

## **DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT**

**Address:** Abbeygate House, 57-75 Kings Road

**Application No:** 181850 / FUL

**Proposal:** External alterations and ancillary works to the existing building, including a private terrace area

**Applicant:** Swiss Pillar Investments AG

**Date received (valid from):** 24/10/2018

**Target Decision date:** 19/12/2018

**Agreed Extension of Time:**

**Case officer:** Tom French

### **1. Site description and Surrounding Area**

The application site is located on Kings Road near the Crown Bridge. The site contains a four storey office building with entrances in the south elevation (onto Kings Street) and the north elevation (facing the River Kennet). The site is bordered to the north and west by the River Kennet and includes a terrace area to north.

The site falls within the Central Core and Area of Archaeological Potential as defined by the Reading Central Area Action Plan (2009). The site is located within an Air Quality Management Area, area of potential contaminated land and is mostly within Flood Zone 2 however the north west corner of the site is within Flood Zone 3. The Abbey Ruins (Scheduled Ancient Monument) are situated opposite the application site.

The application building is not listed, nor is it located within a conservation area. The site is located within the Reading Central Area and within the designated Central Core and area of Archaeological Potential as defined by the Reading Central Area Action Plan (2009). The site is adjacent to the designated Office Core and Tall Buildings Cluster.

### **2. The Proposal**

Full planning permission is sought for alterations to the terrace that is located to the rear of the building (north) and alterations to the front (south) elevation. To the front of the property it is proposed replace the cladding on the high level bay window features, to extend the canopy over the entrance and to paint the existing masonry under the canopy and on the boundary wall.

To the rear it is proposed to refurbish the existing terrace including the addition of seating and ping pong table, to add an area of artificial grass, to remove the stairs that face the river and to add planting and soft landscaping.

### **3. Consultation**

Three site notices were displayed at the site on 01/11/2018. No responses have been received.

Natural Environment:

The RBC Natural Environment Officer provided the following consultation response:

‘I have a number of concerns about this application.

Abbeygate House backs onto the River Kennet and is an area of Reading Town of considerable landscape character. On the far (northern) side of the Kennet, Chestnut walk is a well-trod public footpath which leads to the historic Reading Abbey Ruins and Forbury Gardens, a popular area for walks around the Town Centre. The River Kennet is an identified existing and potential ‘Treed Corridor’ and the property is located in an area identified in the Adopted Tree Strategy as having less than 10% tree cover and as such, the Borough Council is committed to enhancing the tree and landscape cover in these areas through positive planning decisions.

The application before us appears result in the creation of an enclosed ‘backyard’ to Abbeygate House with security fencing, a shipping storage container and removal of many established beds of amenity planting to the detriment of the wider landscape character.

The application proposes the removal of many of the raised beds on site and this would inevitably result in a net loss of planting space within the hard landscape. In addition the removal of the boundary steps and replacement with a continuation of the brick terrace topped with metal railings will create a harder more urban edge to the property. The security railings will increase the sense of enclosure and harm views of Abbeygate House as seen from Chestnut Walk. The inclusion of artificial turf would not suffice to mitigate the removal of amenity planting on site.

Overall I consider that this application would result in a poor quality landscape to the detriment of the local amenity. Any revision to the scheme should also look to replant trees in the planting pits adjacent to the River Kennet as part of the wider enhancement of the site.’

Following the submission of a revised landscaping and planting scheme the Natural Environment Officer retained concerns regarding the appearance of the proposed fence, however did not maintain the natural environment and landscaping objections to the application.

Environmental Agency:

As the application site is within 20m of a main river the Environment Agency have been consulted. The following response has been received:

The site is within 8 metres of a main river, the Kennet. The proposed development lies within Flood Zone 3 and 2 as defined in Table 1 of the Planning Practice Guidance to the National Planning Policy Framework and is therefore at risk of flooding.

This application falls under our Flood Risk Standing Advice (FRSA) and we advise you to review the application using this guidance available on the GOV.uk website:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/flood-risk-assessment-local-planning-authorities>

We do not need to be consulted further on this application on flood risk grounds.

#### **Informative - Environmental Permit**

This development may require an Environmental Permit from the Environment Agency under the terms of the Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2016 for any proposed works or structures, in, under, over or within 8 metres of the top of the bank of designated 'main rivers'. This was formerly called a Flood Defence Consent. Some activities are also now excluded or exempt. **An environmental permit is in addition to and a separate process from obtaining planning permission.** Further details and guidance are available on the GOV.UK website:  
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/flood-risk-activities-environmental-permits>.

#### **4. Plans and Documents Considered**

The Council, in reaching its recommendation, has taken into consideration the following plans & documents:

Drawing No.:

- PL0102 - Existing Basement Plan
- PL0103 - Existing Ground Floor Plan
- PL0104 - Existing First Floor Plan
- PL0105 - Existing Second Floor Plan
- PL0106 - Existing Third Floor Plan
- PL0107 - Existing Fourth Floor Plan
- PL0108 - Existing Roof Plan
- PL0109 - Existing South Elevation (Front) and Sections
- PL0110 - Existing West Elevation
- PL0111 - Existing North Elevation and Sections
- PL0112 - Existing East Elevation
- PL0121 - Site and Location Plan
- PL0122 Rev. A- Proposed Basement Plan
- PL0123 - Proposed Ground Floor Plan
- PL0124 - Proposed First Floor Plan
- PL0125 - Proposed Second Floor Plan
- PL0126 - Proposed Third Floor Plan
- PL0127 - Proposed Fourth Floor Plan
- PL0128 - Proposed Roof Plan
- PL0129 - Proposed South Elevation (Front Entrance)
- PL0130 - Proposed West Elevation
- PL0132 - Proposed East Elevation
- Abbey Gate, 57-75 Kings RD Design and Access Statement, October 2018
- Planning Statement Abbey Gate, Kings Road, Reading October 2018

As received: 24/10/2018

- L90-200 Rev. B - Landscape Strategy
- L90-300 Rev. A - Detailed Planting Plan

As received: 05/12/2018

- PL0111 Rev. A - Proposed North Elevation
- PL0121 Rev. A - Site and Location Plan
- PL0122 Rev. A - Proposed Basement Plan
- PL0123 Rev. A - Proposed Ground Floor Plan
- PL0130 Rev. C - Proposed West Elevation
- PL0132 Rev. D - Proposed East Elevation

As received: 18/12/2018

- L90-200 Rev. C - Landscape Strategy
- L90-300 Rev. B - Detailed Planting Plan

As received: 19/12/2018

## **5. Relevant Planning History**

900398 - ADV - Two 10' x 12' flat estate agents letting boards - Application Permitted

920371 - FUL - Installation of two tubular posts with security cameras - Application Permitted

070898 - ADV - New low level backlit stainless steel building signage attached to new cantilevered canopy - Application Permitted

070899 - FUL - Refurbishment of the entrance and central area of front elevation of 1990's office block - Application Permitted

070963 - FUL - The conversion of half the existing fourth floor storage space into office space and erection of 4 new pitched roof dormers with alterations to 2 existing ones. Pitched Velux roof lights are included to increase daylight penetration into the office space. Removal of decorative balustrades and replacement with ones conforming to current building regulations. Facade and hard landscape cleaning - Application Permitted

110379 - CLP - Installation of 4no. 200 x 200mm grills to exterior wall on balcony - Application Permitted

## **6. 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.

## **7. Relevant Planning 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 Local Development Framework ‘*Core Strategy*’ 2008 (Altered 2015) and ‘*Sites and Detailed Policies Document*’ 2012 (Altered 2015).

The ‘*National Planning Policy framework*’ (‘NPPF’) 2012 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) (Core Strategy and Sites and Detailed Policies Document) 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.

## **8. Relevant Policies**

The application has been assessed against the following policies:

### **National**

National Planning Policy Framework;  
National Planning Policy Guidance;

### **RBC Local Development Framework**

#### **Reading Borough Local Development Framework Core Strategy (2008) (Altered 2015) Policies:**

CS7: Design and the Public Realm  
CS8: Waterspaces  
CS20: Implementation of the Reading Transport Strategy  
CS33: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment  
CS35: Flooding  
CS38: Trees, Hedges and Woodlands

#### **Sites and Detailed Policies Document (2012) (Altered 2015)**

DM4: Safeguarding Amenity  
DM12: Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters

#### **Reading Central Area Action Plan (2009)**

RC5: Design in the Centre  
RC14: Public Realm

## **9. Appraisal**

The main issues to be considered are:

- Design - Impact upon the Host Building and Surrounding Area
- Amenity
- Impact on Historic Environment
- Flooding
- Natural Environment

#### Design - Impact upon the Host Building and Surrounding Area

The proposed alterations to the front of the property (the south elevation fronting Kings Road) include extending the existing canopy above the entrance, alterations to the exterior cladding, painting the boundary wall and the addition of two roof lights in the south facing roof slope.

In the context of the host building, the proposed alterations to the south elevation are considered to be of an acceptable scale and form. As such there would not be any significant detrimental impacts to the application property or surrounding area in terms of design. Rather, it is considered that the proposed works could enhance the appearance of the application property and contribute positively to wider street scene.

The alterations proposed to the terrace to the rear of the property (north) include the addition of seating, a ping pong table and an area of artificial grass. Further it is proposed to remove the stairs that face the river and to add planting and soft landscaping. A new fence is proposed to the east of the terrace.

The proposed alterations to the terrace are relatively modest in scale and would take place within the footprint of the existing terrace. The proposed development is considered to represent an improvement to the existing terrace and would serve to enhance the appearance of the host building and surrounding area, including Chestnut Walk and the waterway.

The proposal accords with Policy CS7 and RC5.

#### Amenity

Given the scale and nature of proposed development, it is not considered that the proposal would have any significant detrimental impact upon the amenity of neighbouring properties.

The proposal accords with Policy DM4.

#### Impact on Historic Environment

The application building is not listed, nor is it located within a Conservation Area. However, it is located near to the Scheduled Ancient Monument of Reading Abbey and a number of listed buildings in the vicinity of the abbey. Whilst the proposed works would

be visible from the abbey, given the nature of the proposal, the significance of the heritage assets is not considered to be adversely affected.

The proposal accords with Policy CS33.

#### Flooding

Further to the consultation response from the Environment Agency, the application site is located within Flood Zone 2. The planning statement submitted in support of this application states that the existing drainage features will remain unaltered and that the proposed alterations do not increase the size of the building. As such, given the scale and form of the proposed development, it is considered that the proposal would not increase the risk of flooding to the building or surrounding area, impede the flow of floodwater or in any way increase the risks to life and property arising from flooding.

The proposal accords with Policy CS35.

#### Natural Environment

Further to the consultation response provided by the RBC Natural Environment Officer (see above) and following the submission of a suitable landscaping strategy and detailed planting plan; there are no objections to this application with regards to landscaping or the natural environment.

The proposal accords with Policy CS38

#### Other Issues

Community Infrastructure Levy

The proposal would not be liable for the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).

### **10. Recommendation**

**Grant** planning permission, subject to the following conditions:

#### **Conditions**

1. The development to which this permission relates must be begun not later than the expiration of three years beginning with the date on which the permission was granted.

Reason: to prevent an accumulation of unimplemented planning permissions, and in accordance with Section 91 of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of this development shall match those of the existing building unless otherwise stated on the approved plans.

Reason: To ensure that the new development appears in keeping with the existing building, in the interests of the character of the area, in accordance Policy DM9 of the Sites and Detailed Policies Document 2012 (altered 2015).

3. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:

Drawing No.:

- PL0124 - Proposed First Floor Plan
- PL0125 - Proposed Second Floor Plan
- PL0126 - Proposed Third Floor Plan
- PL0127 - Proposed Fourth Floor Plan
- PL0128 - Proposed Roof Plan
- PL0129 - Proposed South Elevation (Front Entrance)

As received: 24/10/2018

- PL0111 Rev. A - Proposed North Elevation
- PL0121 Rev. A - Site and Location Plan
- PL0122 Rev. A - Proposed Basement Plan
- PL0123 Rev. A - Proposed Ground Floor Plan
- PL0130 Rev. C - Proposed West Elevation
- PL0132 Rev. D - Proposed East Elevation

As received: 18/12/2018

- L90-200 Rev. C - Landscape Strategy
- L90-300 Rev. B - Detailed Planting Plan

As received: 19/12/2018

Reason: because permission is granted in respect of the development as detailed in the approved plans only.

### **Informatives**

1. Your attention is drawn to the terms and conditions of this permission. Any development which is carried out but which differs materially from the approved plans and details, or does not comply with any condition(s) or planning obligation(s) attached to the permission may result in the Council taking action to remedy the breach of planning control. If you are in any doubt please contact the Council.
2. The applicant's attention is drawn to Building Regulations requirements. Please contact Building Control on 0118 937 2449 for advice.
3. The construction (and demolition) of the development will be subject to environmental health law and the applicant is referred to:  
<http://beta.reading.gov.uk/environmentalprotection>

4. The decision to grant planning permission follows the positive and proactive consideration of the issues raised by this planning application and issuing the decision within the statutory time period.
5. This development may require an Environmental Permit from the Environment Agency under the terms of the Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2016 for any proposed works or structures, in, under, over or within 8 metres of the top of the bank of designated 'main rivers'. This was formerly called a Flood Defence Consent. Some activities are also now excluded or exempt. **An environmental permit is in addition to and a separate process from obtaining planning permission.** Further details and guidance are available on the GOV.UK website:  
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/flood-risk-activities-environmental-permits>.
6. The Local Planning Authority has worked positively and proactively with the applicant to resolve relevant matters to allow permission to be granted within the prescribed target or agreed extended timescale for the decision to be issued.