

Planning Statement V2

Mayer House,
Chatham Place,
Reading,
RG1 7AN

Catalyst Ltd.

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1 Introduction

1.1 This Planning Statement is submitted on behalf of the applicant, Catalyst Ltd. (hereafter “the Applicant”) to support a Full Planning Application for the replacement façade and waterproofing of Mayer House, Chatham Place, Reading (hereafter the “Site”).

1.2 The proposed development is as follows: -

“Removal of combustible material on the façade; designing and installing new materials that are fit for purpose and make watertight the existing structure.”

1.3 The development may be broken down into the following constituent parts: -

- Removal of combustible material present on the façade;
- Application of non-combustible material related to the external façade; and,
- Works to ensure the building is watertight.

1.4 The proposed development is funded by Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), and as such is subject to significant time pressures.

Application Documents

1.5 The planning application is submitted in full.

1.6 This application was initially submitted under reference **210935/FUL**, however was deemed invalid. The following documents were submitted with the initial submission:-

- Elevation Plans (FAT-377-PE-001, FAT-377-PE-002, FAT-377-PE-003)
- Existing and Proposed Building Section (FAT-377-SK-504a)
- Site Location Plan,
- Photographed Hardie Plank Samples,
- Photographs of the Site,
- Application Form.

1.7 This subsequent submission, also under reference **210935/FUL**, has been prepared in accordance with the planning application validation guidelines (Reading Borough and National) and is supported by the following drawings and documents:

- Existing Elevation Plans – including Location Plan at 1:2500 (FAT-377-PE-004, FAT-377-PE-005, FAT-377-PE-006);
- Proposed Elevation Plans – including Location Plan at 1:2500 (FAT-377-PE-001, FAT-377-PE-002, FAT-377-PE-003);
- Existing and Proposed Building Section (FAT-377-SK-504a_P3);
- Planning Statement – including material details (Newsteer);
- Application form; and,
- Ownership certificate – Certificate B, notice served on all residents.

2 Site Description and Context

- 2.1 The Site lies centrally between Chatham Street (A329) and Oxford Road to the northeast of Reading Town Centre. The Site fronts Chatham Place, which forms a pedestrian-only forecourt between Mayer House to the south and Chatham Place to the north. Pedestrian and vehicle access is provided via Eaton Place to the east and Alfred Street to the west of the Site. The Site is located half a mile from central Reading and Reading Station which provides access to central London within 25 minutes.
- 2.2 Although built as part of the Chatham Place Masterplan, the Site is specific to Mayer House identified as building 2 of phase 1 in the Masterplan. The proposed alterations are specific to the external façade of the building and will result in minor aesthetic changes to the building while improving the overall safety of the building and its immediate environment.

Planning History

- 2.3 A search of the Reading Borough Council website has identified the following parent permission for the Site: -
- **051364** - Detailed planning application for phase 1 comprising a mixed use development of 50,289 sq.m gea including 307 residential units (211 Private and 96 affordable), 591 space multi-storey car park, ancillary parking, a community use, flexible mixed uses at ground floor level comprising A1, A2, A3, A4, A5 and D2 uses, highways and public realm works. Granted. 29/11/2005.

Planning History Conclusions

- 2.4 The scheme that was implemented on the Site formed building 2 of phase 1 of application ref. 051364. The granted permission gave detailed consent for phase 1 comprising a mixed use development of 50,399sq.m GEA as a combination of residential and community/flexible ground floor uses. The Site forms a 6 storey residential building with 2 residential cores.
- Planning permission 051364 was subject to 12 conditions

Planning Submission Subject of this Statement

- 2.5 An application under reference **210935/FUL** was submitted by Higgins Partnerships on 02/06/2021 and was deemed invalid. An informal exchange with Reading Borough Council was undertaken on behalf of the applicant, this exchange dated 01/07/2021 stated the following documents were required to make the application valid: -
- Planning Statement;
 - Materials Details;
 - Drawings (Existing and Proposed);
 - Ownership Certificate.

These outstanding documents are provided as part of this amended submission package.

- 2.6 This initial application referred to the description of development as: -

"Mayer House is an already occupied 6 storey, 2 core residential building.

We are contracted for the urgent removal of combustible material on the façade; designing and installing new materials that are fit for purpose. We

are to ensure the stripped façade is watertight and safe throughout construction, whilst occupants remain in-situ.

MHCLG is funding the remediation project and have requested the works to be undertaken as a matter of priority."

- 2.7 While providing the aforementioned information required for validation, this description has been amended to reflect the following: -
- "Removal of combustible material on the façade; designing and installing new materials that are fit for purpose and make watertight the existing structure."*
- 2.8 The proposed works seek to make safe the existing occupied residential building. The proposed works are funded by MHCLG and as such are subject to significant time pressures. MHCLG have stipulated that due to the fire risk related to the existing building these works are to be undertaken as a matter of priority. Sensitive to these time pressures through pre-application exchanges we are seeking to resolve any issues to ensure that this application is not subject to any pre-commencement conditions and that the application will be dealt with in 8 weeks via delegated powers.
- 2.9 We trust that the necessary detail has been provided as such and welcome any queries or clarifications necessary to achieve the timescales as outlined above.

3 The Proposed Development

3.1 The proposed development is as follows: -

"Removal of combustible material on the façade; designing and installing new materials that are fit for purpose and make watertight the existing structure."

3.2 The development may be broken down into the following constituent parts: -

- Removal of combustible material present on the façade;
- Application of non-combustible material related to the external façade; and,
- Works to ensure the building is watertight.

3.3 This application seeks full planning permission. All proposed works are considered essential works necessary to ensure the safety of existing and future building residents.

4 Planning Policy

- 4.1 This section sets out the planning policy framework against which the proposed development should be assessed.
- 4.2 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) states that planning applications for development should be determined in accordance with the Statutory Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 4.3 For the purposes of this application, the Development Plan comprises the following:
- Local Plan (2019)
 - Policy Map (2019)
- 4.4 Other material considerations include:
- The National Planning Policy Framework (2019) (NPPF);
 - National Planning Practice Guidance.

Development Plan

- 4.5 We highlight the key planning policies of the Development Plan that are considered particularly relevant in the determination of the application.

Local Plan

- CC1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- CC2: Sustainable Design and Construction
- CC7: Design and the Public Realm

Site Designations

- 4.6 The Reading Borough Policies Map shows the Site as having the following designations: Reading Central Area, Air Quality Management Area, and West Side Major Opportunity area.

Local Plan Policies (2019)

- 4.7 **CC1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development** – this policy accords with the principles of the NPPF, guiding that a positive approach will be taken to development, where the Council will work proactively with applicants to find solutions that mean proposals can be approved wherever possible.
- 4.8 **CC2: Sustainable Design and Construction** -this policy focuses on non-residential buildings, however, seeks to promote the use of sustainable building materials and practices to combat the effects of climate change.
- 4.9 **CC7: Design and the Public Realm** – this policy seeks to ensure high-quality design in the public realm which recognises the character of a proposal and its surrounding area and assess proposals as such.

National Planning Policy Framework

- 4.10 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was adopted in February 2019, setting out the overarching planning guidance to which all Development Plan Documents should comply. As such, the NPPF is a material consideration of considerable weight. Guidance as to how the NPPF, Planning Policy and Planning Law should be used in practice is provided within the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG).
- 4.11 Presumption in favour of sustainable development lies at the heart of the NPPF. For decision taking, Paragraph 11 sets out that, this means expediently approving development proposals which accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay or, where there are no relevant policies or those policies are out of date, permission be granted unless the application of policies within the Framework which protect assets of importance provide a clear reason for refusing development, or any adverse impacts of approving the proposal would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits.

National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)

- 4.12 The NPPG was published by the Government in March 2014 to provide more detailed guidance to support the policies set out in the NPPF (2012). It was partially updated after the publication of the NPPF 2019. The document forms part of the Government's wider strategy of making the planning system more efficient and effective and follows a review of planning policy guidance. The guidance is published as a web-based resource and in 2014 was accompanied by a Written Ministerial Statement by Nick Boles which explained how it replaces or cancels over 150 previous documents. The NPPG includes guidance on 41 categories including health and wellbeing, local plans, design and the planning application process.
- 4.13 The NPPG highlights that good design is an integral part of sustainable development. New proposals should reflect this requirement for good design (as set out in national, regional and local policy) while local planning authorities are advised to give great weight to outstanding or innovative designs which help to raise the standard of design more generally in the area. The guidance further outlines that good design seeks to create places, building and spaces which work well for everyone and, most importantly, adapt to the needs of future generations.

5 Planning Considerations

- 5.1 Having regard to the planning policy framework outlined above, this section now assesses the proposed development against the Development Plan, taking account of any other relevant material considerations.
- 5.2 Given the location and context of the proposed development, the following matters are considered to be relevant to the assessment of the planning merits of this application:
- The Principle of the Development
 - The Principle of Design
 - Building Safety
 - Sustainable Design and Construction

The Principle of Development

- 5.3 Development was approved and constructed under Reading Borough Council reference **051364** as such was deemed acceptable.
- 5.4 As guided by policy CC1 of the Local Plan, and driven by the NPPF, a proactive approach that centres around the presumption in favour of sustainable development will be taken to all development proposals. The principle of development has already been agreed and accords with this policy.

The Principle of Design

- 5.5 As the retrofitting of an existing building, the materials proposed reflect the existing design as far as possible. The main basis of the proposal centres around the making safe of the site by removing combustible materials from the façade. Following this removal, the proposal seeks the replacement of this material with an industry recognised non-combustible alternative, in this case, a combination of Envirowall render and Hardie Plank VC.
- 5.6 Hardie Plank is a manmade alternative to the existing wood cladding that is specified to have achieved the highest rating possible (A2, s1-d0) for a coloured facade product. Although the proposed material has been colour matched to the existing timber cladding and provides the closest possible match the overall aesthetic will differ slightly from the existing. This difference is seen to be an overall benefit to the scheme as the proposed material will provide a consistent finish and will not suffer from the uneven weathering the current façade experiences.
- 5.7 Similarly, Envirowall is a fire-retardant manmade material which provides a colour matched, textured finish comparable to the existing Sto Acrylic Render. As the proposed Envirowall material is replacing a similar, but combustible render-insulation composite, the proposed textured appearance will pose little visible differentiation from that which is existing. Due to the combustible quality of the existing underlying insulation the proposed change to non-combustible materials will result in a minor increase to the thickness of the rendered element. This will result in the rendered element of the building changing from 197.5mm to 297.5mm thick. Despite this change, it is asserted that as the proposed materials provide the closest match to the existing building aesthetic and to the untrained eye would provide little to no visible difference related to thickness.
- 5.8 The retention of the proposed mixed material design accords with Local Plan Policy CC7 reflecting the existing buildings design.

Building Safety

- 5.9 Ensuring the building provides a safe and enduring environment is central to this proposal. Fire risk related to flammable façades is an issue that has been highlighted and is becoming better understood in recent years, following the 2017 Grenfell Tragedy. The Site as with many other buildings across the country currently poses a risk to residents related to fire, as the current façade features unsuitable cladding. The primary aim of this application is to rectify this issue and make safe the existing building. Rectifying this issue will not only serve to remove the fire risk the current material poses but also serve to relieve the stress and strain on residents who have been living at risk.
- 5.10 The importance of rectifying this issue and removing this risk is further highlighted by the financial support provided for this project by MHCLG.
- 5.11 It should be recognised that the issue of the presence of this high-risk material extends beyond issues of safety related to the mortal safety of residents, but also impacts residents financial and mental health. The proposed development is funded by MHCLG, highlighting the importance of rectifying this issue. While there are no specific Local Policies related to fire risk the health and safety of residents is of utmost importance to Reading Borough Council.

Sustainable Design and Construction

- 5.12 The proposed development aims to increase the life of the existing building through the removal and replacement of the dangerous and defective cladding and façade currently in place. By retrofitting the existing building to replace the defective parts, the proposal accords with policy CC2 which seeks sustainable design and construction, preserving the buildings' structure and removing only the necessary elements. The weatherproof materials proposed will further improve the longevity of the building while providing a consistent finish to the building which will be unaffected by weathering.

6 Design and Materials

- 6.1 As the proposal seeks to make safe the existing building due to issues with the material of the external façade, the fundamental design of the building is proposed to remain. The proposal seeks the removal of the existing wood cladding and render (white and mid blue) and insulation for replacement with wood look cladding and white face cladding composed of a non-combustible material. As the predominant issue with the existing material is fire risk related to the materials composition, like for like replacement is not possible. Hardie Plank VC cladding has been proposed as the closest aesthetic match made of the non-combustible material required to make the building safe. SPS Envirowall combination cladding and insulation are proposed to replace the existing render, this material provides an aesthetically similar finish and is colour matched to the existing render without the existing fire risk.
- 6.2 Beyond providing the closest aesthetic match for the existing Western Red Cedar timber cladding, the proposed Hardi Plank material is man-made and has higher weather-resistant properties than the existing material. As the weathering of the existing cladding was a concern raised in the initial decision, the proposed cladding which will provide a consistent finish that will not degrade over time should be considered an overall benefit to the scheme.
- 6.3 The proposed replacement of the existing acrylic render (both white and mid blue coloured) will provide little visual change to the external material of the building. However, the element of concern in this location is the presence of combustible insulation under the buildings outer shell. As shown in drawing FAT -377-SK-504a the existing combustible insulation and façade is 197.5mm thick, this is proposed for replacement with non-combustible insulation, 297.5mm thick. This increase in thickness is necessary as the thermal performance of non-combustible insulation is lower than that of combustible insulation. The result is a minor increase in the overall building envelope while providing a safe and secure environment for residents. Further to these benefits, the proposed Envirowall system incorporates a fire retardant expanded polystyrene insulant (EPS) that has successfully undergone full-scale fire testing to BS8414 Part 2 of the building regulations and is compliant for use on buildings above 18 metres high. The finish provided by this material includes a weather protective coating, this reduces weathering to the material and keeps the building looking newer for longer.



Figure 1: Photograph of Existing Materials as referenced in Table 1



Figure 2: Proposed Hardie Plank (A)

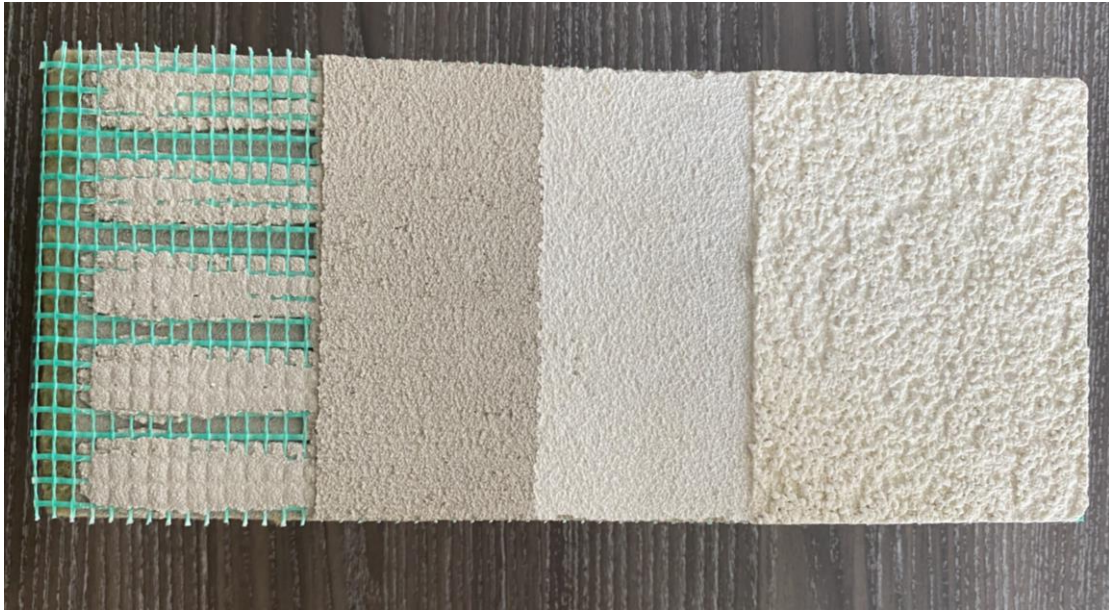


Figure 3: Envirowall – shown in white (B)

		Wood Look		Render
Existing	1	Red Cedar Timber	2	Sto Acrylic Render (white and mid blue)
Proposed	A	Hardie Plank VL 'Chestnut Brown'	B	SPS Envirowall render

Table 1: Existing and Proposed Materials

7 Summary and Conclusions

- 7.1 The proposed development seeks to enhance the safety and security of an existing residential building within an existing town centre area. Beyond the immediate safety of building residents, the proposed development seeks to increase the safety of surrounding buildings through rectifying former building materials recently understood to be unsafe. The proposed works are funded by MHCLG, who have stipulated that these works must be undertaken as a matter of priority due to the fire safety risk to existing residents associated with the existing façade.
- 7.2 The facade alterations to the building make positive steps in creating a safe environment for existing and prospective tenants. From a design perspective, the enhancement provides a suitable replacement façade which beyond providing essential safety benefits to residents also provides long term aesthetic benefits to the building as the material proposed for replacement is enduring and will not suffer from unpredictable weathering as seen on the existing façade. The proposed aesthetic enhancements complement the existing and emerging character of the area through both good design and material choice.
- 7.3 The proposed development constitutes “sustainable development” in accordance with Paragraph 8 of the NPPF and according to the provisions of Paragraph 11 of the NPPF, the development should be granted Planning Permission “without delay”.