

Response to Local Authority comments dated 7th Oct 2019

Planning Reference 182252

Response to Natural Environment Officers Comments

Sections 4.2 (Site Arrangement) and 4.7 (Landscape and Public Realm) of the Design and Access Statement identify eight interconnected character areas. Of particular relevance is the relationship between three of those areas; Station Square, The Avenue and Caversham Road. Whilst these three areas have distinct characters, they are connected by key landscape elements and in particular the proposed trees.

The scheme connects these areas with a new tree lined streetscape, reinforcing the Caversham Road frontage between trees T1 and T6 and continuing along The Avenue into the newly extended North Station Square.

This approach provides a number of significant landscape benefits, including an extended and landscaped North Station Square, a new tree lined Avenue and a consistent tree lined verge to Caversham Road, balancing the loss of some existing trees with the substantial benefit of a co-ordinated and consistent approach, along with a very significant increase in the number of on-site trees. For reference, this results in an increase in the number of trees in these areas from ten to over fifty, including thirty-six lining The Square, The Avenue and Caversham Road.

Whilst we still believe this is a valid approach, given the NE Officers continued concerns, we have reviewed and can retain T3 (a Category B tree) by adjusting the building line and recessing the taller piece of the building proposed along Caversham Road, without any undue affects to the overall scheme.

This can be achieved by moving the building line by approximately 4m further back from Caversham Road and aligning the proposed building with the existing building line. We have attached a drawing showing this amendment in principle.

This will allow for the retention of T3, whilst maintaining the integrity and consistency of the existing and proposed trees from T3 to North Station Square.

In addition, the existing below ground culvert running across the site needs to be relocated to facilitate redevelopment. This is best achieved by revising the currently proposed route, with a slight adjustment to keep the existing section of culvert next to T3. This allows the existing culvert to be connected into the new culvert route, north of T3. This approach minimises disruption to Caversham Road and allows for the retention of T3.

This approach still results in the loss of two Category C trees (Trees T4 & T5). Given the scale and importance of this regeneration proposal these are, in our view, more than suitably compensated for by the extensive new trees along Caversham Road and beyond. This does result in three of the new trees being placed in planting containers, and our landscape architects (HED) have demonstrated how this can be successfully achieved and is a solution often used in town centres. This will not reduce the available footpath width. The three proposed trees in planting containers along Caversham Road are *Sorbus aucuparia*, to match the other proposed trees.

22nd Oct 2019

Illustrative examples of the proposed planters, which can be also found in the addendum submitted in July 2019 (A11113GR0021P1):





Sorbus aucuparia

In summary, this amended proposal (A11113B2101P1):

1. Allows for the retention of tree T3 by setting the proposed building line back by approximately 4m, aligning with the existing building line.
2. Replaces Category C trees T4 & 5 with an extensive avenue of thirty-six *Sorbus aucuparia*, three of which are in planting containers.
3. Retains the existing section of below ground culvert running adjacent to T3. The new connection being made to the north of T3, allowing for its retention.
4. Has no loss of building area or units.
5. Maintains the schemes' new, tree lined avenue from Caversham Road to North Station Square.

Given the important regenerative aspects of this scheme, we propose that the loss of Category C trees and their replacement with 170 new trees on the site as a whole, along with the retention of two Category B trees, represents a significant landscape and townscape benefit for Reading.

