. Responding to the consultation requirements

The Applicant actively took on board the advice outlined in RBC's SCI to maximise levels of engagement with local residents and other stakeholders, ensuring those who wished to be involved in the engagement process were able to do so.

Encouraging engagement

A community newsletter was sent to 689 residential and business addresses closest to the site. The newsletter invited residents to take part in the online consultation by registering for the online presentation, and provided contact details, including a telephone number and email address for anyone who wished to contact the team. The online presentation and Q&A event allowed residents to get an overview of the plans and ask the project team any questions they had.

Hard copies of the consultation material could be posted to residents should they request further information. A copy of the newsletter can be viewed in Appendix 1, a map of the distribution area where the newsletters were delivered can be found in Appendix 2, and a screenshot of the online presentation can be found in Appendix 3.

Consultation for those without internet access

To ensure that all residents were able to engage with the consultation process, any residents who did not have access to or did not wish to access the online consultation were able to contact a member of the team to discuss the proposals directly.



4. Public engagement

The Applicant was keen to engage with the local community at an early opportunity in order to discuss the plans and respond to any concerns raised as early and practically as possible.

Newsletters were sent to 689 addresses to introduce the plans to the community. The newsletter encouraged residents to register for the online presentation and Q&A session which was being hosted by the project team and encouraged them to contact the project team should they have any questions.

An email was sent to the Reading Civic Society (RCS), notifying them of the upcoming consultation event. The email invited representatives from RCS to the consultation and also offered a separate meeting should they wish to engage on a one-to-one basis. The Applicant will continue to engage with RCS throughout the application process.

On Thursday 21 July, the Applicant, alongside other members of the project team, hosted a public meeting on Zoom which was attended by five local residents. The project team gave a detailed overview of the proposals and then answered questions submitted by the residents throughout the evening.

Response

In total there were five respondents to the consultation invitation, and they were registered for the event. Emails were sent to each of them with a link to the meeting and they were encouraged to submit questions to the team prior to the event, so we could cover those in the presentation. There would also be an opportunity for them to ask questions live as the meeting was taking place.

Following the consultation, we received a phone call from one of the attendees who expressed support for the application, particularly the opportunity for additional affordable units in a central location within Reading.

Tene Living is committed to continued engagement throughout the lifespan of the project and will be having a site visit in the future, which residents will be encouraged to register for and attend.



5. Political engagement

Prior to the newsletters being sent to local residents, Tene Living wanted to engage with key political stakeholders within RBC, including Abbey ward members, where the site is located. Emails were sent to Cllr Mohammed Ayub, Cllr Tony Page and Cllr Karen Rowland to notify them of the letter being sent to local residents and businesses. The email inviting these ward councillors to meet with the team to discuss the plans. An email was also sent to Cllr Micky Leng in his role as Lead Councillor for Planning and Assets, inviting him to meet with the team as well.

Follow up emails were sent to the above councillors prior to our online consultation, reminding them it was on and inviting them to join, or have a separate meeting.

6. Summary of feedback

Tene Living encouraged local residents and stakeholders to provide feedback on the proposals utilising a number of consultation methods. A summary of the feedback and the response from the project team is included below.

During the consultation event, several questions were asked of the project team, we have analysed the feedback and responded to the key themes that emerged. Following the consultation event, we received a phone call from a local resident who expressed his support for the application.

Key Themes		
<u>Parking</u> A respondent to the consultation asked if any car parking, or cycle parking will be provided. Applicant's response: Parking is already provided as part of the existing building and even with an uplift in flats, a policy compliant level of parking will be retained. Cycle parking will also be provided as part of the plans. The proximity of the site to the	<u>Affordable housing</u> A respondent to the consultation asked if any affordable housing will be provided. Applicant's response: Of the proposed new homes, 30% will be affordable, which works out at 11 homes. The mix of affordable offer will be Reading Affordable Rent and Shared Ownership. The importance of affordable housing in this location was	<u>Sustainability</u> Another respondent asked what measures were being taken to ensure the development would be sustainable. Applicant's response: The redevelopment will not require the building to be knocked down and built from scratch which will reduce carbon emissions during construction. It is also an all-electric scheme, therefore none of the units will



train station and other amenities makes the site an ideal location for those without cars to live as they can use more sustainable forms of transport.	highlighted to us in a phone call following the consultation event as one local resident expressed support for the plans and interest in moving into the building upon completion.	run off gas or oil which will decrease pollution. An increase of biodiversity which the application provides, including new greenery on the site, will also improve the sustainability of the site.
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7. Conclusion

The Applicant has initiated a positive and proactive community consultation strategy that has sought to engage with all local residents and stakeholders who wished to be involved in the process. The Applicant has continued to engage proactively and in accordance with the provisions of RBC's Statement of Community Involvement and the National Planning Policy Framework generally.

The Applicant has listened to and reflected upon the comments received throughout this consultation period and will continue to engage with and update the local community as the development progresses.

Engagement with the local community will continue following the submission of the planning application and The Applicant looks forward to continuing discussions in the interests of ensuring that the overall planning benefits of the proposed development are fully understood and that any remaining concerns are fully allayed, where possible.



Appendix A – Newsletter



Dear resident,

RE: Consultation on Soane Point, 3-10 Market Place

I am writing to you on behalf of Tene Living, who are keen to understand your views on the emerging proposals for new apartments at **Soane Point, 3-10 Market Place**, which is near to where you live. We have enclosed a plan which shows the site in relation to the surrounding area.

In May 2022 the Planning Inspectorate concluded that this site would be suitable for the conversion of the existing offices into new apartments. As part of the offer at Soane Point, Tene Living will provide flexible accommodation so that residents can change and grow within an established community as their circumstances change.

Following initial meetings with Reading Borough Council, Tene Living are exploring the possibility of delivering around an additional 40 units at Soane Point through an upward extension. As part of this, external refurbishment works being undertaken to the façade, with car parking to be provided on the basement and will be accessed from Abbey Square.

As residents who live near to the proposed new apartments, we appreciate that you may have specific questions about this application prior to submission. A meeting for near neighbours, which we propose to take place online, will enable residents to meet the team and ask questions.

When is the meeting?

To ensure that those who work are also able to engage with the proposals, we are proposing that the online meeting takes place on **Thursday 21 July, at 18:00.**

How can I register for the meeting?

Please email danielbarry@mpc.email or call 07443564142 to be added to the invite list. A link will then be sent to you closer to the time of the meeting.

Yours sincerely,

Daniel Barry
On behalf of Tene Living

Email: danielbarry@mpc.email

Phone: 07443564142



Appendix B – Distribution map



Appendix C – Online Presentation

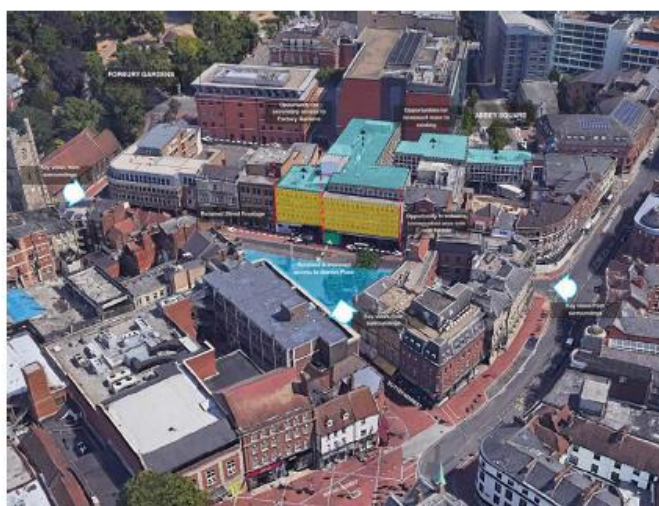
Soane Point, 3-10 Market Place, Reading

Consultation event
July 2022



The site

- ▲ The site is located 3-10 Market Place, Reading.
- ▲ The building was constructed in the 1960's in a brutalist style incorporating a concrete façade on Market Place.
- ▲ The building is structurally sound and has the capacity for extension.
- ▲ Refurbishment of the existing east and west facades would prove beneficial to Market Place and Abbey Square.
- ▲ A feature of the existing building is the open terraces at roof level. Offering attractive spaces with panoramic views across the town centre.



Soane Point, Reading – Tene Living (Reading) Ltd.
Statement of Community Involvement



The proposals

- ▲ Tene Living has permission to convert the existing building to residential. The current proposal seeks to add 38 additional apartments through an upward extension, along with external refurbishment works to improve the appearance of the building.
- ▲ The new proposed units vary in size from 1 bed 1 person flats to 3 bed 4 person flats. A mixture of public and private terraces have also been incorporated to provide residents with high quality outdoor space.
- ▲ These proposals will provide an affordable and flexible range of accommodation to attract people to live in the centre of Reading.



Key benefits



Beautiful new facade on Abbey Square and Market Place



38 new homes in central Reading



Enhancement of the existing retail offering



Sustainable development