

PLANNING STATEMENT

**Supporting a planning application for the removal of existing development and
the construction of a four-storey building to comprise 19 dwellings and
associated works**

at

75 - 81 Southampton Street, Reading RG1 2QU

September 2021

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Statement is written in support of an application for planning permission to remove all existing development, comprising an empty single storey building and hard standing, and construct a four-storey block with nineteen dwellings and associated development.
- 1.2 The application is submitted following pre-application advice provided by the Council on two occasions, references 210207/PREAPP (June 2021) and 201237/PREAPP (October 2020). Comments and advice provided have been taken on board and addressed in this planning application.
- 1.3 This Statement should be read in conjunction with the following plans and documents which accompany the planning application:
- Location Plan and Block Plan (titled Proposed Ground Context) PDO1 Rev K
 - Proposed Floor Plans (Proposed Plans) PD02 Rev K
 - Proposed Elevations (and section plan) PD03 Rev G
 - Landscape Plan 336_PN_01
 - Planting Plan 336_PP_01
 - Design and Access Statement September 2021
 - Heritage Statement (with Archaeology)
 - Preliminary Ecological Survey
 - Affordable Housing Financial Viability Assessment (plus 11 appendices)
 - Transport Statement
 - Noise Impact Assessment
 - Air Quality Report
 - Groundsure Utility Infrastructure Report
 - Utilities Electricity
 - R&D Asbestos Report
 - Daylight and Sunlight Report
 - GEA Contaminated Land Report (plus 2 appendices, maps and historic maps)
 - Landscape Principles
 - Landscape Specifications
 - Energy and Sustainability Statement
 - Demolition and Construction Management Statement
 - Open Space Statement
 - SUDs report (and 5 appendices)
 - S106 Draft Heads of Terms
 - CIL

2.0 SITE LOCATION & DESCRIPTION

- 2.1 The application site is towards the edge of central Reading. It is in a sustainable location: with essential provision shops close by and the Oracle shopping centre approximately 500m away; there is good public transport access with bus stops close by and the railway station is 1km away (with direct bus connections). Figure 1 provides an aerial view of the site and locational context.
- 2.2 The surrounding area is mostly residential interspersed with commercial development. There is a range of urban architecture, in the main 19th to 21st Century, comprising two storey and three storey terraced houses, modern offices and apartment blocks that vary between three storeys and six storeys in heights.
- 2.3 The site fronts onto a busy road. Southampton Street has a one-way traffic system, pavements to both sides, street lighting and parking restrictions through double yellow lines, short term public parking and resident permit holder parking.
- 2.4 There are heritage assets opposite the site and nearby, notably grade II star listed houses opposite and St Giles Church north of the site. These identified in figure 1 (LB).

Figure 1: Aerial (google) showing locational context of the application site.



- 2.5 The site is 0.07 hectares in size. It is rectangular in shape, and it is level. A large single storey building occupies most of the site. It was last occupied by Coop Funeralcare.
- 2.6 Immediately adjacent to the site there is an empty plot that is allocated in the Local Plan for residential development at Policy CR14j. The policy states that the site 0.08ha in size is suitable for 13-19 dwellings and should: enhance the setting of nearby listed buildings; take account of potential archaeological significance; address noise impacts on residential use; and address air quality impacts on residential use.

3.0 RELEVANT HISTORY

- 3.1 Historic Ordnance Survey (OS) maps indicate that the existing building was constructed between 1912 and 1931. As mentioned above it was last occupied by Coop Funeralcare. Wikipedia states that the Coop Funeral Care group was the largest funeral director in the UK and accounted for 16.5% of the “at need” funeral market during 2016. Funeral directors are a commercial use, they fell into the former A1 Use Class Order, so now fall under Use Class E.
- 3.2 The commercial use is supported by further evidence in terms of the planning history associated with the site. All the applications were submitted on behalf of Coop Funeralcare.
- 2014 planning reference 140483 for a canopy to the rear and replacement of existing gates to a roller shutter door on the front.
 - 1999 planning reference 980736 for two shopfront fascia signs and two side entrance signs.
 - 1991 planning reference 910732 for non-illuminated 200mm high bronze plastic, black edge lettering screw fixed to brickwork.
 - 1990 planning reference 900575 for rebuild of front elevation and creation of pitch on part.
- 3.3 As already mentioned, pre-application advice has been provided by the Council previously, references 210207/PREAPP (June 2021) and 201237/PREAPP (October 2020). The 2020 note also mentions another pre-application advice, reference 191814/PREAPP which considered two development options: 1, the erection of a five-storey building of 21 residential apartments; and 2, including the adjacent vacant land to the north for the erection of a five-storey building of 50 residential apartments.

4.0 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

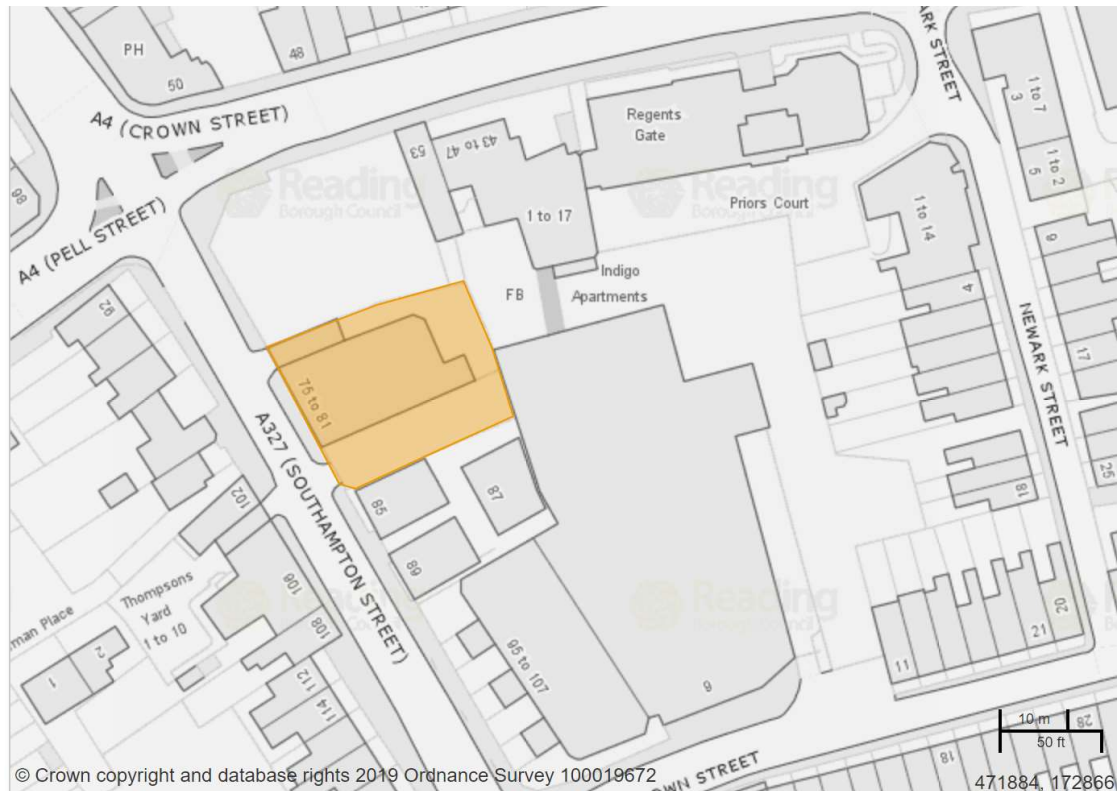
- 4.1 The proposal is to demolish and remove the existing building and its surrounding area of hardstanding. Then to construct a four-storey building comprising 19 dwellings, with a shared central lobby stairs and lift and residents direct access to the outside shared amenity area and secure cycle parking. Secure storage for bins and recycling will be provided to one side of the building at the front, providing convenient access both for residents and the removal services.
- 4.2 The building is set back from the highway. It sits lower in height comparable to its immediate southerly neighbour and the top floor is set back slightly in a mansard roof design. Within the front space there will be a parking space for a van size service vehicle. Planting to the front will provide shrubbery for defensive space to the ground floor windows of dwellings and street trees. The building maintains space to both sides, to one side secure access is provided for residents to use the cycle store.
- 4.3 The dwelling mix comprises:
- On the ground floor, four apartments - 1 x 3 bed with 107m² floor area; and 3 x 2 bed with 61m² and 67m² floor areas.
 - On the first and second floors, five apartments – 1 x 1 bed with 50m² floor area; and 4 x 2 bed with floor areas of 61m² to 69m².
 - On the third floor, five apartments – all 1 bed with floor areas of 50m² to 58m².
- 4.4 The dwellings will be served by air source heat pumps, thus reducing the carbon footprint of the development, and providing heating and cooling for the new dwellings. Other green credential features proposed include green walls and roofs; native/naturalised planting and trees selected to provide a range of ecological and aesthetic benefits and growth habits; and ecological interventions such as bird boxes, insect houses and a low intensity maintenance regime. The development will be car free, encouraging walking, cycling and the use of public transport and nearby car club services.

5.0 PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

- 5.1 Section 38(6) of the Town and Country Planning Act requires that planning applications are determined in accordance with the provisions of the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. All Development Plan policies should be in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the NPPF is a material consideration.

- 5.2 The Development Plan comprises the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 (LP). A screen print of the Local Plan Map which highlights the relevant policies is provided at figure 2 below. Other material planning policy documents comprise: Community Infrastructure Levy Charging Schedule (CIL); Annual Monitoring Report 2019-2020; Affordable Housing SPD; Planning Obligations under S106 SPD; Sustainable Design and Construction SPD; City Centre Framework; The NPPF, as already mentioned; National Design Guide; and Nationally Described Space Standard.

Figure 2: LP policies identified for the site.



Results

Area: 747 m², 0.07 ha.

RBC Borough Boundary

Boundary of Reading Central Area policy CR1-10

Air Quality Management Area see policy EN15

Boundary of Article 4 Direction see policies EN1 H7

article4: Part of Park, Redlands, Katesgrove (C4 HMOs)

Allocated development site CR11-14 SR1-4 WR1-3 CA1 ER1

policy: CR14j

address: Corner of Crown Street and Southampton Street

THE PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT

Loss of Existing Development

- 5.3 The pre-application advice acknowledges the former use of the building to be Class E. Whilst the site is within the Reading Central Area as defined by policy CR1, it is outside the Central Core, Primary Shopping Area and is not located with a designated Primary Frontage (Policy CR7). Therefore, there is no policy objection to the principle of the loss of an E/A1 land use on the site.
- 5.4 The pre-application advice also stated that the loss of the existing building must be considered. Policies CC7 (Design and the Public Realm) and CR2 (Design in Central Reading) seeks that all development must be of high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area within which it is located. Policy EN1 (Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment) seek that historic features including their settings are protected, Policy EN6 (New Development in a Historic Context) seek that in areas characterised by heritage assets the historic environment will inform and shape new development. It was agreed that the existing building has no architectural or historic interest. Whilst the building is visible within the street scene because it has no street set-back, its modest height limits any significant harm to the setting of the surrounding heritage assets. The pre-application advice acknowledges that subject to design considerations of the replacement building, the removal of the existing building is unlikely to cause an objection.

Proposed Residential Development

- 5.5 The NPPF (2021) states that decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes in a way that makes as much use as possible of previously developed land, such as this site. The pre-application advice accepted that the accessibility of the site was acceptable for residential development in the context of policy CC6 (Accessibility and the Intensity of Development) and that new residential development would align with the broad objectives of Policy H1 (Provision of Housing), in assisting in meeting the Borough's annual housing targets.
- 5.6 The next-door site is allocated for residential development under policy CR14j. That site is similar in area to the application site. The policy deems it suitable for up to 19 dwellings, subject to the impact on the setting of nearby heritage assets, potential archaeological significance, and addressing noise and air quality impacts on future occupiers. The policy CR14j site is immediately on the junction of Southampton Road and Crown Street, roads considered as two of the busiest in and out of Reading Town Centre. The application site fronts onto Southampton Street,

a busy one-way street and Noise and Air Quality Assessments have been carried out and are provided with this application. Both conclude that the proposed development would generate acceptable living conditions in respect to noise and air quality standards.

- 5.7 In respect of the demolition and construction impacts, a draft demolition and construction management statement is provided with the application. Operational working times will be limited and all practices carried out in a manner to ensure no unacceptable harm to the amenity levels of existing residents neighbouring the site.
- 5.8 It was demonstrated with the pre-application submission that development of the site would not unacceptably jeopardise privacy or daylight and sunlight levels to neighbouring development. Daylight and sunlight assessments influenced the overall design and provision of windows to the dwellings. A daylight and sunlight report accompanies the application, demonstrating that the proposed development would generate acceptable living conditions in respect to daylight and sunlight standards.

THE IMPACT ON THE SETTING OF HERITAGE ASSETS and ARCHAEOLOGY

- 5.9 As shown in figure 1 above, the site is opposite and nearby a number of Listed Buildings and within a designated view of heritage significance. Policy EN1 (Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment) seek that historic features including their settings are protected. Policy EN6 (New Development in a Historic Context) seeks that in areas characterised by heritage assets the historic environment will inform and shape new development. Policy EN5 (Protection of Significant Views with Heritage Interest) seeks that the new development should not harm and where possible should make a positive contribution to views of acknowledged historical significance; the view north down Southampton Street from Whitley Street towards the Grade II listed St Giles Church past the pre-application sites is identified as a significant view with heritage interest within the Borough.
- 5.10 The application is supported by a Design and Access Statement that demonstrates how the nearby heritage assets, including the view to St Giles Church have influenced the design. In addition, a Heritage Statement which includes an Archaeological Appraisal is provided. Consideration is given to NPPF guidance on Heritage Assets and relevant LP policies, CS7, CR2, EN1 and EN5. Guidance within the Reading Central Area Action Plan (2009) was also consulted, specifically policy: RC5 – Design in the Centre: requiring new developments to respect the existing

layouts, form, massing, materiality, and architectural quality of the surrounding area.

- 5.11 A site visit was carried out, evidenced by photos in the Heritage Statement; and it was noted that there are a number of detracting elements within the settings of the Heritage assets opposite and nearby the site. These include the application site itself, as well as a visually distracting array of front-of-property refuse areas, modern street signage and traffic control. As such, whilst the height of the current development may be modest, its direct street frontage and contrasting scale and character to the heritage assets do not make a beneficial contribution to the settings of these assets. The proposal, however, represents an opportunity for the enhancement of their current setting.
- 5.12 The new building retains a set back from the Southampton Street frontage and a step down from its neighbour (see Figure 3 below), as well as landscaping to the frontage which will serve to integrate the new building within the existing streetscape and soften its appearance. Although unlikely to appear within the specified view from Whitely Street (as outlined in Section 3 of the Heritage Statement), the new building will come into the view towards St Giles Church when moving northwards along Southampton Street and particularly after the turning to West Hill where both the church spire and application site are in full view.

Figure 3: View northwards to St Giles Church with proposed development



- 5.13 In conclusion on this matter, as evidenced in the Heritage Statement: No harm has been identified to the significance of any of the designated heritage assets or to

views of acknowledged historical significance. The proposals would be proportionate and, compliant with relevant policies contained within the NPPF and the Reading Borough Council Local Plan. There would be preservation for the purposes of Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

CHARACTER & APPEARANCE

- 5.14 Policies CC7 (Design and the Public Realm) and CR2 (Design in Central Reading) seek that all development must be of high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area within which it is located, including landscaping.
- 5.15 The proposal has been informed by the character of the area, including those heritage assets that make a positive and important contribution to the character and appearance of the area and dealt with above. The proposal has also been designed to reflect the pre-application advice.
- 5.16 The materials and style reflect the traditional styles of nearby buildings. The set back and height ensure that the building will not have a domineering presence in the street. A small step back in the profile frontage serves to break up the massing of the front elevation. Frontage planting, including trees soften the development and add attractive features to the street. The off-road parking bay for service vehicles has also been designed to reflect the symmetry of the building and the materials will be functional and attractive.

UNIT MIX

- 5.17 Policy CR6 requires developments to include no more than 40% 1 bed units and a minimum of 5% 3 bed units. The proposal provides 1 x 3 bed, 11 x 2 bed and 7 x 1 bed units. The proposal complies with the policy requirement.

RESIDENTIAL AMENITY

- 5.18 Policy H5 (Standards for New Housing) sets out the standards that new housing should be built to. Policy CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity) seeks to protect the amenity of existing and future occupiers whilst Policy EN16 (Pollution and Water Resources) seeks to protect existing and future occupiers from the impacts of pollution. Policy CR6 (Living in the Centre) seeks that residential development in the Central Area provides a suitable standard of accommodation for future occupiers, particularly in respect of noise and air quality.

- 5.19 The plans show that National Described Space Standards are adhered to, albeit some of the larger 2 bed units are a little less than the 70m² for four-person bed spaces.
- 5.20 The designs and window locations have been influenced by sunlight and daylight assessments (a report accompanies the application). All habitable rooms have full-sized windows that face onto the street or onto the amenity space and high-level windows to the sides to ensure adequate light and outlook.
- 5.21 All windows serving habitable rooms at the ground floor have an area of shrubs planted to create some defensible space. To the front, the set back is greater than that provided at pre-application stage, the set back and additional planting should acceptably mitigate future occupiers from the impacts of the road. The number of trees that can be planted to the front is balanced with the need to ensure adequate levels of light into the dwellings and the safety of drivers and pedestrians in respect of the service vehicle parking area.
- 5.22 The plans show that the closest residential building to the rear is 18 – 20m away. There are no windows which look directly towards the proposed building. To the sides, high level windows are proposed. Hence the proposal does not have any impact on the privacy levels of surrounding development, nor would it impact on privacy levels of the potential development of the adjacent site for residential development.
- 5.23 Policy H10 (Private and Communal Amenity Space) seek that new dwellings are provided with functional private or communal open space. The policy acknowledges that developments within central Reading may not always be able to provide amenity space to a similar level as those outside the centre albeit some private/communal space should be provided. The proposal includes provision of a landscaped communal area of amenity space to the rear. This combined with the accessible location of the development near leisure and recreation facilities within the town centre is considered adequate provision of the development.
- 5.24 The application is accompanied by an Air Quality Assessment Report and Noise Assessment Report, which demonstrate that the proposal adequately mitigates existing and future occupiers from pollution.

SUSTAINABILITY

- 5.25 The proposal results in the provision of over 10 dwellings and is thus categorised as a major development. Policy H5c requires that all major new build residential is designed to achieve zero carbon homes standards. The Council's interpretation of

zero carbon homes standards is that the development would be required to achieve a minimum 35% improvement in the dwelling emission rate over the target emission rates, as defined in the 2013 Building Regulations and then a financial contribution would be required to offset the remaining carbon emission to zero.

- 5.26 An Energy and Sustainability Statement accompanies the application. It shows that the development is expected to achieve regulated CO₂ savings of 45.5% compared to a notional development that meets the minimum Part L 2013 Regulations standards of performance. This complies with the Reading Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document (Adopted December 2019) CO₂ savings target of 35% overall. To achieve 'zero carbon' for the residential portion of the scheme, 9.2 tonnes per annum of regulated CO₂, equivalent to 274.6 tonnes over 30 years, from the new-build domestic portion should be offset offsite. The offset based on £60 per tonne over a 30-year period was determined as £16,560.
- 5.27 Policy H5b also requires that all new building housing is built to the higher water efficiency standard under Regulation 36(3) of Building Regulations. Page 12 of the Energy and Sustainability Statement shows how water consumption in the dwellings will be reduced. In accordance with Policy CC3 (Adaptation to Climate Change), the proposal will incorporate Air Source Heat Pumps to provide renewable energy; and green roofs, which help provide insulation as well as contributing towards sustainable urban drainage.
- 5.28 The proposal will be a car free development. It is in a highly accessible location, where services and facilities are easily reached on foot, cycle or via public transport. On street parking is controlled through double-yellow lines and resident permits, so encouraging future occupiers to avoid car ownership.

TRANSPORT

- 5.29 Southampton Street (A327) is a one way (South to North) main transport corridor and, as defined by the Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD is located within Zone 2, the primary core area but on the periphery of Zone 1, the central core area, which lies at the heart of Reading Borough, consisting primarily of retail and commercial office developments with good transport hubs.
- 5.30 A Transport Statement accompanies the application and demonstrates the site is well located in its ability to access sustainable transport opportunities. This includes a high frequency bus service within 200m of the site access, and a principal cycle corridor along London Road being located within 50m of the site access. There is also a wide range of local facilities within the vicinity of the site that enables local living and reduces dependence on the private car. This includes Reading Town

Centre, where there is a substantial retail and leisure offer, alongside significant employment opportunities. Therefore, the development site is compliant with paragraph 108a of the NPPF, as there are appropriate opportunities for sustainable travel modes to be taken up. The site is also considered to be compliant with Policy TR1 of the RBC Local Plan, as the site has an excellent level of accessibility by sustainable modes.

- 5.31 Southampton Street and the surrounding road network all have parking restrictions preventing on-street parking. Double yellow lines run along the front of the development and a residential parking permit scheme operates in roads near the site. This does however offer short term parking for visitors or those utilising hire vehicles / car clubs. The nearest car club hub is 1.5km, or 20 minutes walk, from the site. There are also car parks towards the town centre on Church Street, approximately 300m from the site access, which provides parking provision for any residual car use.
- 5.32 A servicing layby will be provided alongside the building, accessed by way of a vehicular crossover. The plans show that a small lorry (Online delivery vehicle), can park within the bay without impeding the footway. In line with the pre-application advice, this has been set back from the road edge to reduce the visual impact and maintain priority to pedestrians along Southampton Street. The servicing bay will also allow resident to drop off items from car clubs/hire cars, prior to return the car to the hire facility or car club space.
- 5.33 The Council's cycle parking standards require a total of 10 cycle parking spaces. The plans provide for 20 cycle parking spaces within an enclosed bike store. This significantly exceeds the Council requirement, and further increases the attractiveness of cycling for residents.
- 5.34 A refuse store is located to the east of the site, which is accessible directly from Southampton Street. Refuse collection will be undertaken from the street, which is in line with the existing collection arrangements at neighbouring residential properties on Southampton Street. Although this is a typical arrangement whereby refuse vehicles wait in the carriageway, there is a benefit of two 'straight ahead' lanes on Southampton Street at the access to refuse area. This means cars can pass stationary refuse vehicles safely if needed. In addition to a servicing space provided at the frontage, there is short term public parking available immediately adjacent to site access and in the surrounding residential roads to allow delivery vehicles to service the development without waiting in the carriageway.

BIODIVERSITY

- 5.35 Policy EN12 (Biodiversity and the Green Network) seeks that all development should provide a net gain for biodiversity. The pre-application advice considered that there may be a risk that the proposals would affect protected or priority species. An Ecology Appraisal has been carried out and accompanies the application. The survey concludes that the development can proceed with minimal impact to habitats and legally protected/notable species if the mitigation measures outlined within Section 5, and any measures arising from the further surveys, are implemented. There is also the opportunity to enhance the development for local wildlife in the long-term by implementing the enhancement measures.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

- 5.36 Policy H3 (Affordable Housing) sets out that proposals of 10 dwellings or more are required to provide 30% of the dwellings as affordable housing. The policy goes on to set out that in cases where proposals fall short of the policy target for affordable housing then this would need to be evidenced by way of a detailed viability appraisal (the Council's Affordable Housing SPD 2021) sets out what information is required to be provided as part of an appraisal).
- 5.37 An Affordable Housing Viability Assessment has been carried out and accompanies the application.

OPEN SPACE

- 5.38 An Open Space Statement as required for validation accompanies the application. The site is not in or next to an area of Open Space.

S106 CONTRIBUTIONS

- 5.39 Contributions will be the subject of negotiations, based on Council requirements and viability. A draft head of terms accompanies the application.

6.0 CONCLUSION

- 6.1 This statement along with separate accompanying reports provide evidence that the proposal accords with the Development Plan and NPPF in respect of providing sustainable development of a high quality and climate responsive design.
- 6.2 It is understood that the application will be reported to the Council's Planning Applications Committee, as a major-level planning application. It is anticipated that it will be presented with Officer recommendation for approval, subject to planning conditions and any necessary and viable S106 contributions.