Thames Water Utilities Ltd. - Containerised Laboratory Buildings - Temporary application for a period of five years. Reading Sewage Treatment Works, Island Road, Reading, RG2 0RP.

1. Site and Surrounding Area

Reading Sewage Treatment Works (STW) is located to the south of Reading on the west side of the A33. The STW was relocated from Manor Farm to its current site in Island Road in 2005. The STW serves Reading and the surrounding area for the treatment of sewage. The STW site comprises sewage treatment plant and a number of buildings which either house sewage treatment plant and equipment or provide office space in connection with the operational and administrative functions of the STW.

The Reading Recycling Centre is located to the west of the STW site, beyond which are open fields. To the north of the STW across Island Road are a landfill site, a number of residential properties and the River Kennet, beyond which is Thames Water's Fobney Water Treatment Works. A former greyhound racing track is located to the east of the STW. On the opposite side of the A33 to the east is the Hilton Hotel and the former Manor Farm STW site, which has been developed for residential and other uses.

The containerised buildings are located to the rear (east) of the main STW Building, close to the eastern boundary of the STW, as shown on the enclosed Location Plan. The proposal is to retain the buildings in their current location. The application site comprises a very small area within the context of the overall STW site.

2. Background

Planning permission was granted to relocate the STW from Manor Farm to the current Island Road site in October 2001 and the new STW was opened in 2005.

Reading STW is the receiving sewage works for the sewage flows from Reading and the surrounding catchment area. Thames Water has a duty to ensure that it carries out its statutory obligation to receive and treat these flows, so there is a continuing responsibility to maintain the existing catchment infrastructure and to carry out the investment agreed with the Government Regulator (OFWAT) to extend and improve this infrastructure. This work, which relates to both the STW itself and to the sewerage network in the catchment area, is run from the Reading STW site.

There is currently insufficient laboratory space at Reading STW to facilitate the work of the Thames Water Innovation Team. The additional space provided by the two containerised units will allow innovation projects to run in parallel and with additional scope, to enable greater operational and capital efficiencies.

Thames Water have reviewed the possibility of using existing buildings within the site, however all the space within these buildings is required for the daily operation of the STW or other operational and administrative functions and as such is not available for any other purpose.

The containerised buildings were relocated to Reading STW from Thames Water's Deephams STW in early 2015. Thames Water's normal procedure is not to carry out development without compliance with the relevant planning requirements, however in

this case the need for planning permission was overlooked and so this application is made retrospectively.

3. Proposed Development

The proposal is to retain the two containerised buildings in their current locations. The buildings are rectangular in shape and constructed from steel, coloured light grey. Building 1 is 7.93m in length, 3.5m in width and 2.4m in height. Building 2 is 9.83m in length, 3.5m in width and 2.4m in height.

Each buildings is sub-divided to provide two separate internal rooms. Building 1 will provide a meeting room and storage facilities and Building 2 will house laboratory testing equipment and a number of computer work stations. Building 1 has external access doors on the front (west) and side (north) elevations. Building 2 has two external access doors on the front (west) and side (south) elevations, as shown in the photos below.

Building 1 – Side (north) Elevation.

Building 1 – Front (west) Elevation.

Building 2 – Side (north) and Front (west) Elevations.

Building 2 – Side (south) Elevation.

The buildings cover an area of 62.15 square metres and will provide 59.85 square metres of floor space. The buildings have been designed for temporary use and can easily be moved off site once they are no longer needed.

There will be no additional employees, vehicle movements or parking requirements as a result of the proposal.

4. Planning Policy and Issues

The Development Plan for Reading Borough is formed by the Reading Borough Core Strategy (adopted 2008) and the Sites and Detailed Policies (adopted October 2012). The Proposals Map shows that the application site is within the Settlement Boundary of Reading where development is permitted subject to compliance with other development plan policies.

Utilities Infrastructure.

Core Strategy Policy CS9: Infrastructure, Services, Resources and Amenities seeks to ensure that sufficient infrastructure is provided to service development. The sub-text to this policy recognises that development in Reading Borough puts pressure on infrastructure services including water supply and waste water management. The proposed development is required as part of Thames Water's role as the statutory wastewater undertaker for Reading Borough.

Residential / Amenity.

The proposal is part of the established use at the STW and no additional activities or vehicle movements will be generated. There are no residential properties in proximity to the application site and there will be no impact on residential amenity as a result of the proposal.

Visual Impact.

The proposed development is very small in scale in the context of the Reading STW site. The eastern STW boundary is well screened by existing vegetation and the development will not be visible from outside the STW site, or prominent in views from within the site.

Flood Risk.

The STW and the application site is within an area that is designated as Flood Zone 2 according to the Environment Agency flood plain maps and the Reading Borough Proposals Map.

A Flood Risk Assessment Report has been submitted with the planning application and concludes that:

- There will be no significant loss of flood plain storage;
- The development will not impede water flows; and
- There will be no significant increase in flood risk elsewhere.

5 Conclusion

In conclusion there is a need for a small amount of additional space at Reading STW for laboratory facilities in connection with the work of the Thames Water Innovations.

The proposed development is small in scale in the context of the Reading STW site. The development will not be visible in views from outside the STW site and will not impact on residential amenity.

It is considered that the relatively unobtrusive buildings, which have been in use for some time without any problems, will cause no environmental harm and therefore should be permitted in accordance with the above policies and guidance.