



Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee
10 April 2024

Dear Tom Bradfield

OBJECTION TO PLANNING APPLICATION 240173 – Broad Street Mall

SUMMARY

We object to this application because it:

- Fails to respect the 1970s architectural heritage of the Broad Street Mall,
- Does not comply with the principles of the Minster Quarter Framework,
- Fails to protect or enhance the character and appearance of the adjacent conservation areas and listed buildings,
- Is detrimental to short and long range views into the area,
- Is unimaginative in design and materials.

Members of CAAC attended the consultation event in Broad St Mall on 13 July 2023.

1. HERITAGE

1.1 Broad St Mall

1.1.1 The heritage value of Broad St Mall must be considered in evaluating this proposal. Originally known as the Butts Centre the mall was built in 1971 – making it now over 50 years old. If approved, the concrete car park façade, the most iconic feature of the exterior of the mall will be lost apart from a token nod or two. This is the last of Reading's three concrete car parks.

1.1.2 The proposal will entirely demolish a strip of units along the southern edge of the mall that will allow retail and residential towers to be built from ground level rather than floating on the roof of the mall (as approved in application 182137). Almost 14,000 square metres of non-residential space will be lost to demolition and 2,000 created.

1.1.3 The facade demolition will entirely change the character and appearance of the mall and the wider Minster Quarter area. Once demolished, the car park façade, and with it a locally significant example of the post war architectural character of Reading, will be lost forever.

1.2 Adjacent conservation areas

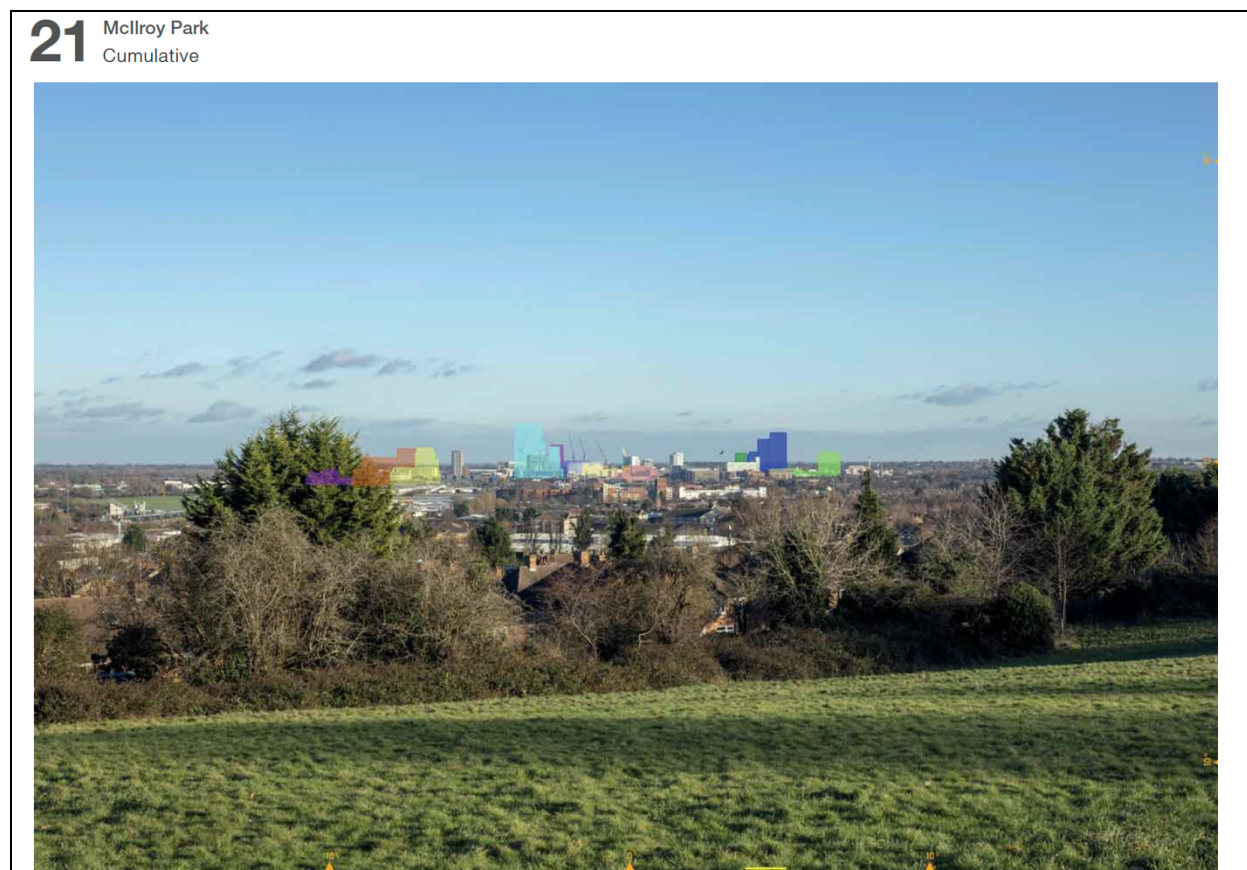
1.2.1 St Mary's Butts/Castle Street and Russell Street/Castle Hill/Oxford Road conservation areas, including listed buildings, will be overshadowed by the looming presence of the tall residential towers (section 11 of Environmental Impact Assessment Volume 2: deals Heritage, Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment). The towers in this proposal are up to 10 storeys taller than application 182137 and exceed the parameters (20 storeys) within the Minster Quarter Development Framework.

1.2.2 This proposal does not protect or enhance the significance of historic assets and their settings, but overpowers them and so does not comply with policy EN1 (Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment).

1.3 Significant Views with Heritage Interest

1.3.1 The Environmental Impact Assessment: Volume 2 assesses the impact on two significant views with heritage interest: the view from Mcllroy Park and the view approaching Reading from Southampton Street (not Mount Pleasant).

1.3.2 From Mcllroy Park (21), the development appears as a group of buildings among others within Reading's changing skyline. The cumulative view shows clearly how in prominence this proposal challenges and fights with the Station Hill development which it is accepted within the 2019 New Local Plan would be the tallest in Reading.



*View from Mcllroy Park post development including other tall buildings in the town centre.
From EIA Volume 2*

1.3.3 From the top of Southampton Street (14) and approaching St Mary's Butts, the development is the only tall building on the horizon. This does not respect the crossroads of Bridge Street, Gun Street, Castle Street and St Mary's Butts as the ancient Saxon centre of Reading; the market that the old road led to before the Abbot established his market and laid out London Street in the twelfth century.

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From Mount Pleasant area along A327 looking north-west towards Broad Street Mall
Cumulative



View from the top of Southampton Street post development. From EIA Volume 2

1.3.4 The development would have a negative impact on two significant views with heritage impact as set out in Policy EN5: View 1 McIlroy park and View 2 down Southampton Street. The negative impact on both views would be less if the buildings were not as tall.

2. DESIGN

2.1 The three tall towers and fourth block are uninspiring in design.

2.2 The predominant materials are a mix of light and dark grey toned brick and terracotta toned powder coated metal rainscreen cladding panels. It is disappointing that red isn't even brick or terracotta.

2.3 We are unconvinced that an open projecting balcony on buildings of this height are desirable or provide any useful amenity to the occupants.

3. OTHER MATTERS

3.1 The future of the mall would seem to be as an area of recreation and amenity primarily for residents of the towers. Paragraphs 4.22 to 4.25 of the Planning Statement 'Delivering Broad Street Mall's Future Vision' says in para 4.25 talks of '...blurring the line between home, work and leisure activities, setting the Mall up to be one of the main reasons to call Reading home'.

4. CONCLUSION

This application should be rejected for the reasons stated.

Evelyn Williams
Chair Reading CAAC
On behalf of Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee
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