

Statement of Community Engagement

No.1 Reading, 29-35 Station Road, Reading

Station Road Dev Co Ltd

November 2018



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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Statement of Community Engagement (SCE) has been prepared by Turley on behalf of Station Road Dev Co Ltd.
- 1.2 This SCE forms part of a planning application for a new hotel, offices and retail space at 29-35 Station Road, Reading.
- 1.3 Full details on the design of the proposed development are set out in the accompanying Design and Access Statement, which explains how the design has evolved. The accompanying Planning Statement outlines the pre-application process of engagement with Reading Borough Council which has been undertaken. Further details are provided in the accompanying technical reports submitted as part of the planning application. This SCE should be read alongside these other documents.
- 1.4 The SCE provides a detailed record of the consultation activities that have taken place in order to inform and engage with interested parties on the application proposals. All feedback received during the consultation period was recorded, analysed and considered as part of the design process.

Consultation overview

- 1.5 The Station Road Dev Co Ltd development team delivered a pre-application engagement programme, which included engagement with planning officers at Reading Borough Council, key town centre stakeholders and site neighbours (both residential and commercial). This engagement has enabled the project team to build an understanding of the local context, raise awareness of the developing plans and inform the evolution of the proposals.
- 1.6 To ensure site neighbours and relevant stakeholder groups had the opportunity to view and comment on the proposed plans a number of engagement methods were used. Engagement activities included pre-application briefing meetings with key stakeholders; distribution of a letter to site neighbours inviting them to a drop in session; and hosting the drop in session itself.
- 1.7 As detailed in this SCE, the comments received during the public consultation have been taken into account in developing the final scheme.
- 1.8 In summary, the Applicant considers that the pre-application engagement undertaken with the local community and stakeholders has been timely, meaningful and effective.

2. Policy Context

- 2.1 The Applicant recognises that National Planning Policy places an emphasis on community involvement as an important part of the planning application process. To ensure the approach taken in the pre-application stages of this application was consistent with national and local guidelines, relevant policy was reviewed in full.
- 2.2 The Government's policy on community involvement is set out in a number of statutory and non-statutory documents, including the National Planning Policy Framework (2018), the Localism Act (2011) and the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004). Reading Borough Council provides guidance on pre-application consultation in their Statement of Community Involvement (2014).

National Planning Policy Framework (2018)

- 2.3 The revised National Planning Policy Framework (July 2018) ("the Framework") sets out that the planning system should be a collective enterprise with the purpose of helping deliver sustainable development. Paragraph 128 specifically promotes early pre-application engagement and explains that applications that can demonstrate effective pre-application engagement should be favoured over those that cannot. The purpose is to better coordinate public and private resources and help identify issues that can be resolved at the pre-application stage. In addition, paragraph 39 states that as a result, the outcomes for the community are improved and the planning system is able to function more effectively and efficiently.
- 2.4 As set out in this SCE, appropriate community engagement has taken place prior to the submission of the planning application, in full accordance with guidance set out within the Framework.

Reading Borough Council Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) 2014

- 2.5 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) requires Local Planning Authorities to produce Statements of Community Involvement (SCI) which set out how they will consult on policy and how they expect applicants to consult. Reading Borough Council sets out its expectations for pre-application engagement in its Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) 2014.
- 2.6 The Council encourages developers to carry out public consultation for all applications of a sensitive or significant scale prior to submitting an application and invites developers proposing lower amounts of development to carry out similar pre-application involvement and consultation.
- 2.7 The Station Road Dev Co Ltd project team has reviewed both national and local guidelines on pre-application engagement before creating a bespoke engagement strategy as detailed in Chapter 3.

3. Consultation Activity

- 3.1 An engagement strategy was formulated as part of the project and included:
- Engaging with planning officers at Reading Borough Council
 - Reviewing the report of a previous consultation on proposals for redevelopment of the same site
 - Engaging with local councillors
 - Engaging with the business community
 - Consulting site neighbours
 - Engaging with other town centre stakeholders
- 3.2 The engagement strategy was developed with consideration of government policy on community involvement and Reading Borough Council's Statement of Community Involvement (2014), as detailed in Chapter 2.

Pre-application discussions with Reading Borough Council

- 3.3 The Applicant has been fully committed to engaging with Reading Borough Council early in the pre-application process, recognising the benefits this can provide to the application process for both parties, and to contribute towards the evolution of the proposals by resolving issues at the pre-application stage.
- 3.4 Pre-application discussions with Reading Borough Council have taken place between September 2017 and the submission of the application.
- 3.5 Pre-application scoping meetings were held with Reading Borough Council in September 2017 and January 2018.
- 3.6 A formal pre-application meeting was held with Reading Borough Council in June 2018.
- 3.7 Full details of the pre-application engagement undertaken with Reading Borough Council can be found in the Planning Statement which accompanies the application. The primary concern raised by Reading Borough Council during the pre-application discussions was the height of the proposed building. The proposals presented at the pre-application were for a 28 storey building, however responding to the feedback from Reading Borough Council the proposals have now been reduced to 22 storeys.

Reviewing previous consultation

- 3.8 29-35 Station Road has been the subject of a series of planning applications in recent years, none of which have come to fruition. Nonetheless, consultation on previous applications for the site can help inform the approach to the current development proposals. Most recently an application was submitted for a 23 storey residential development on the site. These proposals were for a building of a similar height to the proposals now being put forward by the Applicant, and therefore the report of the consultation on the previous scheme is of particular relevance to the current proposals.

3.9 The Statement of Community Involvement, dated July 2015, and submitted to Reading Borough Council as part of planning application 151962, sets out the consultation which took place on that proposal. Key elements of which were:

- (i) Meetings with ward members
- (ii) Leaflets delivered to 281 immediate neighbours
- (iii) 1,700 leaflets delivered locally
- (iv) 500 leaflets distributed to commuters at Reading Station
- (v) Two days of public exhibition

3.10 The consultation undertaken above led to feedback being received from 19 people.

3.11 Taking into account the limited responses received to the consultation on the previous scheme, the Applicant and its development team devised a focussed consultation approach for the current planning application, which included direct contact with immediate residential and commercial site neighbours as well as engagement with key town centre stakeholder groups.

Engaging with local councillors

3.12 Between May and October 2018 the Applicant and Turley kept the ward councillors for the site (Abbey ward) informed of the on-going progress of the proposals as well as offering briefing meetings with them. Whilst the offer of meetings has not, to date, been taken up by ward councillors, the feedback received has fed into the consultation programme undertaken by the Applicant - in particular through the inclusion of additional stakeholder groups in the engagement process undertaken.

Engaging with local business groups

3.13 In September 2018, Turley, on behalf of the Applicant, wrote to the following organisations offering to meet with them to brief them on the proposals:

- (vi) Reading UK
- (vii) Reading BID
- (viii) Thames Valley LEP
- (ix) Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce

3.14 To date a meeting has been held jointly with representatives of Reading UK and Reading BID (on 20th September), and another meeting has been held with the Chief Executive of Thames Valley LEP (on 27th September).

Consulting with site neighbours

- 3.15 Given the low level of attendance and feedback when a public exhibition was undertaken by the previous applicants in 2015, it was not considered appropriate to replicate the consultation strategy used for that application. It was decided that it would be more appropriate to take a targeted approach to consultation with site neighbours for this application, ensuring that those upon whom the proposals would most directly impact had the highest priority in consultation. Businesses and residents neighbouring the site (154 in total) were therefore invited to attend a drop-in session held in the neighbouring Thames Tower building at which information on the emerging proposals was available and members of the development team in attendance to answer any questions.
- 3.16 An invitation letter was written to raise awareness of the proposals and invite recipients to attend the drop-in session. The letter also provided a phone number and email address which site neighbours could use to contact representatives of the project team with any questions or comments. A copy of the letter is included at **Appendix 1**.
- 3.17 The letter was sent to the properties within the shaded area displayed in **Figure 1** shown below with the site marked in red.

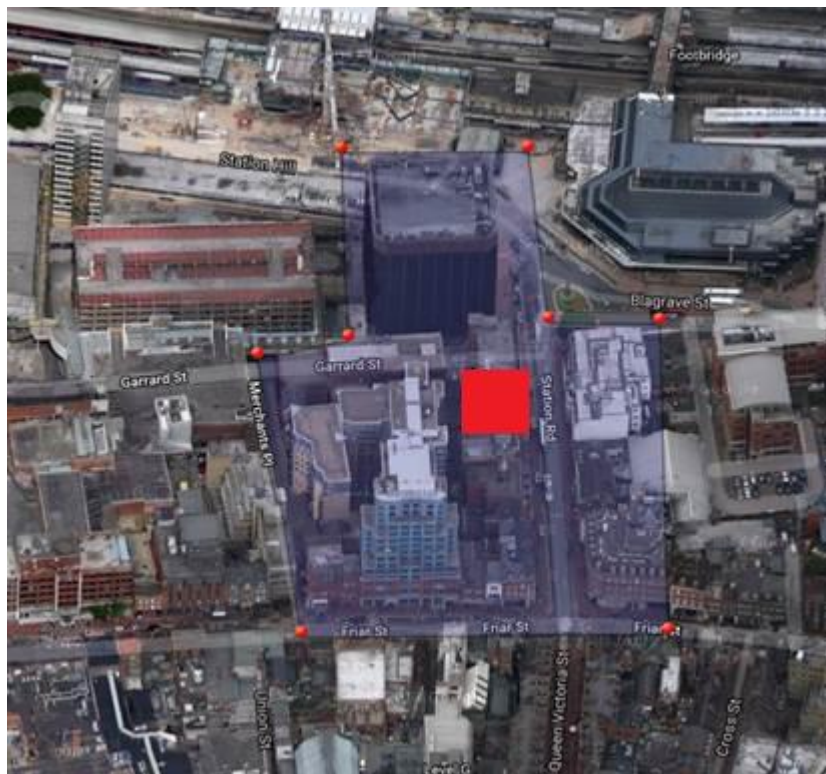


Figure 1: Consultation area

Drop-in session

- 3.18 The drop-in session was held on 27th September between 3pm - 7pm in the Roost, Thames Tower, Station Road, Reading. Five people attended the session.

- 3.19 At the event, six display panels were set up showing images of the proposed development. Members of the project team were available to answer questions. Some images can be seen in **Figure 2**.
- 3.20 A copy of the display panels is included at **Appendix 2**.

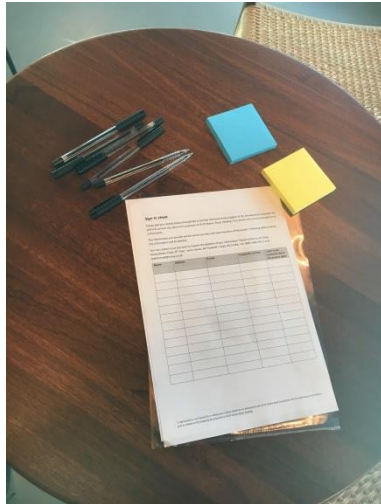


Figure 2: Photographs of the drop in session

Engaging with other town centre stakeholders

- 3.20 In October 2018 Reading Civic Society and Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee were contacted and invited to meet representatives of the Station Road Dev Co Ltd and the project team to discuss the proposals before they were submitted.
- 3.21 A meeting took place on 22nd October 2018 with three representatives of Reading Civic Society, who included amongst their number members of the Conservation Area Advisory Committee and the Caversham and District Residents Association.

4. Feedback

- 4.1 To date, no written feedback has been received from the business groups and site neighbours engaged with, although notes were taken in all meetings. The responses from the meeting with Reading UK, Reading BID, Thames Valley LEP and those who attended the drop in session is summarised below.
- 4.2 The business groups and site neighbours support the principle of this site being brought back into productive use and once again making a contribution to Reading's economy.
- 4.3 Support was expressed by business representatives for both the proposed hotel use and ground-floor retail use, recognising a need for hotel accommodation in Reading and the benefits of providing an active frontage for this prominent site in central Reading.
- 4.4 Qualified support was given by business representatives for the proposed office use, with some business representatives highlighting the quantity of office space already available in Reading. However, general support was expressed for offices with a smaller floorplate than what is currently available in Reading. It was recognised that whilst there is currently office space available with a large floorplate, there is a limited amount of space suitable for businesses which need smaller office spaces and start-ups.
- 4.5 Questions were asked by some of those who were consulted about the rationale behind using the proposed buff / grey colour pallet, rather than red brick (which is prevalent in Reading Town Centre).
- 4.6 All those who have given feedback to date, both business representatives and site neighbours, have been supportive of the proposals in respect of bringing a vacant and derelict site back into active use and by doing so reducing anti-social behaviour on and around the site, which is recognised as being a problem at present.

Feedback from Reading Civic Society

- 4.7 Following the meeting with Reading Civic Society on 22nd October, the Civic Society provided formal written feedback on 1st November. This feedback is currently being reviewed in detail, however a summary of the issues raised is provided below.
- 4.8 The Civic Society is supportive of the mix of uses proposed and preferred the retail/hotel/office proposal to residential use. Particular note was made to the approach taken to the ground floor of the proposed scheme, which was said to be "welcomed".
- 4.9 The Civic Society described the design as, "acceptable, but not stunning" and "welcomed" the approach to the ground floor.

- 4.10 The Civic Society observed that the lines on the building were clean and simple, with the potential to be seen as an elegant design, but questioned whether such a design might not be better appreciated when not surrounded by other buildings.
- 4.11 The Civic Society questioned the impact of the decision by the developers of Thames Tower to complete that development at a height lower than that envisaged by the Reading Borough Council Tall Buildings Policy and queried whether this impacted on the suitability of a tall building on the 29-35 Station Road site. The Civic Society also suggested that these proposals should be considered in conjunction with the proposed future development at Station Hill.
- 4.12 Whilst recognising that that the Applicant's proposals had already been reduced in height from 28 to 22 storeys, the Civic Society said that it was not convinced about the proposals and design in the context of Station Road. In particular, the Civic Society raised questions about the impact of the proposals on the Grade II listed Malmaison Hotel and other nearby buildings, especially as seen from Broad Street and Friar Street.
- 4.13 The Civic Society also had potential concerns about the light and shadow cast over the station concourse (whilst acknowledging that the majority of the effect would be a result of Thames Tower and that the proposed 29-35 Station Road development may be relatively minor).
- 4.14 The Civic Society questioned the impact the building would have on wind in the area.
- 4.15 The Civic Society thought that having windows overlooking the service road was a good plan.
- 4.17 Station Road Dev Co Ltd will consider all matters raised by the Civic Society and will continue to engage with the group during the post-submission period.

5. Applicant Response

- 5.1 The focus of the consultation was on encouraging comments and suggestions on the proposals and to identify any other issues which respondents considered should be taken into account when shaping the development.
- 5.2 The appropriateness of a tall building in this area of Reading was identified as an issue of concern by Reading Borough Council and Reading Civic Society; this issue was also raised in the consultation report submitted in support of the 2015 application on this site. The proposals initially shared with Reading Borough Council were for a 28 storey building, however in response to Council feedback this has now been reduced to a 22 storey building and it is the 22 storey proposals which have been consulted upon by Turley on behalf of the Applicant since September 2018. The Applicant considers that a building of 22 storeys is appropriate in this location for the reasons detailed in the Planning Statement.
- 5.3 Detailed responses to questions about the design of the proposed development, particularly in respect of its setting and the context of the neighbouring Thames Tower building and emerging proposals for Station Hill, are addressed in the Design and Access Statement that accompanies the planning application. However, the Applicant considers that the design of the proposed scheme is of a high quality which reflects and complements its surroundings and will provide a positive and attractive gateway between Reading station and the town centre.
- 5.4 The Applicant considers that these proposals offer a suitable use of mixes, including retail, hotel and office, which are appropriate - and beneficial - for this town centre site close to Reading station.
- 5.5 The colour pallet used in this Application is a response to the traditional place markers in Reading's history, namely ecclesiastical buildings (which were historically the tallest buildings in the town). These buildings tended to be of a buff stone and grey slate construction, often using a checkerboard pattern; the buff brick and grey of these proposals are influenced by this and the grid pattern used is a response to the historic checkerboard pattern.
- 5.6 In response to concerns raised by site neighbours and town centre stakeholders in respect of anti-social behaviour in and around the existing, vacant, site a window has been added to the proposals for the rear of the ground-floor retail unit to provide surveillance over the service road off Garrard Street.
- 5.7 The Applicant's design team is exploring options for improving the street scene at ground floor level, which would also help to reduce or prevent antisocial behaviour around the site.
- 5.8 Issues of light and wind are covered in the detailed reports accompanying the planning applications.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 The Applicant has undertaken an appropriate level of pre-application consultation with key stakeholders and the local community. This engagement has enabled the project team to build an understanding of the local context and raise awareness of the proposals for the redevelopment of 29-35 Station Road, Reading.
- 6.2 The engagement programme undertaken for the development has met the requirements of national planning policies and the general principles set out in Reading Borough Council's SCI (2014).
- 6.3 The Applicant has engaged with the community through a range of methods and techniques including pre-application meetings with council officers, business/community groups and a drop in session for site neighbours.
- 6.4 In response to the meetings and drop-in session, no formal written feedback has been received. However, the key themes from the oral feedback given are recorded in this SCE and have been considered as part of the pre-application process.
- 6.5 The feedback received has been reviewed and responded to in this SCE. In summary, the Applicant considers that the pre-application engagement undertaken with the local community and stakeholders has been timely, meaningful and effective.
- 6.6 The feedback received has been generally positive and has indicated support for the uses proposed for this site as well as emphasising the importance of regenerating this prominent site in Reading Town Centre. No objections to, or significant concerns about, the proposals have been raised during the pre-application consultation

Appendix 1: Site neighbour letter

Turley

19 September 2018
Delivered by post

[Salutation]
[Address 1]
[Address 2]
[Address 3]
[Address 4]
[Address 5]

Dear Sir or Madam,

INVITATION TO DROP IN INFORMATION SESSION ON PROPOSALS FOR 29-35 STATION ROAD, READING

I am writing to introduce myself; my colleagues at Turley and I represent Breithorn Developments, which is intending to submit proposals for the redevelopment of 29-35 Station Road, Reading (the former Norwich Union building) later this year.

We are aware that this site has been empty for a number of years and that there have been several attempts to redevelop it, none of which have come to fruition. We are keen to bring forward proposals for this site which are deliverable and will make a positive contribution to the economy of Reading.

Before submitting a planning application, we are keen to discuss the proposals with site neighbours. We are therefore arranging a drop in session for immediate neighbours on Thursday 27 September between 3pm-7pm at The Roost on the top floor of Thames Tower. Members of the project team including architects and planners, as well as representatives of Breithorn, will be on hand to talk you through the emerging proposals and answer any questions you may have.

If you would like to attend at any time between 3pm-7pm, please could you let me know either by e-mailing stationroad@turley.co.uk or by leaving a message on 08081 688 296. On the day, please go to the reception desk at Thames Tower and ask for Anne Blackburn at Broadway Malyan who will direct you to The Roost.

We hope to see you on Thursday 27 September. In the meantime, if you have any questions please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Yours faithfully,



Theo Butt Philip
For and on behalf of Breithorn Developments
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Appendix 2: Exhibition panels

[illegible][illegible]

3 | Hotel and Office Layouts

No.1 Reading, 29-35 Station Road

1st Floor Lobby and Office

2nd Floor Lobby and Office

3rd Floor Lobby and Office

4th Floor Lobby and Office

5th Floor Lobby and Office

Accommodation Schedule

Room Type	Quantity	Area (sqm)
Single Room	10	10.00
Double Room	10	10.00
Triple Room	10	10.00
Quadruple Room	10	10.00
Single Room	10	10.00
Double Room	10	10.00
Triple Room	10	10.00
Quadruple Room	10	10.00
Single Room	10	10.00
Double Room	10	10.00
Triple Room	10	10.00
Quadruple Room	10	10.00

Notes:

- 1. All rooms are fully furnished.
- 2. All rooms have private bathrooms.
- 3. All rooms have air conditioning.
- 4. All rooms have internet access.
- 5. All rooms have a safe.
- 6. All rooms have a minibar.
- 7. All rooms have a TV.
- 8. All rooms have a telephone.
- 9. All rooms have a desk.
- 10. All rooms have a chair.
- 11. All rooms have a table.
- 12. All rooms have a lamp.
- 13. All rooms have a mirror.
- 14. All rooms have a wardrobe.
- 15. All rooms have a closet.
- 16. All rooms have a shelf.
- 17. All rooms have a drawer.
- 18. All rooms have a cabinet.
- 19. All rooms have a bench.
- 20. All rooms have a stool.

Scale: 1:100

Legend:

- Red: Lobby
- Green: Office
- Blue: Parking

North Arrow

[illegible]

5 | Street Scene - Garrard Street
No.1 Reading, 29-35 Station Road

Architectural rendering of a street scene on Garrard Street. The scene features a tall, modern glass skyscraper (No.1 Reading) and a shorter, multi-story building with a red brick facade (29-35 Station Road). A yellow excavator is visible on the left. The sky is blue with light clouds. Text labels identify the buildings: "NO.1 READING" and "29-35 STATION ROAD". Below the main rendering are six small square images showing different material textures: stone, metal mesh, wood, brick, glass, and stone.

BroadwayMalayan™

6 | Thankyou
No.1 Reading, 29-35 Station Road

Thank you for visiting our exhibition. We would welcome any comments.



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