

October 2018

Statement of Community Involvement

East Street, Reading

Created for Studios Development (Reading)

The ideas and information contained within this report and any other associated documents are of a confidential nature and must not be passed on to any third party without the prior written consent of Built Environment Communications Group.

Contents

Executive Summary 3

Background and Approach 5

Public Drop-in Event..... 6

Feedback 7

Conclusion 10

Appendices..... 11

Appendix A – Exhibition Invitation Distribution Area 11

Appendix B – Resident & Business Invite 12

Appendix C – Email Invitation sent to Ward Councillors 13

Appendix D – Presentation Slides..... 14

Appendix E – Feedback Form 22

Executive Summary

This Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) demonstrates the schedule of pre-submission engagement which was undertaken by Studious Development (Reading) Ltd (referred hereafter as 'the Applicant') in preparation for the submission of their application for East Street Car Park (referred hereafter as 'The Application Site').

The submitted application is for the proposed development comprising 135 bedrooms for student habitation; amenity spaces including lounge, cinema room and dining room; landscape space and indoor cycle storage.

The Applicant has previously been granted planning permission for the Application site however, these renewed proposals are being submitted as part of an assessment to better utilise the site.

From the outset the Applicant sought to ensure early engagement with the local community in the vicinity of the application site. To facilitate this, consultation activities were undertaken, including a public drop-in event and an ad hoc exercise visiting local businesses. The project team has looked to involve the local community during the consultation process and to ensure that the community were made aware of the proposals and had the opportunity to provide feedback.

The Built Environment Communications Group (BECG) were appointed to organise and manage this process. To do so, BECG put together an engagement strategy that would satisfy the expectations of Reading Council. This report provides details of the community engagement undertaken by the Applicant including the feedback received and how this has been reflected in the submitted proposals, where possible. Please find below a list of consultation activities undertaken by the project team to raise the profile of the site and engage with local residents.

Date	Event
26/09/2018	Email invitation sent to Ward Councillors
24/09/2018	Drop-in event invitation sent to residents
4/10/2018	Drop-in event and local businesses visited

The objectives of the consultation were to ensure that residents, businesses and local stakeholders were made aware of the proposals and any potential concerns that they may have could be addressed by the project team.

To complement the previous consented proposal's consultation period, the Applicant continued to engage with the local community by having the following engagement events:

Drop-in event

The drop-in event gave an opportunity for residents to find out more about the proposed scheme. They were shown a presentation with the proposal details and were then encouraged to fill out a feedback form. The majority of attendees also engaged in discussions with the members of the project team, asking questions and detailing their thoughts.

Visiting Local Businesses

Members of the Project team went to individual businesses surrounding the Application Site. Members of staff or the business representatives were shown the same presentation as at the drop-in event. Going directly into the local community allowed the Applicant to gain more insight into a range of perspectives regarding the proposals.

Response to feedback

The Applicant received 16 feedback form responses that showed support with the proposal's principles. This is evident from the following multiple-choice answers which were only positive or neutral towards the proposals:

- **Layout and design-** 75% 'strongly agree' or 'agree' with the proposed layout and design of the proposals.
- **Landscaping and design materials-** Over 80% of recipients 'strongly agree' or 'agree' with the landscaping and design materials of the proposal.
- **Student use-** 75% of recipients 'strongly agree' or 'agree' with the choice of student accommodation.

Executive Summary

Additionally, three major themes were consistent in the written open-ended comments which are displayed below:

- **Anti-social behaviour-** There was concern that the security of the site could be compromised by anti-social behaviour. This was mostly addressed by discussions between the project team and residents regarding the planned onsite management team. After these discussions the general feeling amongst the attendees was that in the long term, the proposals would help alleviate the issues.
- **Traffic management during construction-** Residents were looking for reassurances that disruption to them would be limited during the construction. The Applicant will be addressing much of the resident's concerns within the Construction Management Plan. This plan will aim to reassure the residents of East Street that the construction of the scheme will be conducted according to agreed guidelines with the Council.
- **Student impact-** Residents and local businesses tended to agree that more students would provide a positive contribution to the local area. This positive response from the feedback forms is very encouraging to the Applicant, who has set out a clear intention of gaining the support of the local community.

Further comments were also made, which have been addressed in the feedback section of this document. This document sets out a record of the public consultation process and a summary of the feedback received.

Background and Approach

The consultation period sought to follow national and local engagement strategies by providing the local community with an opportunity to comment on and shape the proposals prior to the submission of the planning application. This was done mainly through a drop-in event which was designed to provide an update to local residents about the proposals in comparison to the previous consented scheme.

The consultation programme sought to:

- Raise the profile of the scheme within the local community
- Inform about the design, planning and development process
- Communicate the proposals to local residents and stakeholders
- Provide a mechanism for interested individuals and parties to comment on the scheme and related issues
- Open lines of communication with residents and stakeholders which would remain open throughout the planning process.

The Consultation strategy was to provide first contact engagement with local residents and political stakeholders to first raise awareness of the proposals and the drop-in event as the conduit to provide feedback. This was done through a letter invitation sent via royal mail to local residents and businesses and an email invitation to the local ward councillors. This strategy therefore included:

- An agreed distribution area for consultation (Appendix A)
- Delivery of invitations for the public exhibition inviting local residents (Appendix B)
- Invitation sent to Katesgrove Ward Councillors (Appendix C)
- A public drop-in event held in the onsite Management office
- A feedback form available at the exhibition for attendees to provide their thoughts about the proposals
- A dedicated email address for residents to send queries about the consultation and proposals
- A dedicated consultation hotline and email address provided on the exhibition boards and feedback forms for all attendees to access

Public Drop-in Event

Drop-in Event

The Drop-in event was held between 5-8pm on 4th October 2018 in the Management site Office located on the site on East Street. The location was chosen given it was located on the proposal area and to provide ease of access to residents and invited stakeholders.

The exhibition was advertised via two methods. Invitations were sent to 424 local addresses, both residential and commercial, within the local community using a defined distribution area. Also, email invitations were sent to the local ward councillors, including:

Name	Position
Cllr Sophia James	Ward Councillor – Katesgrove
Cllr Rose Williams	Ward Councillor – Katesgrove
Cllr Gurvinder Kaur	Ward Councillor - Katesgrove

The drop-in event provided a sixteen slide PowerPoint presentation (Appendix D) with details about the proposals including:

- Introduction and background to the site
- Overview of the proposals
- CGI views of the proposals
- Elevations views of the proposals
- A comparison between the consented scheme and the new application
- A breakdown of the overhead site plans for the site – basement, ground floor and indicative upper floor levels
- Proposed design materials for the scheme
- Landscaping proposals
- Benefits of the scheme
- Further contact information

The event attendees and local business representatives were shown a tablet presentation detailing the proposals and then encouraged to fill out a feedback form (Appendix E).

Local businesses visited

Occurring simultaneously to the drop-in event, the Applicant went directly to local businesses to gain a wider perspective of feedback from the local community. The Applicant received feedback from 8 further businesses, alongside the feedback received during the drop-in event.



Photo taken at drop-in event

Feedback

The public drop-in event was organised to inform local residents and stakeholders about the proposals and to garner their feedback – whether attendees were supportive of the scheme and if not where the proposals could be improved.

A member of the project team guided the attendees through the presentation. After which, they were encouraged to fill out a feedback form which consisted of a questionnaire and a space to write their own comments.

Previous engagement in regards to the original application meant that several of the attendees were already well-informed about the scheme and its general principles indicating there was already a level of awareness amongst some residents regarding the proposals.

The drop-in event attracted 10 residents, the majority of whom live on the same street of the Application Site. 16 Feedback Forms (including feedback sought from local businesses) were received during the event

A summary of the feedback can be found below:

- **Layout and design** - 75% 'strongly agree' of 'agree' with the proposed layout and design of the proposals.
- **Landscaping and design materials** - Over 80% of recipients 'strongly agree' of 'agree' with the landscaping and design materials of the proposal.
- **Student use** - 75% of recipients 'strongly agree' or 'agree' with the choice of student accommodation.



Photo of attendees filling in feedback forms

Map of feedback respondents addresses



 Attendee postcode  Approximate location of proposed site

Note: There are two addresses outside of this image at:

- School Rd, RG31 5BG
- Lowfield Rd, RG4 6PQ

Feedback

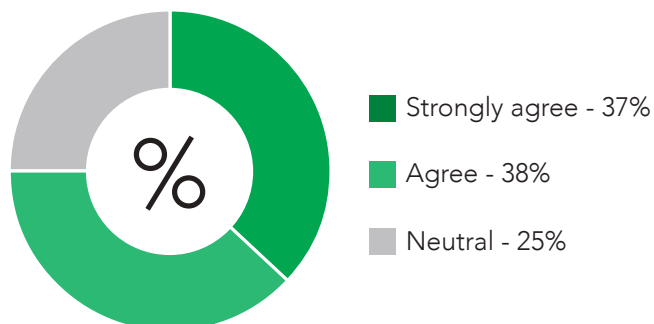
Feedback form responses

For the first three questions on the Feedback form, the recipient had the following answers available to them: Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree and Don't Know

Question 1 Do you agree with the proposed layout and design of the proposals?

A clear majority of (75%) 'strongly agree' or 'agree' with the proposed layout and design of the proposals with 25% answering 'neutral'.

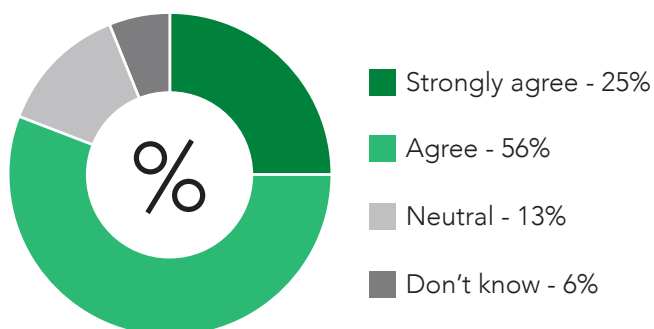
These responses indicate that the general feeling toward the design were positive and show the lack of concern expressed during the public consultation for the extra-storey (in comparison to the consented plans) within the proposals. One resident noted down that the design will 'create a really lovely student environment.'



Question 2 Do you think that the landscaping proposals and design materials will make a positive contribution to the local area?

Over 80% of recipients 'strongly agree' or 'agree' with the landscaping and design materials of the proposal whilst 20% answering 'neutral' or 'don't know'.

These answers reflect several recipients who expressed enthusiasm with what the scheme would look like commenting that they were happy the scheme would be a well-designed addition, whilst not being out of place in the surrounding area. Another resident echoed this sentiment when they wrote that the 'scheme looks like it will blend in.'

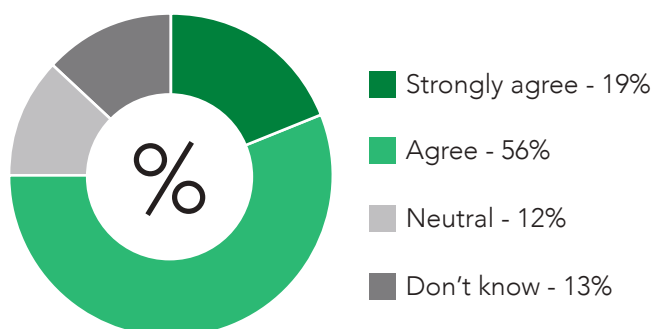


Question 3 Do you agree the proposals provide a sustainable choice for new high quality student accommodation?

75% of recipients 'strongly agree' or 'agree' with the choice of student accommodation whilst the 25% remained 'neutral' or 'don't know'.

These responses reflect that most attendees accepted that students are beneficial economically to the local community. With one resident writing 'this [student accommodation] will bring life to the area.'

Additionally, residents acknowledged that purpose-built student accommodation would help alleviate the pressure on Reading homes being converted into Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO).



Feedback

Question 4 Any further comments

For the fourth question, the residents and business representatives were asked for any further comments. This gave an opportunity to write any additional comments that people might have about the proposals. The following is a selection of these comments:

Positive Comments

- We agree with the plan for this development.
- [Will] Create a lovely student environment and won't feel too isolated or further away from other students.
- We're excited to have 100+ students right behind our business.

Neutral Comments

- Please make sure to secure the area at night especially the entrance as the area is already subject to heavy ASB [Anti-Social-Behaviour].
- We would like to be sure that the new building could address an improvement in security of the site.
- How is your CDM plan going to deal with the very restrictive site space moving forward?

Negative Comments

- Issues with the management is undertaken- often large vehicles/ lorries are on pavement blocking access at East View Place with the development of New Century Place.
- Please keep construction vehicle noise down in the mornings!

Key Issues for Review

The following are the general themes that were discussed:

General theme discussed	Response
Concern regarding anti-social behaviour According to residents, East Street has been a venue for anti-social behaviour. There was concern that the new residents of the proposed scheme, students, could be vulnerable.	The utilisation of the site as private student accommodation will utilise the site with proper lighting and security measures. A management team will also be deployed onsite to ensure that surveillance of the site is maintained and to reduce anti-social behaviour
Traffic management during construction There is concern about how much disruption there will be to residents living on East Street during construction.	A construction management plan will be in place to ensure that traffic movements to and from the site are correctly managed during the construction process. Once construction is completed, given the site is student accommodation and is located in an central, urban location, it is envisaged that the site will not generate a large number of traffic movements.

Conclusion

This statement of community involvement summarises the consultation activity completed in connection with this application. The Applicant has conducted a programme of community engagement, which has demonstrated the Applicant's commitment to providing an opportunity to view the proposals. This has worked to introduce the proposals to local stakeholders, garner their feedback and an opportunity to raise any concerns regarding the proposals.

The public drop-in event held on 4th October was the focal point of the engagement strategy and this was followed up with a further ad hoc exercise talking to local businesses on the day. The Applicant wished to be open and approachable from the outset of this engagement programme and BECG organised an array of meetings, presentations and a public exhibition to be able to gauge the local community's perception of the proposals and relay any comments or discussion points to the development team.

The combination of inviting residents to discuss the proposals and visiting local businesses has given the Applicant feedback from both residential and commercial perspectives. The responses that the Applicant received to the proposals were positive. Overall, 75% of respondents agreed with the proposed layout and design of the proposals. 81% of respondents agreed that the landscaping proposals would make a positive contribution to the area. 75% of respondents agreed that the proposals provided a sustainable choice for new high-quality student accommodation. In particular attendees felt that the proposals would provide a quality student environment and local businesses were supportive of new students in the area.

The concerns that were expressed are two-fold, the first being, security of the site during construction and after. The second being, how much disruption would be caused to the residents of East Street during construction. These comments were fed back to the development team and have been assessed as part of the proposal submission.

In conclusion, this statement of community involvement demonstrates that the proposals put forward have been effectively presented to the public and the Applicant has striven to engage with the community throughout the process. The Applicant will continue to engage with stakeholders and the public to inform them about the progress of the development to seek further feedback from the community.

Appendices

Appendix A – Exhibition Invitation Distribution Area



Appendix B – Resident & Business Invite



The Building Centre
26 Store Street
London WC1E 7BT

T: 020 3697 7630
E: info@becg.com
W: becg.com

Monday 24th September 2018

Dear Resident,

R.E. Invitation to drop-in event

I am writing to introduce our company BECG, who specialises in promoting community engagement and increasing public awareness of local developments. We are currently working with our client who is looking to display plans for the former private car park, East Street.

As a local resident, we would like to invite you to a public drop-in event, where you can view plans, speak to members of the project team and give your comments and feedback. The details of the exhibition are as follows:

Date: Thursday 4th October

Time: 5pm – 8pm

Venue: Collegiate Site Office, Opposite New Century Place, East Street, RG1 4QJ

If you cannot attend the exhibition, please do not hesitate to get in touch with Sarah Wardle at BECG, if you have any questions or would like further information, at the following:

Email: sarah.wardle@becg.com

Telephone: 020 3697 7659

Yours faithfully,

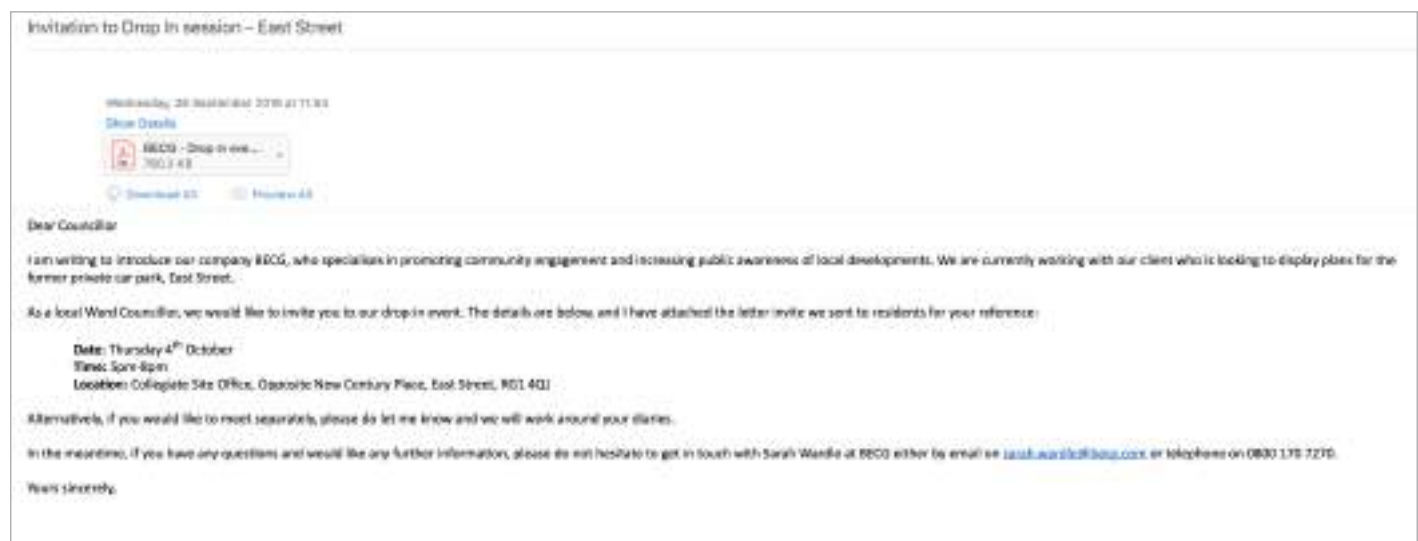
Sarah Wardle
Senior Account Director
Built Environment Communications Group

Registered in England and Wales | Company No: 03096503 | VAT No: GB 730 2333 80

— Birmingham | Bristol | Cambridge | Cardiff | Leeds | London | Manchester | Norwich | Winchester —

Appendices

Appendix C – Email Invitation sent to Ward Councillors



Appendix D – Presentation Slides

Welcome

Today we are displaying plans to redevelop the East Street Car Park into a new high-quality development built for student accommodation. This will help to provide student housing required in Reading as well as contributing to local infrastructure.

Following this event, the team will evaluate the feedback received and further refine the proposals, before submitting a planning application later this year.



Background

The East Street Car Park is currently in use as a site compound having previously been a private office car park. The offices have now been converted to C3 residential dwellings in a sustainable location with no parking required.

Studios previously submitted the original application which was initially refused. This application was subsequently updated and gained consent through appeal.

Studios has reviewed the consented proposals and plan to submit an updated scheme, which you can view today.



Appendix D – Presentation Slides

Vision

Studios proposes to provide a purpose-built 5 storey student building, constructed to the highest quality.

The site will include:

- 135 bedrooms for student habitation
- Amenity spaces including: lounge, cinema room and dining room
- Attractive, fully landscaped spaces
- Cycle storage to promote sustainable travel
- Onsite management through a leading national student housing management company to regulate onsite behaviour – Collegiate AC



CGI displaying site from top of East Street

Proposals



CGI showing the exterior of the scheme from East Street

Appendix D – Presentation Slides

Proposals

Original application and new application comparison



Proposals

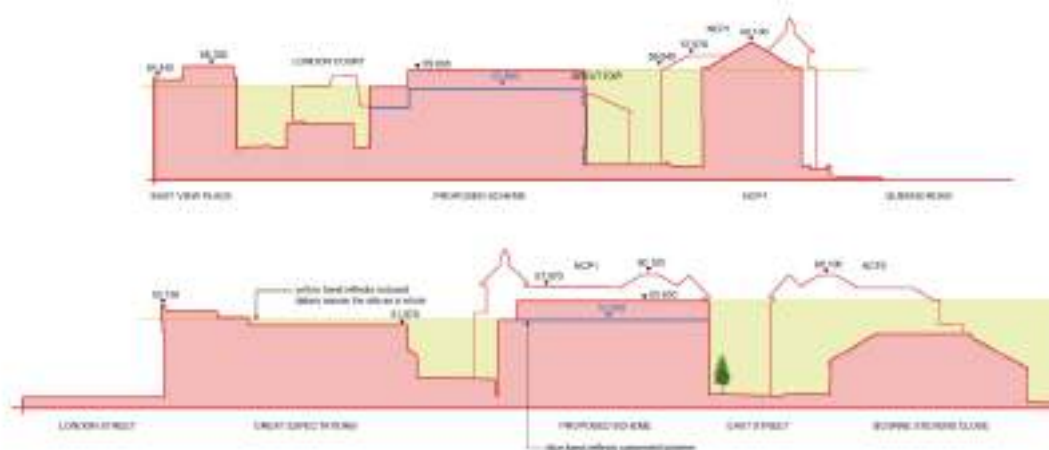
Consented scheme and new application comparison



Appendix D – Presentation Slides

Proposals

Consented scheme and new application comparison



Proposals - Elevations



Diagram showing the exterior of the proposals

Appendix D – Presentation Slides



Appendix D – Presentation Slides

Proposals



Plan – Typical Upper Level

Proposed Design Materials



Appendices

Appendix D – Presentation Slides

Landscaping Proposals



Landscaping Proposals



Appendix D – Presentation Slides

Benefits for you

Studios is mindful of including the community in any development proposals, as well as ensuring that proposals are in keeping with Council requirements for Student Housing. This development will benefit the local community in the following ways:

1. **High-Quality:** The materials proposed will help enhance the local area and street scene
2. **Infrastructure Payments:** A higher CIL payment than the original application contributing to council funding
3. **Student Housing Needs:** Reading University is looking to increase student accommodation in the town and this site will contribute to this
4. **Alternative Development Needs:** The site's capacity and purpose-built design will help free up other potential sites for alternative uses such as residential homes, including affordable housing
5. **Student Benefits:** Students are a benefit to the local area contributing to the local economy, increasing business opportunities and creating jobs
6. **Fewer HMOs:** Purpose-built student accommodation lessens reliance on HMO student development which benefits the local community
7. **Quality Design:** An improved façade and external materials compared to the consented scheme

Thank you for attending

Thank you for visiting our public exhibition, we hope you found this useful.

Please take a moment to complete one of the feedback forms available at the end of this presentation.

Alternatively, you can return a completed feedback form to us using one of the pre-paid reply envelopes available here today.

Please note, the deadline for submitting feedback is 5pm on Tuesday 16th October 2018. The project team will carefully review all of the feedback received prior to the submission of a Planning Application to Reading Council.

If you have any further questions, please contact Alex Cowley at BECG through the following:

 alex.cowley@becg.com  0800 170 7270

Appendix E – Feedback Form

East Street, Reading



FEEDBACK FORM

Privacy Statement

By filling-in and returning this form to us you are agreeing that we can hold and process your personal data in relation to this public consultation exercise.

- We will only share your personal data with the project planning team for planning evaluation purposes only.
- Your identifiable, personal data will not be used for any other purposes without your consent. We will use your data to:
- Send you updates about the project (where you provide us with your contact details).
- Develop a Statement of Community involvement (or similar document) about this public consultation that will be submitted to the planning authority or similar body; this will be a publicly available document. Your comments will be anonymous, and we will only identify you in these reports with your express permission.

If you provide us with your contact details, we might also contact you to ask you more about the comments you've made.

Thank you for taking the time to attend our exhibition and discuss the proposals with a member of our team.

The team would appreciate any comments or observations you have about the scheme or any of the detailed plans on display. Please take the time to complete this form and either place it in the ballot box, or return it to us using the free post envelope provided by Tuesday 16th October 2018.

If you require any further information please contact a member of the project team using the details below:

Community Hotline: 0800 170 7270
Email: alex.cowley@becg.com

*PLEASE COMPLETE ALL SECTIONS BELOW IN BLOCK CAPITALS

Once completed, please fold this feedback form in half and post it into the ballot box before you leave the event. If you wish to fill in later and return it by post, please place it in an envelope and return it to: Exhibition Response, B E C G, Building Centre, 26 Store Street, London, WC1E 7BT. You must affix a stamp, unless you have a prepaid envelope.

Your Details

If you choose not to fill in all parts of this section, we will not be able to include your comments in the consultation process.

Title (Miss/Mrs/Ms/Mr/Other):

First Name or Initial:

Surname:

Postcode:

Age Group (please circle):

- ☐ Under 13 ☐ 13-17 ☐ 18-24 ☐ 25-34
☐ 35-44 ☐ 45-54 ☐ 55-64 ☐ 65-74
☐ 75-84 ☐ 85+

Your Contact Details

We will use these details to contact you and update you on the proposals. You don't have to fill in this section if you'd rather we didn't contact you.

Address:

Telephone:

Email:

☐ I would like to be kept informed on the progress of the proposals

DATA PROTECTION

We hold all personal data in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (EU) 2016/679 and your personal data will not be transferred outside of the European Economic Area. You can see our full Privacy Statement, Data Protection Policy, Data Retention Policy and find out how to make a Subject Access Request at the following website address becg.com/dp or by contacting us on 01926 893 893 / dataprotection@becg.com

Appendices

Appendix E – Feedback Form

Q1. Do you agree with the proposed layout and design of the proposals?

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Don't Know

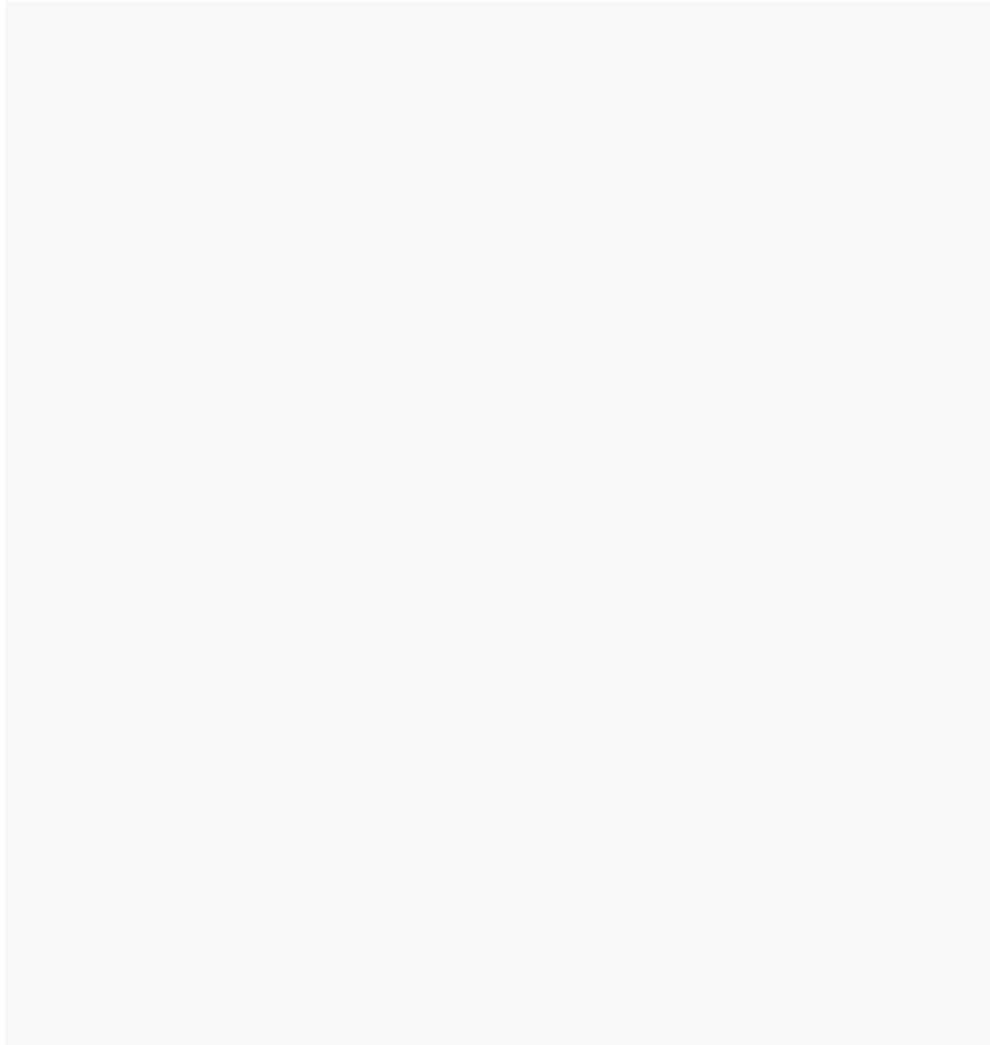
Q2. Do you think that the landscaping proposals and design materials will make a positive contribution to the local area?

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Don't Know

Q3. Do you agree the proposals provide a sustainable choice for new high quality student accommodation?

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Don't Know

Q4. Any further comments



Birmingham:

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Birmingham,
B4 6GA
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Aztec West
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