

Delegated Application Report

Address: Reading International Business Park

Application No: 211754/FUL

Proposal: Construction of car port structures within the rear car park at Reading International Business Park with roof mounted photovoltaic panels

Extended Target Date: 01/02/22

Case Officer: Connie Davis

Site Description

The application site involves the site and buildings at the 'Reading International Business Park'. The site includes a six-wing office building, a Grade II listed cottage "Little Lea Cottage", a central, circular 'pod' building surrounded by a small lake. The site also contains a large open car park to the rear, and a child care centre.



A designated green link is established round the site, but this does not extend to the south-western corner which is the subject of this application.

Proposal

Planning permission is sought for the erection of car ports in the south-west corner of the site. The car ports would have solar panels fixed onto the roof of the ports.

The proposals will not result in the loss of any of the existing car parking spaces. The 'car ports' are proposed to be up to 5m in height and constructed using a lightweight structure. It is envisaged that the power generated by the PV Panels would generate renewable electricity for use within the campus and through the resultant reduction in carbon emissions required to power the building, improve the sustainability of the campus. In total, 1,614 PV Panels would be installed across the proposals.

A number of trees are proposed to be removed as a result of the proposed car ports, but re-planting is to be accommodated.

Plans Submitted:

782_RIBP Solar Carport Layout

Received 15th November 2021

Application Form

BS5837 Tree Survey and Arboricultural Impact Assessment, August 2021 prepared by Greengage

J0035789_1 - Site Location Plan

Supporting Letter prepared by Carter Jonas

Received 27th October 2021

Relevant Planning History:

201619 - Upgrade of existing office building comprising the construction of a new entrance, reconfiguration of the car parking and basement level employee ancillary facilities (provision of new gym and end of journey facilities) and improvements to the hard and soft landscaping (including provision of meeting pods), consolidated waste management area, external alterations to 'The Dot' and internal works to the Listed Little Lea Cottage and the recolouring of the existing terracotta tiles under Permitted Development Rights - Application Permitted

970250 - Development for unrestricted B1 use including 10,000 sq ft of managed small easy-in, easy-out units, associated leisure use, creche, retention of B2 use in established depot, 75 service parking spaces & 1275 parking spaces, servicing, landscaping - Application Permitted

Consultations

External Consultation

A site notice was displayed at the site for the required 3 week period. No comments have been received.

Internal Consultees:

Transport - No objection

Natural Environment - No objection

Relevant Planning Policy & Guidance:

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The Development Plan for Reading relevant to the application site comprises the *Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)*.

The '*National Planning Policy framework*' ('NPPF') 2021 states clearly that its content is to be a material consideration in the determination of applications. The 'NPPF' states that due weight should be given to the adopted policies of the Local Development Framework (LDF) according to their degree of consistency with the 'NPPF' (the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the 'NPPF', the greater the weight that may be given). Accordingly,

the 'NPPF' and the following development plan policies and supplementary planning guidance are relevant.

Planning policies

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

National Planning Policy Guidance

Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

CC7 Design and the Public Realm

CC8 Safeguarding Amenity

TR3 Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters

EN1 Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment

EN14 Trees, Hedges and Woodland

Other Documentation

Reading Borough Council Tree Strategy (2020)

APPRAISAL

a) Principle of development

The proposed car ports would be erected on brownfield land as the site is currently in use as a car park. As such, there is not resistance to the principle of adding car port structures given these would complement and relate to the use of this part of the site.

b) Design Impact on surrounding area

The proposed car ports would be placed in the south-west corner of the site, behind the main office buildings. As such, their view from the street would be limited, coupled with their single storey height. The structures themselves are considered reasonable in scale given the size of the site. The proposed solar panels are a particularly welcomed element of the scheme. The car ports would also be located a sufficient distance from the Grade II Listed 'Little Lea Cottage' so as not to result in a harmful impact on the setting of the heritage asset. As such, the proposal would not be considered detrimental impact on the visual amenity of the area in accordance with Policies CC7 and EN1 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019). However, a condition will be attached securing materials details.

c) Impact on neighbouring amenity

The proposed car ports would not be located near residential development and therefore would not be considered to result in an adverse effect on neighbouring amenity. The proposal is therefore considered acceptable in relation to Policy CC8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

c) Highway Matters

The RBC Highways Officer confirmed that there are no objections to the proposal on Highway grounds. The amount of parking spaces will remain the same and car ports will not impact

vehicle manoeuvres. As such, the proposal is considered acceptable in relation to Policy TR3 of the Local Plan (2019).

d) Natural Environment Matters

Proposals require the removal of a number of individual trees within two groups (W89 and G153) and a young ash (T152) to facilitate the parking reconfiguration. These are minor removals within large groups which will not significantly impact the landscape contribution or value as a visual screen.

Proposed planting includes 14 trees elsewhere on site. These proposals are considered to be sufficient to mitigate the loss of trees associated with proposals and the AMS detailing proposed planting will be secured by condition. No objections were received from the Natural Environment Officer although some concern was raised over how the functionality of the solar panels will be achieved given trees in the south-west corner of the site. The agent advised that they did not believe the trees will impact the functionality of the proposed solar panels, hence that canopy management shouldn't be required. The LPA have no evidence to dispute this, so it is accepted. The proposal is therefore considered acceptable in relation to Policy EN14 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

Equality Act 2010:

In determining this application the Council is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. However, there is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that the protected groups identified by the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular planning application. Therefore in terms of the key equalities protected characteristics it is considered there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the development.

Recommendation: GRANT permission subject to the following conditions:

Conditions:

1. Approved plans
2. Time limit
3. Materials to be approved
4. AMS as specified

Informatives:

1. Terms
2. Building Control
3. Complaints about construction
4. Encroachment
5. Positive and Proactive