

Planning Statement & Flood Risk Assessment

***Proposed demolition of 2 existing boat stores and
erection of 1 replacement boat store and associated
works***

***at “Reading University Boat Club, Abbotsmead
Place, Caversham, Reading, RG4 8BB”***

On behalf of The University of Reading

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. This Planning Statement (statement) has been prepared by Bailey Partnership's Chartered Town Planning service on behalf of The University of Reading (the applicant) in support of a full planning application for:

"Proposed demolition of 2 existing boat stores and erection of 1 replacement boat store and associated works"

- 1.2. The following supporting documents that should be read in conjunction with this statement are listed in the covering letter (and below):

- Application forms
- Covering letter
- Ecology Report (to follow)
- Arboricultural Report
- Drawing no. 29055-000-G-001

- 1.3. This statement provides a description of the site, the proposed development and an analysis of the main design considerations raised by the proposals. It contains reference to both local and national planning policy and provides an overall assessment of the proposal.

2. Site Location and Description

- 2.1. The site is known as “*Reading University Boat Club, Abbotsmead Place, Caversham, Reading, RG4 8BB*”.
- 2.2. The application site is currently occupied by:
- Two storey boat club with ground floor boat storage and upper floor club house
 - Two storey women’s boat house with only ground floor in use for boat storage
 - Sculling shed
 - Car park
- 2.3. RUBC was established in 1903. In 1938 the existing women’s boat club was built along with a separate men’s boat house. In 1989 the men’s boat club was completely destroyed by fire and replaced with the existing modern facility. It was clearly not appropriate at this time to provide separate facilities for men and women; therefore, the new boathouse provides club house facilities for both sexes. The ground floor of women’s boat house has continued to be used for storage and repair of boats.
- 2.4. RUBC has a fleet of over 60 boats with a value in excess of £150,000; therefore, it is vital to provide safe, secure and protective storage of these boats as well as an area to undertake boat repair and maintenance.
- 2.5. In the 1960’s a sculling shed was constructed to provide facilities for the storage of sculling boats.
- 2.6. Both the sculling shed and women’s boat house are now beyond economic repair and separate facilities for women are no longer required and a new storage facility is required. The provision of new storage is solely to replace existing facilities and not increase the capacity for rowing at the boat club or change any of the activities that currently take place.
- 2.7. RUBC is one of Reading University’s most thriving sports clubs. They offer a comprehensive programme ranging from complete beginners to Olympians. The University employs 2.3 FTE to manage the facilities and coach rowing. There is well established partnership with British Rowing and this includes providing support for up and coming talented rowers, who are not Reading University students.
- 2.8. With such a long history it is not surprising that RUBC is one of the country’s premier rowing clubs enjoying considerable success over the years. The highlight was in the London Olympics in 2012 when 10 alumni/students were in the GB rowing team, winning two gold and two bronze medals.

- 2.9. The site is bound by existing residential units to the east (namely Crendon Court in relation to the proposed building) the River Thames to the south, residential units to the west and a public car park to the north. Each boundary to the site with the exception of the northern boundary is screened through well established trees.
- 2.10. The entire site falls within Flood Zones 2 and 3. The existing boat stores proposed to be demolished are in Flood Zone 3, as is the proposed boat store.
- 2.11. The application site is not affected by any footnote 9 policies (Green Belt, Local Green Space etc). The site does however abut an “important area of open space” and a “major landscape feature” to the south.

3. Relevant Planning History

- 3.1. There have been numerous applications for works to protected trees on the site (TPOs) and an application for “*replacement location signs attached to existing gates*”.
- 3.2. There is no other relevant planning history in this instance.

4. The Adopted Development Plan (DP)

4.1. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the provisions of the Development Plan (DP) unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In this instance the Reading Borough Council Core Strategy (adopted January 2008 & altered January 2015), Reading Central Area Action Plan, Central Area Action Plan and Sites and Detailed Policies provides the adopted DP.

4.2. The relevant DP policies are as follows:

- CS37 - Major Landscape Features and Strategic Open Space
- SA17: Major Landscape Features
- RC5 - Design in the Centre
- RC7 - Leisure, Culture and Tourism in the Centre
- RC9 - Living in the Centre
- RC14 - Public Realm

4.3. The above policies are dealt with in Section 6.

5. Other Material Planning Considerations

National Planning Policy Framework (Framework)

- 5.1. The Framework sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied.
- 5.2. The Framework is an important material consideration that, on its own, is of such weight that it can justify a decision contrary to the relevant policies of the DP.
- 5.3. Paragraph 74 is particularly relevant to this proposal and states:

*“Existing open space, sports and **recreational buildings and land**, including playing fields, **should not be built on unless**:*

- *an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or*
- *the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or*
- ***the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the needs for which clearly outweigh the loss***” (Bailey Partnership bold).

- 5.4. Whilst sited on land associated with recreational buildings the proposals consolidate the recreational activities on the site through the demolition of 2 existing boat stores (which will occur at an as yet undetermined date after the erection of the proposed boat store) and thus there is no net loss of recreation provision.

Planning Policy Guidance (PPG)

- 5.5. The PPG contains further guidance on Flood Risk and Coastal Change which is relevant to the assessment of this application (see Section 7).

Development Guidelines Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) and Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG)

- 5.6. Although it is important to highlight that SPDs and SPGs do not form part of the adopted DP they are material planning considerations. There are no specific SPDs or SPGs relevant to this proposal.

6. Assessment

Principle

- 6.1. The application site is established as Reading University Boat Club and therefore the proposed boat store development is acceptable in principle.
- 6.2. The proposal is in full accordance with paragraph 74 of the Framework which states that:
- “... recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless:*
- *The development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the needs for which clearly outweigh the loss”* (Paragraph 74, the Framework).
- 6.3. The proposals are clearly in accordance with paragraph 74 of the Framework due to the fact that the proposals consolidate the boat storage facilities across the site, in line with the operational requirements of Reading University Boat Club. The proposal will not result in the loss of recreation provision.
- 6.4. The proposed development will eventually result in a net reduction in the number of buildings on the site and reduce the total built GFA of the site (see Section 7 below).

Character and Appearance

- 6.5. The proposed boat store is sited in close proximity to the main clubhouse. The proposal also demolishes 2 existing boat stores to the north (which will occur at an as yet undetermined date after the erection of the proposed boat store). The resultant effect is that the demolition of the existing boat stores leaves an open expanse of land, free from built form which significantly improves the character and appearance of the site. This is a significant benefit of the proposals especially when considered against the “major landscape feature” and “important area of open space” to the south of the site (adjacent to the river). The proposal is therefore in accordance with policy SA17 which seeks to maintain the natural environment of the Borough and policy CS37 which ensures that no development will detract from the character or appearance of the designated major landscape feature. In fact, as discussed above the proposals enhance the natural beauty and visual amenity of the Borough’s open space and landscape in this location.

Design & Amenity

- 6.6. The size and design of the building has been informed by the storage needs of Reading University Boat Club. The proposal allows for the internal provision of 2 single storage racks and a double storage rack.
- 6.7. The proposal has been sited in close proximity to the main boat club building (the clubhouse) to ensure a close physical and operational relationship. The proposed siting also enables immediate access to the River Thames, whereas the existing boat stores to be demolished are sited further north.
- 6.8. Due regard has been given to the existing residential units to the east, namely the side elevation of Crendon Court. The design of the proposed boat store adopts a low pitch which ensures that the overall height of the proposed building is kept to an absolute minimum whilst accommodating the necessary storage space. Therefore the proposal aims to reduce the impact of the proposal on the side elevation of Crendon Court which faces the rear elevation of the proposed boat shed.
- 6.9. The side elevation of Crendon Court contains 3 small windows of approximately 500mm x 900mm each. The first floor window is obscure glazed and therefore appears to serve a bathroom rather than a habitable room. The 2 windows to the ground floor have sill levels which fall below the top of the close board boundary fence (which itself is approximately 1.8m high). Due to the restricted size of these windows it is highly unlikely that these windows serve habitable rooms. Thus any perceived loss of light or outlook is not considered to be significant.

Access and Transport

- 6.10. Vehicular access to the site is via a secured private road leading from Abbottsmead Place, however with no parking on site, vehicles only enter the site when necessary i.e. moving boats, emergencies etc. Pedestrian access is possible via the same private road and also from footpaths that run along the Thames.
- 6.11. The existing site access arrangements will remain unaltered as will the number of users of the site and its facilities. There is therefore no requirement to reassess the provision of car parking or pedestrian access points.

Ecology

- 6.12. An ecological walkover was completed during the week commencing 25th September 2017 by Ecological Planning & Research Ltd. The ecologist noted that there was insufficient edge habitat to provide for reptiles and each tree

lined boundary has very low potential to support bats. As such the ecologist does not recommend further survey work.

- 6.13. An ecology appraisal confirming the above statement will be provided during the application.

Arboriculture

- 6.14. The proposals are supported by the Baseline Tree Survey and Preliminary Retention / Removal Advice report (dated September 2017). The report confirms that there is 1 existing tree to the north east of the proposed boat store of moderate value (Category B) whilst the trees to the south west are noted as having low value (Category C). With the exception of 2 low value trees (ref. 3002 and 3003) all trees are to be retained and a suitable “zone for replacement” has been identified to the south west of the proposed boat shed. This zone for replacement provides an opportunity to further ensure that the proposed boat store is suitably screened when viewed from the south.

Sustainability

- 6.15. The sustainability credentials of Reading University are commendable. A 35% reduction in carbon emissions was achieved in 2016 and has set an ambitious target of 45% by 2021. The University has a dedicated Sustainability Services team to help drive further reductions across the following areas:
- Electricity Improvement
 - Heating and Ventilation Improvements
 - New Energy Centre & District Heating Network
 - Wider Sustainability
 - Better space utilisation
 - Halls redevelopments and efficiency
 - UK emission factors
- 6.16. Through the adoption of admirable targets and strategies the University has achieved a 26% reduction in non-residential water consumption since 2011/12 with further significant reductions planned by 2021 (30%-35%).
- 6.17. Sustainability is therefore a key consideration for the University and this has played a key role in the proposed development. In terms of the three dimensions of sustainable development; economic, social and environmental roles - as set out in paragraph 7 of the Framework the proposed development performs the following roles:
- 6.18. The proposals afford due consideration to the flood risk (see Section 7 below) and ensures that the proposed development will be able to be accommodated

on site without adverse impacts on the flood zone, thus performing an environmental role.

- 6.19. Due consideration has also been afforded to the siting of the proposed boat store which minimises the impact upon the neighbouring property. The proposals therefore perform a social role in that respect.
- 6.20. The proposal will deliver a significant social benefit through the provision of new recreational facilities.
- 6.21. The proposals will secure a significant economic and social benefit through supporting local employment during construction.
- 6.22. The above mentioned significant benefits are considered to be of such weight that these can justify a positive determination of the application.

7. Flood Risk Assessment

- 7.1. As discussed in paragraph 2.4 the proposed boat store is situated entirely within Flood Zone 3.
- 7.2. Due to the very nature of the proposed building the proposed development cannot reasonably be located in an area that is not within Flood Zone 3. The proposed use seeks to maintain a close relationship with the existing main clubhouse building due to operational requirements. The proposed boat store is classified as “water-based recreation” and is therefore defined as “water-compatible development” as set out in Paragraph: 066 Reference ID: 7-066-20140306 of the PPG. Therefore the proposed development is acceptable in Flood Zone 3 as set out in “Table 3 Flood Risk Vulnerability and Flood Zone Compatibility”.
- 7.3. The proposed building is constructed with the knowledge that the building could be subject to flooding and adopts a flood resilience approach rather than resistance (Paragraph: 060 Reference ID: 7-060-20150415, PPG). The roller garage doors, and a combination of brickwork and profile metal cladding allow water to enter and exit the building without increasing flood risk elsewhere.
- 7.4. The proposal results in a significant net reduction in the total developed area which in itself is a significant benefit of the proposals. The existing boat stores to be demolished equate to a total GFA of 212m² (61m² and 151m²) whilst the proposed boat store is 97.65m². As such the net reduction in the total developed area of the site equates to 114.3m² (Paragraph: 050 Reference ID: 7-050-20140306, PPG).
- 7.5. The site of the existing boat store will be returned to grass. This has the effect of increasing floodplain storage, enabling greater water flows and reducing flood risk beyond the application site (Paragraph: 067 Reference ID: 7-067-20140306, PPG).
- 7.6. Therefore overall the proposals are considered to be compatible with the existing use of the site, appropriate in terms of design and water resilience design, and will eventually result in a net reduction in the total developed area of the site which is a significant benefit in terms of reducing flood risk and increasing floodplain storage.

8. Conclusion

- 8.1. The proposed re-development of this previously developed site is in accordance with the adopted DP and the thrust of the Framework which supports development for recreational provision.
- 8.2. The proposals seek to group the built form together and use existing landscape features to reduce the visual impact upon the important area of open space and major landscape feature.
- 8.3. The proposed building is constructed with the knowledge that the building could be subject to flooding, however the roller garage doors, and a combination of brickwork and profile metal cladding allow water to enter the building without increasing flood risk elsewhere.
- 8.4. The proposal will deliver a significant social benefit through the provision of new recreational facilities.
- 8.5. The above mentioned significant benefits are considered to be of such weight that these can justify a positive determination of the application and should therefore be approved without delay.