

Apex Plaza
3 Forbury Road
Reading RG1 1AX

New Changing Facilities Building with secure cycle storage
New entry doors to car park

Planning Statement

1901_PS_01

April 2020

The Site

The site is located towards the south of Reading Station and to the north of Readings main shopping area. The existing building is located on Forbury Road. The building is mainly (Class B1) office use, with (Class A1/A3) retail use at ground level along Forbury Road.

The building has a building of a similar size on the east which is an office building and the south side which is an office building with retail at ground floor. To the north and west sides is the Reading station building and the stations platforms.

This application is principally concerned with a single storey building, a Changing Facilities Building located to the north of the site.

The Site is located in a highly accessible location close to Reading Station. It also benefits from good bus links with many buses using Forbury Road. The surrounding area is mainly an office and retail area.

Planning History

On 13th February 2017 planning permission (ref. App No: 161882) was granted for external alterations to existing office building (use class Ba1) to comprise remodelling of the western entrance and reception area, enhanced landscaping and associated public realm improvements.

On 19th May 2017 planning permission (ref: App No: 170040) was granted for change of use of ground floor Block B from office (use class B1) to create three retail units (Use Class A1/A3), associated external alterations and enhanced landscaping and associated public realm improvements fronting Forbury Road.

On 14th March 2018 planning permission (ref: App No: 180100) was granted for change of use of ground floor Block B from office (use class B1) to create three retail units (use class A1/A3), associated external alterations and enhanced landscaping and associated public realm improvements fronting Forbury Road without complying with condition no. 6 of planning permission ref, 170040 to extend the permitted opening hours from 07:00-19:00 hours Monday to Saturday, and 08:00-19:00 hours on Sundays and Bank/Other Holidays to 05:00-23:00 hours Monday to Sunday including Bank/Other Holidays.

There have also been a number of planning applications granting for works to trees and illuminated fascia signs over the years.

Policy Designations

The Site is within the Central Reading Area, an Office Core Area and Employment Area (Offices) as defined by Reading's Local Plan Proposals Map (June 2019).

The Proposals

Legal & General propose to erect the single storey Changing facilities building (Use Class B1) at basement level to the north of the building. This part of the current service road is not required to gain access into the car park. Therefore it is proposed to make more use of the service road with needed facilities for the office workers, helping to provide workspace with more cycle facilities contributing towards Reading's target to increase local cycling for office workers.

The proposed scheme incorporates a green roof to improve the views into and from within the site, which enhances the existing landscaping along the northern boundary. The green roof will also enhance the biodiversity in this area.

The building will be well insulated to meet current Building Regulation requirements. Efficient water heating with low flow showers and taps have been employed. Led lighting is used to provide an efficient lighting system. Space heating and comfort cooling uses heat recovery features. The green roof helps retain surface water and releases it slowly into the existing drainage system in a delayed way, which benefits the existing drainage infrastructure.

The scheme also comprises minor works to the car park areas with a new access door and additional cycle storage.

Policy CC2: states ... redevelopment and refurbishment of existing building stock, will be acceptable where the design of building and site layouts use energy, water, minerals, materials and other natural resources appropriately, efficiently and with care and take account of the effects of climate change.

Policy CC3: Proposals involving both new and existing buildings shall demonstrate how they have been designed to maximise resistance and resilience to climate change for example by including measures such as ... green roofs.

It also states, All development shall minimise the impact of surface water runoff from the development in the design of drainage system, and where possible incorporate mitigation and resilience measures for any increases in river flooding levels as a result of climate change.

The proposals are shown in more detail in the planning application drawing pack, prepared by Perseverance Architects.

Key Town Planning Considerations

The Development Plan for the Reading Borough comprises Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

The 2012 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the national framework in which the planning system should operate and promotes sustainable growth.

Land Use

It is proposed to increase the existing Class B1 space, to be used as changing facilities and cycle storage to improve the quality of the office space within the building. The site is located within the Central Reading Area, an Office Core Area and an Employment Area (office). These are areas where increases in office provision are supported by planning policy.

Policy EM:1 Of the Local Plan Strategy seeks to improve the quality and quantity of the existing business provision in the Central Reading area.

Policy TR1: requires all development proposals should make appropriate provision for works and contributions to ensure an adequate level of accessibility and safety by all modes of transport from all parts of a development, particularly by public transport, walking and cycling.

One of the key principals for the Central Reading Area is that, access to the centre by foot, cycle and public transport will be improved.

It is proposed to create an additional 83sqm of Class B1 space for changing facilities and cycle storage for office workers, to help contribute towards the needs for quality office space in the Borough. This is considered a key planning benefit of the scheme.

Amenity

Policy CR2 ensures that the development is designed with high quality materials. It goes on to stipulate that there must be consideration to include ways of providing green infrastructure designed into the development, for instance through, green roofs, to enhance the otherwise very urban environment.

The proposed extension to the north of the site is only overlooked by the railway platforms. The building will extend up 4.1m, so will be below the ground floor level office windows.

The building incorporates a green roof which provides an improved view of the building from Reading Station's platforms.

Heritage

There are no heritage issues with the proposed development.

Information Included within the Planning Application

The following documents have been submitted:

- Site Location Plan;
- Block Plan;
- Existing plans, sections and elevations;
- Proposed plans, sections and elevations; and
- Design and Access Statement