

4.0 Alternatives and Design Evolution

Introduction

- 4.1 Regulation 18 of the EIA Regulations require an applicant to provide:

“a description of the reasonable alternatives studied by the developer, which are relevant to the proposed development and its specific characteristics, and an indication of the main reasons for the option chosen, taking into account the effects of the development on the environment”.

- 4.2 This chapter of the ES identifies the main alternatives to the Development which have been considered by the Applicant and describes the main reasons for choices made.

Alternatives

- 4.3 Alternative options typically comprise:

- The ‘Do Nothing’ alternative, where the Development is not progressed;
- Consideration of Alternative Locations or Uses; and
- Consideration of Alternative Designs

The ‘Do Nothing’ Alternative and Alternative Locations and Uses

- 4.4 The ‘Do Nothing’ alternative means leaving the Site in its current use as a vacant department store, cinema complex and associated restaurant and bar units. The beneficial and adverse effects outlined in this ES would not occur. The Applicant did not consider any alternative locations or uses.

Alternative Designs

- 4.5 The Applicant has engaged in a comprehensive process of pre-application engagement with RBC officers; a process that has also included a presentation to and discussion with RBC’s Urban Place Lab advisory group, and Design South East (acting as the Design Review Panel). A Preliminary Built Heritage, Townscape and Visual Appraisal report was prepared for the Development, which was shared with stakeholders as the design evolved during the pre-application stage. Additionally, the extensive consultation activities carried out to engage the local community, as highlighted in Chapter 2 EIA Methodology of the ES, has shaped the Development. The Development assessed within this ES is a result of thorough analysis of the constraints and opportunities on the Site, the character of the surrounding area and the aims of the Development.
- 4.6 The comments on the design of the iteration of the development submitted to RBC in December 2022 resulted in a number of criteria being established for the design including: reducing the massing and forms; relate the design more closely with existing Reading character; vary the skyline of the blocks; and provide increased landscaping. Following the feedback workshops were held between the Applicant and RBC to further refine the Development.
- 4.7 Comparison of the environmental effects between the December 2022 scheme and the current proposed development include better design of the Development and an improved landscape strategy with subsequent townscape and heritage implications.



Figure 4.1: Scheme submitted in December 2022 and the revised Development as considered within this ES.