

Planning Statement

Wensley Road:

New Build & Estate Improvements Phase 2

Wensley Road, Reading RG1

On behalf of Reading Borough Council



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1.0

Introduction

1.1

This Planning Statement provides supporting analysis and commentary for the planning application submitted to Reading Borough Council (RBC) by HTA Design LLP on behalf of RBC for the estate improvement works associated with the regeneration of the estate at Wensley Road, Reading.

1.2

The application seeks full planning permission and advertising consent for:

Renovation works to the three tower blocks which include replacement of the external envelope and windows; extended and reconfigured entrance areas incorporating altered refuse and recycling facilities; replacement ground floor escape doors, external stairs and windows, and replacement roofs; signage on the elevation adjacent to the reconfigured main entrances at ground level and signage at the upper level of the front and rear elevations of each of the three tower blocks; and landscape improvements including planting and surface treatments, and cycle parking stores.

1.3

The scheme has been designed by HTA Design LLP.

1.4

The submitted application forms the second phase of regeneration and estate improvement works to the housing estate at Wensley Road which comprises Wensley Court, Irving Court and Riversley Court.

1.5

The first phase of regeneration and estate improvement works, approved at Committee in August 2020 and granted planning permission in December 2020 (ref. 200122), included: 46 new affordable homes, and redesigned and enlarged central green space including play facilities, new planting including extensive tree planting, and 230 new parking bays to serve the existing and proposed dwellings. Phase 1 is a Net Zero Carbon development and is recognised as an exemplar scheme for the Borough.

1.6

The second phase of regeneration works, submitted here includes a number of refurbishment works which RBC Property Services have identified. Following the consultation process for Phase 1, the scope of refurbishment works has been extended to include further works which seek to reinstate the character of the buildings, introduce sustainable and energy efficient measures to the existing housing stock, and reinforcing a sense of identity for the local community living on the estate.

1.7

The proposed works in Phase 2 include:

- Thermal performance improvements
 - External envelope of the three existing tower blocks: remove and replace existing wall material with high quality, non-

- combustible external wall insulation and render system to improve thermal performance;
- Windows: replace all windows at the three tower blocks with triple glazed inward opening windows;
- Roof: replacement of roof covering and insulation to improve thermal performance
- External elevation changes and signage
 - Signage: street numbering for each tower block will be introduced at the entrance to the buildings and the uppermost level of the building façade;
 - Render: terracotta render (central recessed section of the tower blocks) and light grey textured render (flanking sides);
 - Brick base: ground and first floor.
- Entrance area reconfiguration and staircore improvements
 - Entrance areas: extend and reconfigure entrance areas to the three tower blocks, including replaced door entry system, new entrance doors and new floor and wall finishes;
 - Staircores: replacement ground floor escape doors, external stairs and windows / curtain walling;
- Refuse and recycling strategy
 - Reconfigured refuse and recycling facilities; extend and improve refuse and recycling area and chute, to improve usability, security, access and hygiene for residents and RBC Operatives
- Cycle storage provision
 - increased provision of cycle stores in order to meet needs of existing and new residents;
- Communal amenity space and landscaping improvement
 - Landscape improvements: provision of communal garden primarily for use by the existing residents in the towers, increased tree planting in accordance with Phase 1 proposals

1.8 The scheme has been subject to positive Pre-Application discussions with RBC Officers and a review by the Design Review Panel both of which took place in January 2021. Further details of the Pre-Application discussions are

set out in Section 3 of this Planning Statement and in the Design & Access Statement.

1.9 Details of the scheme have been presented to residents in a newsletter and feedback form in January 2021; further communication to residents will be made via a newsletter sent out to coincide with the planning application submission.

1.10 The key planning considerations relevant to the redevelopment of this site include:

- (i) the acceptability of renewal and regeneration of the local built environment,
- (ii) the proposed design interventions in the housing stock and associated amenity and servicing spaces;
- (iii) the landscaping improvements;
- (iv) the access and cycle parking arrangements;
- (v) the sustainability credentials of the proposal;
- (vi) the acceptability of the design of the proposed signage on the tower blocks.

1.11 This Planning Statement is divided into the following sections:

- Section 2.0 - Site and Surroundings;
- Section 3.0 - Proposed Development;
- Section 4.0 - Planning Policy Considerations;
- Section 5.0 - Planning Assessment of the Proposal;
- Section 6.0 - Design and Layout Considerations
- Section 7.0 - Site Assessment;
- Section 8.0 - Sustainability Strategy
- Section 9.0 - Proposed New Signage
- Section 10.0 - Summary and Conclusions.

2.0

Site and Surroundings

Site and Location

- 2.1 The proposal site is located within the loop road at the western end of Wensley Road, within the Coley Park Estate. The redline boundary encompasses each of the three 15 storey tower blocks and adjoining amenity space separately. The wider site surrounding the tower blocks was the subject of a planning application submitted approved at Committee in August 2020 and granted planning permission in December 2020 for the Phase 1 regeneration and infill development (ref 200122).
- 2.2 Each of the tower blocks contains 89 flats, the majority of which are affordable housing, owned and maintained by Reading Borough Council. The areas encompassed by the redline boundary are within ownership of Reading Borough Council.
- 2.3 Adjoining the proposal site to the west of the tower blocks are residential dwellings also located within the loop road. Residential dwellings are also situated to the north and east of the proposal site. These are primarily two storey terraces and semi-detached houses. To the south of Wensley Road is Fobney Meadow, a nature reserve.
- 2.4 The proposals which are the subject of this application relate to the second phase of the new build and estate improvement works at Wensley Road. The key principles of the works are to take a holistic approach to placemaking; providing affordable, low energy homes; supporting active and sustainable lifestyles; improve green connections and biodiversity; and creating a cohesive community.
- 2.5 The consented Phase 1 development includes the following proposals:
- 46 affordable homes all of which are Net Zero Carbon;
 - 230 parking bays to serve the existing and proposed dwellings
 - A redesigned and expanded central green amenity space, including play facilities;
 - Soft landscaping and tree planting
- 2.6 Drawings have been submitted with this application which show the existing site layout, and the permitted Phase 1 site layout under the approved application (ref. 200102) and the proposed site layout, both with and without the Phase 1 proposals.

Figure 2.1 Extract from Google Maps: site location



Figure 2.2 Phase 1 approved scheme and Phase 2 proposal site redline boundaries



- 2.7 The site is within easy access of recreational and green spaces including Coley Park to the east of the site, and Courage Park to the north-west of the site. The Coley Park allotments are located 200-300m east of the site, off Lesford Road.. Fobney meadow nature reserve to the south is accessible by pedestrian footpaths.
- 2.8 The wider Coley Park Estate lies to the south west of the centre of Reading, within an approximately 30-minute walk from the town centre. To the east of the site is the A33 which links to the M4 which runs to the south of Reading. The M4 links Reading to London to the east and Bristol to the west.

Public Transport Provision and Accessibility

- 2.9 The bus route Number 11 Bronze connects the site to Reading town centre, with services approximately every 20 minutes.



- 2.10 The nearest bus stops are located on Wensley Road, adjacent to the site. There are also bus stops located on Berkeley Avenue which provide additional bus services; these are set out in detail in the Transport Statement which is submitted as part of this application.
- 2.11 The site is located approximately 2.7km south-west of Reading train station, which connects Reading to London and Newbury, and 2.5km south of Reading West train station which connects Reading to Newbury and Basingstoke.



3.0

Proposed Development and Consultation

3.1

This section provides a description of the proposed development and the consultation that has been undertaken with RBC officers. A detailed description of the design of the proposal is set out in the Design & Access Statement prepared by HTA Architects which accompanies this application.

Proposed works

Thermal performance improvements

3.2

There are three key changes which are proposed to improve thermal performance of the existing tower blocks:

- External envelope of the three existing tower blocks: remove and replace existing wall material with high quality, non-combustible external wall insulation and render system to improve thermal performance;
- Windows: replace all windows at the three tower blocks with triple glazed inward opening windows;
- Roof: replacement of roof covering and insulation to improve thermal performance

Entrance area reconfiguration and staircore improvements

3.3

A ground floor extension is proposed to all three tower blocks to facilitate the provision of a new entrance lobby, and a dedicated space to accommodate refuse, recycling and food waste bins so that these are all stored within the perimeter of the building.

3.4

The ground floor fire escape doors accessed from the staircores will be replaced where changes to levels due to Phase 1 proposals require this. Windows and curtain walling for the staircores will also be replaced.

External elevation changes to render and signage

3.5

As part of the changes to the external wall material of the towers, consideration has been given to the elevational treatment.

3.6

The ground and first floor storeys will be clad in brick on all four sides of the building. The remaining elevation of the towers will be rendered in light grey, with a central vertical area of terracotta render running all the way down the building on the front and rear elevations. A double height window feature is

proposed for the 13th and 14th floor on each of the four elevations on each of the blocks.

- 3.7 New signage is proposed to announce the new entrance at ground floor, and also at the top of the building, with vertical numbers spanning the 13th and 14th floor. The high-level numbering is proposed on the front and rear elevations of each of the blocks.

Refuse and recycling strategy

- 3.8 The required bins will be located internally in new storage areas with capacity for the following:

- 5 x 1100 litre General Waste Bins
- 6 x 1100 litre Dry Mixed Recycling Bins
- 5 x 240 litre Food Waste Bin

- 3.9 The existing refused chute will be replaced by a tri-separator system for: general waste; mixed dry recycling and food waste respectively. A weekly collection is proposed.

Increase in cycle storage provision

- 3.10 The Phase 1 proposals relocate the existing cycle lockers to be in closer proximity to the associated buildings, which has the advantage of passive surveillance.

- 3.11 The proposed Phase 2 scheme provides an additional 45 cycle lockers with capacity for 60 cycles space with: single and double 'family size' lockers are included in the provision.

Communal amenity space and landscaping improvements

- 3.12 Improvements are proposed to the open space that surrounds the base of the tower blocks. The majority of the existing open space has no defined usage; the proposed open space will have street furniture for seating and equipment for incidental play. Individual and family cycle storage lockers and street lighting are also proposed. New pathways will be introduced to enhance pedestrian connections with the amenity spaces approved under Phase 1. Tree planting is proposed which forms part of the Phase 1 commitment to planting 279 new trees. A perimeter buffer zone around the existing buildings (minimum 1.8m) will be introduced.

Consultation on Proposals

Pre-Application consultation

- 3.13 Pre-application consultation has been undertaken with officers at RBC in January 2021. Overall officers are supportive of the proposals.
- 3.14 In summary the advice set out in a letter reference 201603/PREAPP states:
- The proposed new ground floor layout and access to the building and refuse storage area is accepted in principle, and the proposed new cycle parking is also accepted in principle;
 - Clear presentation of Phase 2 in relation to the Phase 1 approved scheme
 - Consideration of how the proposals meet the criteria of policy concerned with regeneration and renewal of estates;
 - Provide details on how proposed waste storage areas relates to the existing and approved arrangements;
 - Demonstrate sustainability benefits;
 - Means for designing out crime should be included following advice from the Crime Prevention Design Advisor at Thames Valley Police;
 - Existing trees and new trees proposed by Phase 1 should be protected during construction, defensive planting could be considered around the towers, and soft landscaping should be included wherever possible
 - A bat survey is advised and bird nesting features are recommended to be included in the altered building. An Ecological Impact Assessment has been undertaken, and is submitted here;
 - Consideration should be given to the form of advertisement consent require depending on the size of the signage on the towers;
 - Fire strategy should be considered.

Design Review Panel

- 3.15 The proposal was also presented to the Design Review Panel in January 2021. In summary, the DRP supported the overall approach, subject to further resolution; in particular:

- Ground floor design: improvements are supported, and consideration should be given to the defensible space for the tower blocks, and improved articulation to the front of the building and the front entrance
- Further consideration is needed for the approach taken at the top of the towers
- Some elements of the proposed materials, such as colour matching, and the signage need further consideration;
- Support for the fabric first approach, and the need to consider 'buildability' with residents in-situ;
- Details concerning the window design specifically window reveals and heads need further resolution;
- Quantity and quality of bicycle storage was discussed and the design of innovative and well-integrated external storage and landscape solutions are encouraged;
- Assessment methods for sustainability should be provided and best practice standards are adhered to;

3.16 Further details on the DRP and the design response to feedback received are provided in the Design & Access Statement.

Consultation with Residents

3.17 Consultation with residents started with the Phase 1 proposal. Events were held on 28th August 2019, 25th September 2019 and 25th October 2019. At these events, residents raised issues relating to refurbishment which included, maintenance improvements, the existing refuse and recycling strategy which attracts rodents, need for more cycle lockers, and improvements to outdoor amenity provision.

3.18 Due to the social-distancing restrictions presented by the Covid-19 pandemic, a public exhibition was held January – February 2021. The details of the proposal have been presented to the residents in the following ways:

- 'Week of Action' Newsletter 04/12/2020
- Wensley Road website live 07/12/2020
- Week of Action 07/12/2020 – 13/12/2020
- Consultation banners and posters 06/02/2021



- 3.19 A Feedback and Design Update Newsletter will be sent out to all the residents upon submission of the application.
- 3.20 Further details relating to the consultation with residents are set out in Design & Access Statement.

4.0

Planning Policy Considerations

4.1

This section provides a list of the planning policies and guidance documents of relevance to the consideration of the planning applications.

National Planning Policy

4.2

The revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published by the Government on 25 July 2018 and sets out the overarching national policy framework for planning. The NPPF identifies the economic, environmental and social dimensions of sustainable development (paragraph 8). It has subsequently been revised in February 2019.

4.3

The NPPF also applies a 'presumption in favour of sustainable development' (Para 11) whereby Local Planning Authorities should plan positively to meet the development needs of an area and planning decisions must take account of the proposals accordance with the development plan. Or where the plan is out of date or silent then proposals should be granted where benefits outweigh adverse impacts and the proposals have been assessed against the policies of the NPPF as a whole.

4.4

The following NPPF principles are considered particularly relevant to the Application Scheme:

- Engagement with the local authority and local community;
- Creating healthy, safe and inclusive communities;
- Decision making;
- Making effective use of land;
- Promoting sustainable transport;
- Achieving well-designed places;
- Meeting the challenge of climate change and flooding;
- Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

4.5

Paragraph 39 highlights the importance of early engagement to support 'better coordination between public and private resources and improved outcomes for the community'. Paragraph 128 goes onto emphasise the importance of "early discussion with the local planning authority and local community about the design and style of emerging schemes" to ensure that proposals reconcile differing interests and meet local expectations.

4.6

Paragraph 91 states that planning policies and decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places through promoting social

interaction, creating safe and accessible place, and enabling and supporting healthy lifestyles.

- 4.7 The government's commitment to achieving a well-designed place is set out in section 12. The creation of high-quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve (paragraph 124). This requires the evolution of development proposals to consider quality (paragraph 128). New development should protect against a range of impacts arising from climate change, through suitable adaptation measures, such as increasing green infrastructure, can help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (paragraph 150), and avoid development on the most vulnerable locations with the lowest flood risk (paragraph 163).
- 4.8 Well-designed places also require the active management of growth in a local area. Local authorities are encouraged to support proposals, which prioritise the creation of places which are safe, secure and attractive and minimise the scope for conflicts between pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles, while also responding to local character and design standards (Paragraph 110). Proposals should only be prevented on highways grounds if unacceptable impacts on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network are considered to be severe.
- 4.9 Conserving and enhancing the environment is considered under Section 15 which seeks to contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment.
- 4.10 The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) documents were published from March 2014 and used in July 2018 to reflect the revised NPPF (2018), providing contextual support for the Framework. The following NPPG documents are considered relevant to this application:
- Air Quality (2014);
 - Climate Change (2014);
 - Community Infrastructure Levy (2018);
 - Consultation and pre-decision matters (2014);
 - Design (2014);
 - Making an application (2014);
 - Open space, sports and recreation facilities (2014);
 - Planning Obligations (2016);
 - Viability (2014).



Local Planning Policy

Reading Borough Council

- 4.11 The Development Plan for Reading Borough Council comprises the adopted Local Plan and Proposals Map (November 2019) which covers the period up to 2036.
- 4.12 Other policy documents include: the Community Infrastructure Levy Charging Schedule (January 2015); and Annual Monitoring Report 2019 / 2020.

Supplementary Planning Documents

- 4.13 Supplementary planning documents include: Affordable Housing SPD (July 2013); Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD (October 2011); Planning Obligations under S106 (April 2015), and Sustainable Design and Construction SPD (July 2011).

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

- 4.14 The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a source of funding from developments, which assists in supporting local infrastructure delivery in order to ensure future housing and employment growth envisaged in its Local Plan can be accommodated sustainably.
- 4.15 The RBC charging schedule was adopted in 2015. The charge for residential development is **£120 per sqm** across the Borough.
- 4.16 The proposed development is under 100 sqm (GIA) and therefore the development is not liable for CIL.
- 4.17 All relevant CIL forms have been completed and accompany this planning application.

5.0

Planning Assessment of the Proposal

Key Planning Considerations

5.1

This section and the following section of the Planning Statement assesses the key planning considerations in relation to the proposed development, which are as follows:

- (i) the acceptability of renewal and regeneration of the local built environment,
- (ii) the proposed design interventions in the housing stock and associated amenity and servicing spaces;
- (iii) the landscaping improvements;
- (iv) the access and cycle parking arrangements;
- (v) the sustainability credentials of the proposal;
- (vi) the acceptability of the design of the proposed signage on the tower blocks.

Planning Designations

5.2

The extract of the Proposals Map below shows that the site is not covered by any policy designations. The furthest north-western corner of the estate within the Wensley Road loop is located within in an Air Quality Management Area, and a cycle route runs along Wensley Road to the north. To the south of the site is an area designated as a Major Landscape Feature which is also designated as Area of Archaeological Potential. There are green links to the east and west of the areas of the estate included within the redline boundary.

The map shows a residential and institutional area. Key features include:

- EN7Wg**: A green label indicating a specific area or zone.
- Coley Park Hospital**: Located in the upper right quadrant.
- School**: Located to the right of the hospital.
- St. David's Road**: A road running horizontally across the middle.
- Walton Way**: A road running vertically on the left.
- Winstanley Way**: A road running diagonally from the bottom left towards the center.
- Blue hatched area**: A large area at the bottom of the map, possibly representing a body of water or a specific land use.
- Green areas**: Several green-shaded regions, some labeled **EN7Wg**.
- Red dotted line**: A line running through the center of the map, possibly indicating a boundary or a specific route.

- | | |
|---|---|
|  | Local Green Space and Public Open Space
(policy EN7) |
|  | Air Quality Management Area* (see policy EN15) |
|  | Existing or proposed Green Link (policy EN12) |
|  | Cycle Routes* (see policy TR4) |
|  | Area of identified biodiversity interest* ¹
(see policy EN12) |
|  | Area of archaeological potential (policy EN2) |
|  | Major Landscape Feature (policy EN13) |



Principle of Development

5.3 In order to assess the acceptability of the proposed works consideration has to be given to Policy H14 which states that:

There is scope for some of Reading's suburban residential areas to undergo renewal and regeneration that would achieve the following aims:

- *Improve the local built environment;*
- *Improve and modernise the housing stock; and*
- *Deliver additional homes.*

Where development would fulfil the above aims, it would generally be supported, subject to other policies in this plan and provided that:

- *Any loss of undeveloped land would be outweighed by a qualitative improvement in open and green space and by the benefits of development to the community as a whole;*
- *Buildings and features that make a positive contribution to the area's character are retained*
- *There would be adequate community facilities to serve the resulting community; and*
- *There would not be an unacceptable impact on the highway network as a result of loss of parking areas or garages*

5.4 The proposals seek to improve the existing housing stock, particularly in relation to thermal performance through changes to the materials on the external walls and roof, and new windows which will improve insulation. This will improve the quality of the living environment and reduce energy bills for the residents.

5.5 Alterations and rearrangement to the entrances and recycling / refuse facilities are also introduced. This results in the loss of some undesignated open space. However the proposals will improve and modernise the existing housing stock and bring benefits to the existing community on the Estate. The proposals include:

- the reconfiguration of the ground floor creating space to accommodate a new refuse and recycling strategy which seek to address servicing and hygiene issues relating to the rodent infestation,



- a communal lobby area and new entranceway into each of the tower.
- the provision of additional cycle stores, to adequately serve the residents in the towers and bring positive benefits to the highway network through enabling more residents to use this sustainable form of transport.

5.6 The proposed elevational treatments are comprised of:

- grey and terracotta coloured render;
- the brick base at the ground and first floor storeys;
- elongated window treatment for the upper two storeys; and
- new street numbering at the entrance and upper level.

5.7 These changes will make positive contributions to the character of the estate as the palette of materials that have been chosen to relate positively to the proposed materials for Phase 1, visually linking the two phases; whilst also enhancing the identity of the tower blocks themselves.

5.8 The open space at the base of the towers included in the redline boundary is lawn with no defined usage. The proposal includes improvements to the communal amenity space associated with each of the three tower blocks, which are summarised below and discussed in more detail in Section 7.0:

- the open space at the base of the towers will be redesigned for flexible use, including seating, imaginative play provision, and cycle storage lockers.
- new street lighting will be introduced to improve safety.
- new pathways will link to the wider pedestrian network and the woodland tree planting.
- a buffer zone between the amenity space and tower block will also be created using a cobbled pathway of 1.8m in width.

5.9 The proposal does not seek to provide additional homes, and there will be no loss of existing homes.

5.10 On this basis it is considered that the proposals positively address and comply with the requirements of Policy H14 and are deemed to be acceptable, subject to satisfying other relevant Local Plan policies. This is considered further below.



6.0

Design and Layout Considerations

Design & Layout

- 6.1 The NPPF (2018) is clear in its recognition of the importance of good design, which is considered to be a key aspect of sustainable development (paragraph 124). The NPPF goes on to state at paragraph 127 that planning policies should ensure that developments will function well and add to the overall quality of the area for the lifetime of the development; are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping; are sympathetic to local character and history; establish or maintain a strong sense of place; optimising the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development; and create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible, and which promote health and wellbeing.
- 6.2 Adopted Local Plan Policy CC7 Design and the Public Realm sets out the criteria against which the borough will assess the quality of design. The policy states that all development must be of high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located. This policy has relevance with relation to architectural detail and materials, and landscape.
- 6.3 The policy states that the scheme will be assessed to ensure that the development makes a positive contribution to urban design objectives including character, quality of the public realm and provision of green infrastructure and landscaping, ease of movement and permeability and legibility.
- 6.4 The policy goes on to state that the developments will also be assessed to ensure that they:
- respond positively to their local context,
 - create safe and accessible environments,
 - address the needs of all in society, and
 - are visually attractive as a result of high-quality built forms and spaces.
- 6.5 The policy requires that application for major development, or other relevant developments, should be accompanied for a design and access statement that deals with all the matters set out in the policy. The sections below



provide details on the ways in which the proposed design responds positively to the requirements of Policy CC7.

Accessibility

- 6.6 Ensuring the site is accessible for all residents is a key priority of the design interventions, and accessibility is addressed in four key areas:
- (1) Approach to the site is via Wensley Road, using pedestrian or cycle routes.
 - (2) Service and emergency vehicle access is via Wensley Road. Under Phase 1, accessibility has been improved through the introduction of two new vehicle routes, new parking courts which are adjacent to Irving and Riversley Court and additional emergency and service access routes with controlled drop bollards through the central space.
 - (3) Access from the street: each block will be accessible by a 2m wide (minimum) resurfaced footpath which is part of the Phase 1 scheme. The new recessed entrance, door entry system and wider automatic entrance doors will improve access into the towers. Natural daylight will be increased through glazed entrance doors and skylights. Wheelchair users can access both the new entrance lobby and the refuse and recycling area. A new means of escape is proposed for each of the towers on the north and south elevations, and fire doors are to be replaced to meet current building regulations.

Improved thermal performance

- 6.7 The proposed changes to the external materials and windows to improve the thermal performance of the existing towers will bring benefits to the existing residents. The insulated render system for the second floor to the fifteenth floor will allow for reduced heating bills. Thereby improving on quality of amenity for existing residents. Colours and textures of render have been selected to have the appearance of natural materials and ensure high-quality, long lasting durability.

Responding to local context and high-quality design

- 6.8 Changes to the elevations of the towers include the coloured render, use of brickwork on the lowest two levels, elongated windows on the upper two levels, and signage (street numbering) at the new entrance and at high level. These changes allow for improvements to be made to the existing towers, without major intervention or demolition, and integrate existing buildings with



the new development. This will create visual cohesion and strengthen identity for the estate.

- 6.9 More specifically, the two-storey datum of brickwork creates a visual relationship through the use of materials between the tower, the existing two storey dwellings that surround the Wensley Road 'loop' and the proposed new housing in Phase 1. The detailing of the lintels on the windows on the ground floor echoes the detailing on the proposed new houses in Phase 1, and the proposed recessed brickwork panels creates a visual link to the engaged brick columns in the apartment block in Phase 1. The coloured render, grey render contrasting with terracotta render in the central recessed section, breaks up the mass of the building, with the terracotta render linking to the brick base of the towers.

Designing out crime

- 6.10 The submission design will improve safety and security on the site and address the anti-social behaviour issues which are currently being experienced on the estate. The Crime Prevention Advisor for Berkshire has been consulted and the design has been revised to accommodate their comments, as summarised below.
- (1) Refuse and recycling: The changes to the arrangement of the ground floor to accommodate a new refuse and recycling strategy will bring positive improvements to the existing residents in the tower, providing accessible facilities that address their concerns relating to fly-tipping, misuse of existing facilities and rat infestations. Bins stores will be internal to reduce opportunities for unauthorised fly-tipping, and improve hygiene.
 - (2) New entrance: the existing under-croft entrances into the tower blocks will be replaced with well-lit recessed entrance areas;
 - (3) Lighting and CCTV: as part of the proposed landscaping, 24-hour lighting and CCTV will be introduced to the internal and external communal areas, entrance doors and means of escape on the three existing buildings;
 - (4) Planting plan: clear sight lines and natural surveillance will be supported by the planting strategy with low level plants of less than 1m, and tree canopies of least 2.4m from the ground. A perimeter buffer zone pathways of uneven cobbles and buffer planting around the entrances into the tower blocks are proposed to discourage loitering and antisocial behaviour;



- (5) Cycle lockers: individual cycle locker, rather than larger communal storage, are proposed which will reduce risk of theft or damage to the residents' personal property;



7.0

Site Assessment

7.1

The following sections consider the proposal in relation to open space, communal amenity space and proposed tree planting in relation to the Landscape Strategy, the findings of the preliminary ecological assessment, cycle parking provision, refuse and recycling strategy, and the findings of the ground appraisal strategy.

Landscape Strategy

7.2

The site-wide landscape principles developed for Phase 1 and 2 are set out below:

- Promoting good access from Wensley Road to existing green and active travel networks;
- Enhancing nature at Wensley Road through a nature recovery network and connected green corridors;
- Make Wensley Road a great place to live for families with safe connections from homes to greenspaces;
- Create a fun and stimulating natural play space with activities for all ages.

7.3

The proposals submitted here reflect the key landscape principles, ensuring that there is coherence and continuity between Phase 1 and 2, and that the quality of existing outdoor amenity provision is enhanced and there are estate improvements benefits for the existing residents.

Communal Amenity Space

7.4

Adopted policy DM10 Private and Communal Outdoor Space states:

Dwellings will be provided with functional private or communal open space, including green space wherever possible, that allows for suitable sitting-out areas, children's play areas, home food production, green waste composting, refuse storage, general outdoor storage and drying space. Houses will be provided with private outdoor space whereas flats may be provided with communal outdoor space, balconies and / or roof gardens.

7.5

The policy goes on to state:

7.6

The design of outdoor areas will respect the size and character of other similar spaces in the vicinity, clearly identified whether they are private or



communal spaces, ensure that they are appropriately related to main entrances, enhance safety and the perception of safety for future residents and the general public, and not be compromised by the relationship of other buildings which may be detrimental in terms of overlooking, overbearing or overshadowing.

7.7 The adopted plan states at paragraph 4.4.86:

In determining the appropriate level of private and communal open space for the new development, the constraints of the site and the extent of deprivation of public open space within the proposed scheme will be taken into consideration (paragraph 4.4.86).

7.8 The strategy for open space amenity provision in Phase 1 was to create enclosed amenity spaces at the base of each of the three towers for the use of residents in the tower blocks. Following further discussions with the RBC housing management team concerning the security and management of these spaces, it was considered that these spaces should remain within the public realm for the use by the community on the estate. This will ensure that the amenity space will be for the benefit of all the estate residents while reducing opportunities for antisocial behaviour.

7.9 The design approach taken for proposed improvements to the open space is the same for each of the tower blocks. The perimeter of the communal open space at the base of the towers is defined by a railing, with gates that are open so that existing and new residents on the estate can access the areas. Benches and sculptural elements are included to provide seating and incidental play. A perimeter planting of Silver Birch trees creates a green boundary which encloses the spaces; a minimum clear stem of 2m will allow for visibility at eye level throughout to allow for natural surveillance. Hard landscaping will ensure a reduced maintenance regime. The proposed pathways around the perimeter of the tower blocks connects these amenity spaces with the wider landscaping in the estate approved under the Phase 1 application.

7.10 The proposed interventions meet the requirements of Policy DM10 through the provision of an easily accessible, functional space with children's play equipment and seating, the arrangement of planting to reduce the likelihood of antisocial behaviour. The proposed interventions create communal amenity spaces which is an improvement on the existing open space at the base of the towers, providing an amenity space which is complimentary to the large communal open space at the centre of the estate which forms part of the approved Phase 1 design.



Open Space Statement

- 7.11 The redline boundary for the proposal includes an area of open space within which each existing tower blocks is located. According to policy it is not designated.
- 7.12 Policy EN8 states there is a presumption in favour of retaining undesignated open space: development should not result in the loss of or jeopardise the use and enjoyment of these spaces. Development may be permitted if a replacement open space can be provided at an accessible location close by, or that improvements to recreational facilities on remaining open space can be provided at sufficient level to outweigh the loss of the open space.
- 7.13 Policy ENG refers to the need to provide open space for residential developments that is usable, safely and easily accessible, accessible to the general public, creates a safe environment, provides some informal landscaping for aesthetic, wildlife and recreational purposes and links to the Green Network where possible. Sites proposing less than 50 dwellings or in areas which do not have a deficit of open space, are required to provide new open space, improvements or enhancements.
- 7.14 The adopted plan notes that the amount and / or quality of open space in the Borough should increase over the plan period due to the growing population. Details on the provision of open space in Reading Borough can be found in the Open Spaces Strategy 2007, and the subsequent Strategy Update 2018. The 2007 Strategy identifies the existing open space on the estate as having 'restricted' access for the public. The Open Space Strategy and Strategy Update show that the proposal site is located within the 400m and 600m buffer of recreational open space.
- 7.15 Overall, the Strategy Update notes that between 2001 and 2011, the population of Reading Borough grew 8.8% (as compared to the national rate of 7%, paragraph 4.1), and that in the last ten years there has been a small increase in the amount of recreational open space. In the last ten years there has been a small increase in the amount of recreational open space, and access to open space has slightly increased with a slightly greater proportion of Reading falling within a 400m buffer of recreational open space.
- 7.16 The proposal site is not located in an area which has an open space deficit, and overall accessibility within the Borough has improved, and policy protects existing open space, and seeks to ensure that its quality is not negatively impacted. Policy also states that open space which replaces open space that is lost due to development is accessible and outweighs the loss, and any new open space that is provided is accessible, safe and



provides some informal landscaping and links to the Green Network where possible.

Summary of Existing and Proposed Open Space

- 7.17 Currently, the majority of the existing open space included within the proposal area has poor quality amenity, characterised by the existing bin and refuse collection facilities and poor quality lawn with no defined usage. The open space does not include any pathways, street furniture or street lighting.
- 7.18 The buffer between the ground floor of the tower blocks and the open space is low quality, characterised by a coloured tarmac strip (approximately 1m wide) and a knee rail, and the footway that runs alongside the existing parking court.
- 7.19 The open space that is proposed for development is estate land of low amenity value. The area which is currently occupied by the bins and refuse facilities will now be included within the curtilage of the building, thus enabling the development of a new entrance and an enlarged refuse and recycling store which will provide improved facilities that address the hygiene and servicing issues that are currently experienced on the estate. Therefore the loss of the open space, which is poor quality, will enable improvements that are of benefit to the existing residents of the estate.
- 7.20 A smaller proportion of the open space which is built on, and also has low amenity value, allows for the minor increase in the external wall insulation, and the new cycle storage facilities. These proposed changes will also bring benefits for the existing residents on the estate.
- 7.21 The table below summarises the position in relation to existing and proposed open space: the proposed developments which bring improvements to the estate are facilitated by a loss of 280sqm of low quality open space.

Figure 7.1 Existing and proposed open space

	193 Wensley Court	203 Irving Court	193 Riversley Court
Site Area	1578.5 m ²	1121.0 m ²	1924.5 m ²
Existing			
Existing Building GEA	473.0 m ²	471.7 m ²	500.1 m ²
Existing Open Space <i>(low quality amenity space, including an area occupied by refuse and recycling bins and low quality lawn)</i>	1105.5 m ²	649.3 m ²	1424.4 m ²
Proposed			
Proposed Additional Building GEA <i>(including ground floor extension and external wall insulation)</i>	74.1 m ²	73.8 m ²	45.4 m ²
Proposed Additional GEA <i>(Cycle Stores)</i>	37.0 m ²	29.0 m ²	37.0 m ²
Total building / storage footprint	585.1 m ²	574.5 m ²	545.5 m ²
Proposed Open Space for communal use	993.4 m ²	546.5 m ²	1342.0 m ²
Reduction in Open Space	111.1 m ²	102.8 m ²	82.4 m ²
Total Reduction in Open Space	280.3 m ²		



7.22 The proposed communal open space is redesigned with a flexible amenity space, that incorporates street furniture for seating and imaginative play, individual and family cycle storage lockers and street lighting. The space is clearly defined by new proposed pathways linking to improved pedestrian connections that are part of the wider Phase 1 masterplan and woodland tree planting.

7.23 The new open space proposals also include an improvement to the buffer zone around the existing buildings through the introduction of a wider pathway of 1.8m, surfaced with uneven cobbles. On the street-facing elevations, the perimeter will be defined by a raised brick kerb detail and to amenity spaces by an additional planting buffer section.

Conclusion

7.24 In response to Policy EN8 and Policy ENg, it is recognised that there is a presumption in favour of retaining undesignated open space, and that there is a need to provide accessible, useable high quality spaces. However the amount of open space that is lost is minimal (280 sqm) in the context of the wider estate, and the quality of amenity, the usability of these spaces, and the biodiversity provided by the open space that is lost is low.

7.25 The open space that is lost enables: the extension of the ground floor of the towers incorporating much needed upgrades to the refuse and recycling areas as well as the entrance lobby which have improved accessibility; an improvement to the materials of the external walls of the towers; and the provision of cycle storage. These changes will bring benefits to the existing residents and address the Climate Emergency through the sustainability measures. The renewal and improvement of existing dwellings is in accordance with Policy H14.

7.26 In addition the proposed changes bring the following open space enhancements:

- The improvements to the open space at the base of the tower will provide quality, usable amenity space for exiting residents;
- New tree planting will bring biodiversity and environmental benefits. Further details about the tree planting are provided below;
- A buffer zone will be created around the buildings which will ensure amenity is maintained for the existing residents;
- New lighting in the public realm will improve safety;

7.27 The loss of open space is considered to be outweighed by the improvements made to the remaining open space so that its use and



enjoyment is increased, and safety and accessibility is improved. The proposed changes enable these open spaces to be integrated with the wider estate open space improvements.

Proposed Tree Planting

7.28 Adopted Policy EN14 require trees, hedges and woodlands to be protected from damage or removal where they are of importance. The policy requires new development to make provision for tree retention and planting, particularly on the street frontage, to maintain and enhance the character and appearance of the area in which a site is located, to provide for biodiversity and to contribute to measures to reduce carbon and adapt to climate change. There is also a requirement that the trees are adequately maintained.

7.29 Extensive landscaping, including planting of trees, is included as part of the Phase 1 estate improvement works granted permission in December 2020 (reference no.200122). The Unilateral Undertaking for Phase 1 of the regeneration works requires the provision of 275 trees. Section 4 of the Unilateral Undertaking states:

Paragraph 4.7: To plant 275 trees on the application land.

Paragraph 4.8: If clause 4.7 cannot be fulfilled in its entirety the Owner will submit and obtain approval for an off-site Tree planting Scheme covering the Minster Ward where the remaining number of trees not planted on the Application Land will be planted.

7.30 The table below shows the tree planting strategy for Phase 1 and Phase 2 which responds to the requirements of Policy EN14 and the requirements of the Phase 1 Unilateral Undertaking:

- A total of 275 trees will be removed in Phase 1 and 2 in order to facilitate the development of new dwellings and the landscape and estate improvement works;
- Overall 279 trees will be planted as replacement, exceeding the number removed, and the requirement of 275 replacement trees as agreed in the Unilateral Undertaking;
- of these proposed new trees, 70 will be planted during Phase 2.
- Separate to this, three Turkey Oak trees are proposed for removal by RBC due to health and safety reasons that are not associated with the proposed development. These three trees are therefore not included within the total number of trees to be removed.

Figure 7.3 Tree Strategy

Number of trees to be removed – Phase 1 and 2	
	66 individuals (34 C Cat, 22 B Cat, 10 U Cat)
	209 trees from within 13 groups (169 C Cat, 40 B Cat)
Total	275
Number of proposed trees – Phase 1 and 2	
Phase 1	209
Phase 2	70 (minimum)
Total proposed trees	279

7.31 Further details are set out in the Design & Access Statement.

Preliminary Ecological Assessment

7.32 The adopted plan notes that there are many undesignated sites where there may be important biodiversity interest (paragraph 4.2.63) and therefore for some types of development, an ecological survey report and / or bat survey will be required (paragraph 4.2.64).

7.33 An Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) has been undertaken by ECOSA and it forms a part of the application submission. ECOSA have previously undertaken an EclA for the Phase 1 development at Wensley Road which covers the wider site. The EclA submitted here refers only to the three 15 storey tower blocks within the centre of the site.

7.34 In summary:

Bats

- The tower blocks do not have suitability for roosting bats;
- The wider site has some suitability for foraging and commuting bats;
- Mitigation and compensation measures recommended in relation to bats are that construction works take place within daylight hours in order to avoid disturbance to foraging and commuting bats for the duration of the construction phase;



- The provision of in excess of 70 new semi-mature trees and new landscaping will enhance the area for foraging bats;

Birds

- The tower blocks are unlikely to be used by nesting birds and therefore impacts on birds in the short or long-term is unlikely;
- No mitigation or compensation measures are required in relation to birds;
- Enhancements for bird nesting will be provided through 12 swift nesting boxes integrated within the parapets at roof level of each building; and solar powered MP3 swift callers will be located on each roof which attract the swifts to these new nesting sites, played from April to August set on a timer for certain times of the day. The provision of in excess of 70 new trees and landscaping will also enhance the area for nesting birds;

7.35 The EIA concludes that in considering the impacts of the proposal, and the mitigation, compensation and enhancements proposed, which are set out above, it will accord with relevant national and local policy.

Cycle parking

7.36 Adopted Policy TR5 Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging

Development should provide car parking and cycle parking that is appropriate to the accessibility of locations within the Borough to sustainable transport facilities, particularly public transport.

Development should make the following provision for electric vehicle charging points:

All new houses with dedicated off-street parking should provide charging points;

Within communal car parks for residential or non-residential development of at least 10 spaces, 10% of spaces should provide an active charging point.

7.37 Existing provision: three banks of 4 cycle storage lockers, one for each tower block. As part of the Phase 1 proposals, these cycle storage lockers will be relocated to be in closer proximity to the associated buildings which will allow for improved surveillance from the existing homes.

7.38 Proposed provision: a total of 45 cycle lockers, providing 60 cycle spaces; equating to 30 individual cycle lockers (10 per building) and 15 double 'family-sized' lockers (5 per building).

7.39

Figure 7.4 Cycle Storage Strategy



Refuse and recycling

7.40

7.41



Development should demonstrate measures to minimise the generation of waste in the construction, use and life of buildings and promote more sustainable approaches to waste management, including the reuse and recycling of construction waste and promotion of layouts and designs that provide adequate, well-designed space to facilitate waste storage, reuse, recycling and composting.

- 7.42 The Phase 1 Masterplan was designed to allow for the collection of refuse bins from the current locations in each of the three tower blocks.. Due to the reconfigured street and parking layout, revised locations for existing external recycle bins have been proposed. The general waste bins remain in the existing locations under Phase 1.
- 7.43 A tracking exercise was undertaken and included in the Phase 1 application which demonstrated that the refuse vehicle used by RBC can service these locations.
- 7.44 Under the Phase 2 proposals, which increase the existing internal refuse and recycling capacity in the ground floor of the tower blocks, there are no changes to the collection arrangements. Therefore the tracking exercise undertaken for Phase 1 is equally relevant to Phase 2.
- 7.45 As the capacity of the extended internal refuse and recycling area in the towers has increased, there is no need for the externally located recycling bins as proposed under Phase 1.
- 7.46 Further details are set out in the Design and Access Statement.

Ground Appraisal

- 7.47 A Ground Appraisal report has been prepared by GeoEnvironmental which includes the findings from a desk study and intrusive ground investigation of geochemical and geotechnical factors that have relevance to the proposal.
- 7.48 Intrusive investigation was carried out in February 2020 and the report has been updated to reflect the gas and groundwater monitoring undertaken to date on the site which was undertaken from March 2020 to March 2021.
- 7.49 The report concludes on the further actions that should be taken which include: further investigation of the Made Ground in the north-east area of the Phase 1 site for asbestos, Remediation Method Statement developed for site, including an Asbestos Management Plan if required, Materials Management Plan for the should the re-use of Made Ground soils be proposed; if abnormal conditions are encountered, Geotechnical / Geo-Environmental advice should be sought to determine a suitable source of action.



8.0

Sustainability

8.1

RBC declared a Climate Emergency in 2019, and are committed to working towards achieving carbon neutral Reading by 2030. Policies in the newly adopted Local Plan reflect this support for sustainable development:

- Policy CC1 Presumption in favour of Sustainable Development states that a positive approach will be taken to considering development which reflects this presumption.
- Policy CC2 Sustainable Construction and Design states that proposals will be acceptable where the design of buildings and site layouts use energy, water, minerals and materials and other natural resources appropriately, efficiently and with care and take account of the effects of climate change. In relation to residential development, the policy requires that the proposal should include recycling greywater and rainwater harvesting where systems are energy and cost effective.
- Policy CC3 Adaption to Climate Change states that all developments must demonstrate how they have been designed to incorporate measures to adapt to climate change, which include: orientation of new buildings to maximise opportunities for natural heating and ventilation and reducing exposure to wind and other elements; demonstrate how buildings are maximised resistance and resilience to climate change; use of trees and other planting where appropriate as part of a landscape scheme; minimise impact of surface water runoff from the development in the design of the drainage system.

Energy and Sustainability Statement

8.2

An Energy and Sustainability Statement has been prepared by HTA Design LLP and submitted as part of this application. This documents the following sustainability principles that have been adopted in the proposals:

- Fabric first approach to the building envelope
- Supporting active, sustainable means of transport through the provision of safe, secure and easily accessible cycle storage, and linking to the Phase 1 improved connections to the travel network;
- Improved recycling, refuse and food-waste facilities to encourage and support residents' recycling habits;



- Enhanced landscape and amenity provision with increased biodiversity value and linking with existing and proposed biodiverse habitats;
- Reusing materials on-site where possible to reduce waste, and specifying materials with low embodied carbon, minimising waste and reducing material transportation;
- Holistic approach to improvements to the environment for existing residents leading to positive impact on mental health and personal wellbeing.

- 8.3 A fabric first approach has been adopted for Phase 1, and the fabric specifications have been reviewed in order to inform the approach taken for Phase 2. The proposed strategies for Phase 2 intend to adopt a similar approach to reduce carbon emissions to the lowest levels possible, reduce energy demand, and tackle fuel poverty.
- 8.4 Through the introduction of the proposed fabrics to the external envelope, energy efficiency will improve by 24%, and tenants will benefit from reduced annual heating demand and energy bills.
- 8.5 Four fabric improvement options have been assessed. The specification for Option 4 (triple glazed windows, improved doors, walls and roofs, improved air permeability) aligns with the specifications of Phase 1. A highly performing Mechanical Ventilation and Heat recovery (MVHR) system and full reprovision of lighting fittings with low energy appliances is proposed, which improves carbon reduction by 30.7% above current Building Regulations.
- 8.6 The Energy and Sustainability Statement demonstrate that the proposal meets the requirements of local plan policy, addressing principles of sustainable development, improving the existing built fabric and bringing the existing buildings in closer alignment it with the proposed net zero carbon development in Phase 1.



9.0

Proposed New Signage

9.1

The proposed design includes street number signage for the existing tower blocks. Therefore the application submitted for the main renovation works in the towers and adjoining ground level amenity space is also supported by an application for advertising consent.

9.2

The Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) regulations set out the criteria which cover the instances where express consent is required.

Criteria of Class 2A (An advertisement displayed for the purposes of identification, direction or warning, with respect to the land or building on which it is displayed) in Schedule 3 of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 states:

(1) No advertisement may exceed 0.3 sqm in area:

(2) illumination is not permitted:

(3) No character or symbol on the advertisement may be more than 0.75m in height or 0.3m in an area of special control:

(4) No part of the advertisement may be more than 4.8m above ground level or 3.6m in an area of special control.

9.3

This submission includes an application for advertising consent for the following reasons::

- The area covered by the three signs exceeds 0.3sqm;
- The signs on the elevations will be 5m in height and 0.955m near the entrances; and
- The signage on the elevation will exceed the limit of 4.8m above the ground.

9.4

The proposal must also take into consideration Local Plan Policy OU4 'Advertisements' which states the following:

Advertisements will respect the building or structure on which they are located and / or their surroundings and setting in terms of size, location, design, materials, colour, noise, lettering, amount and type of text, illumination and luminance, and will not have a detrimental effect on public safety. The cumulative impacts of adverts will be taken into account, and a proliferation of advertisements that detrimentally affect visual or aural amenity or public safety will not be acceptable. All adverts shall comply with the following criteria:



- (a) Advertisements will not obstruct windows, any other sign already located on the building, or cut across significant architectural features such as historic fascias, windows, pilasters, cornices or scrolls;*
- (b) Where a shop of business occupies more than one adjacent unit, the advertisement will not run between the shopfronts;*
- (c) Advertisements on listed buildings or in Conservation Areas will respect or enhance the building or area, and will respect the key features of the special historic interest;*
- (d) Advertisements will not reduce visibility for users of the highway or accesses onto the highway;*
- (e) Illumination should not detract from the amenity of the area or pose a safety hazard to users of the highways; and*
- (f) Advertisements should not obscure the sight lines of cameras installed for public safety.*

Details of the Proposed Signage

9.5 As part of the proposed elevational treatment, new signage is proposed at the north-east and south-west corner of each of the existing tower blocks, and at the new entranceway at the ground floor of each the existing tower blocks. The upper level signage shows the street number of each block on Wensley Road. The street-numbering will be arranged vertically, spanning the upper two floors. The ground level signage shows the street number and name of each block.

9.6 The table below provides the measurements of the proposed signage:

Figure 9.1 Signage measurements

	Main Entrance Signage	Upper Floor Signage (Front Elevation)	Upper Floor Signage (Rear Elevation)	Total
193 Wensley Court	1.2m ²	4.3m ²	4.3m ²	9.8m ²
203 Irving Court	0.8m ²	4.5m ²	4.5m ²	9.8m ²
205 Riversley Court	1.1m ²	4.5m ²	4.5m ²	10.1m ²



Consideration of the Proposed Signage

- 9.7 A signage and way-finding strategy is under consideration for the whole of the Wensley Road regeneration area, and the proposed signage included in this application will assist in way-finding and reinforce the identity of the estate.
- 9.8 The proposed street numbering on the tower blocks, at the new ground floor entrance and the upper level signage, will be made from materials that coordinate with the proposed new window frames.
- 9.9 The upper-level signage numerals will be arranged vertically; they will be large and simple for visibility, and sized to correspond with the double height window proportions which are proposed for the upper two floors of the tower blocks. The proposed signage is appropriate in size and scale for the 15-storey tower blocks, and it will be visible from ground-level and assist in way-finding for both pedestrian and vehicles on the road.
- 9.10 The ground level signage will display the name of the tower block and the street number. It will be located adjacent to the proposed new entrance at ground floor, and assist in way-finding and reinforce the identity of each tower block and the whole estate.
- 9.11 The signage is proposed to be a permanent installation,
- 9.12 The signage will:
- Not be illuminated;
 - Not obstruct the windows on the existing tower blocks;
 - Not reduce visibility for highway users;
 - Not obscure sight-lines of cameras installed for public safety.
- 9.13 For the reasons set out above, the proposed signage on the tower blocks complies with the criteria set out in Policy OU4.



10.0

Summary and Conclusions

10.1

This Planning Statement and the suite of application documents submitted in support of this application demonstrates the case in support of the Phase 2 proposals.

10.2

Policy CC1 'Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development' of the RBC Local Plan states:

'A positive approach to considering development proposals will be taken that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Where appropriate, the Council will work proactively with applicants jointly to find solutions which mean that proposals can be approved wherever possible.'

'... Planning applications that accord with the policies in the development plan (including, where relevant, with policies in neighbourhood plans) will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.'

10.3

Sections 5 to 9 of this Planning Statement have demonstrated that the proposals are in accordance with all relevant policies in the statutory development plan and will amount to sustainable development in accordance with the NPPF.

10.4

This application relates to Phase 2 of the new build and estate improvement works at Wensley Road. Phase 1 (approved in December 2020) will provide 46 new affordable homes which will be net zero carbon, and associated improvements to amenity providing, landscaping and planting and the rearrangement of car parking spaces. The design submitted in this application has been considered in the context of the Phase 1 proposals to ensure integration between the two phases.

10.5

The proposal introduces a number of interventions which will contribute to the renewal, regeneration, sustainability and accessibility of the local built environment and adjoining open space. The existing tower blocks are in need of improvement and upgrading, and the proposals will bring positive changes to the existing housing stock and meet policy aims and objectives in this regard. Thermal performance is improved through the introduction of new materials on the external façade of the tower blocks, and measures have also been made to design out crime. The elevations of the existing tower blocks will enable the visual integration of the existing buildings with the proposed new dwellings, through the chosen palette of materials, and other design interventions to the elevations. The proposed signage at



ground level adjacent to the redesigned tower block entrances, and at the top of the towers enable wayfinding, contributing positively to the identity of this residential neighbourhood for existing and new residents.

- 10.6 The key landscape principles set out in the Phase 1 proposal are applied to the Phase 2 proposals. These principles and proposed landscape developments support the integration and linkage between the existing residential area and the proposed new dwellings. There is a loss of open space of low amenity value which is required to facilitate the improvements to the tower blocks. This loss is considered to be outweighed by the improvements made to the amenity and usability of the communal open space, as well as the improvements to the built fabric. Furthermore, the majority of the open space area which will be developed to create the enlarged refuse and recycling facilities at the ground floor of each tower is currently occupied by the refuse bins. The provision of communal amenity space around the base of each tower, as part of the open space provision for the whole estate, ensures there is easily accessible amenity space for the residents of the tower blocks. This space is physically and visually linked to the centrally located communal open space approved as part of Phase 1 through pathways, and a planting scheme that takes into consideration the need to reduce opportunities for antisocial behaviour.
- 10.7 The proposed interventions improve the sustainability of the existing tower blocks on the estate. The new high quality, non-combustible external wall insulation and render system on the tower blocks will bring the fabric closer to current standards in terms of energy performance, and new windows for each of the dwelling units bring benefits to the residents by reducing energy bills. These measures will contribute towards the action that RBC is making to address the climate emergency, and more closely align the energy strategy of the existing towers with the proposed net zero carbon dwellings in Phase 1. The introduction of additional cycle storage contributes to the sustainability of the proposal. The proposed tree planting which fulfils the agreed unilateral undertaking for Phase 1 will contribute to enhanced biodiversity and provide other amenity benefits in the communal open space areas at the base of the towers.
- 10.8 The proposed changes to the entrance lobbies, servicing spaces for refuse and recycling and communal amenity space at ground level are also positive design interventions in relation to accessibility, waste and recycling arrangements, improving the quality of amenity for existing residents.
- 10.9 The proposals for refurbishment works for the existing tower blocks therefore positively address the aspirations and requirements of Local Plan policy and will bring much needed benefits to the residents of the estate



and the wider local community. In overall conclusion, we respectfully ask that planning permission for the Phase 2 proposals is granted.