



PLANNING, DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT AND HERITAGE STATEMENT

TEMPORARY CHANGE OF USE FROM PRISON (CLASS C2A) TO FIREARMS TRAINING
CENTRE (SUI GENERIS) FOR A PERIOD OF FIVE YEARS.

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 This statement is to be read in support of a temporary planning application submitted on behalf of Thames Valley Police (TVP). The application seeks a temporary planning permission (for 5 years from the date of permission) to enable the use of the former HMP Reading site as a facility for Firearms training by TVP.
- 1.2 The application consists of the following;
- The Completed and signed Application Forms
 - Community Infrastructure Levy Form
 - Certificates of Ownership
 - Location Plan
 - Site/Block Plan
 - Combined Planning/DAS & Heritage Statement
- 1.3 TVP has undertaken pre-app discussions with Planning Officers from Reading Borough Council ahead of this submission. The application is being submitted with the full support of the owners of the site.

2.0 SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

- 2.1 The wider site is home to the former Reading Prison. The site is dominated by the Victorian Grade II Listed prison building in the centre of the site. The remainder of the site is predominantly made up of 1960's/1970's buildings ancillary to the former main Prison building and use. The site occupies a prominent position on the south-west corner of the Forbury Road/Kenavon Drive roundabout. The site is bounded by a large boundary wall and slopes from north to south towards the River Kennet on its southern boundary.
- 2.2 The site is immediately surrounded by a number of different uses, most notably the former medieval former Abbey grounds to the south and west of the site which contains a number of historic and listed features. The remaining surrounding area is predominantly a mixture of different commercial developments reflecting the town centre location of the site.

- 2.3 The application site covers the entirety of the former Prison site and measures approximately 0.7 Ha. The main vehicular access to the site is via Forbury Road and this will continue to provide both vehicular and pedestrian access for users.

3.0 THE PROPOSALS

- 3.1 The application seeks a temporary planning permission to utilise the site for Firearms Training by TVP. The use would be a mixture of classroom based training and scenario training within some of the buildings on site. For clarification the application does not propose any physical changes to the buildings or site, it is solely for a temporary and limited 'change of use'. Principally the scenario training exercises would take place in buildings 1, 3 and 7 (as shown on the attached site layout at Appendix 1). Additional 'walkthrough' training may take place in buildings 4, 5, 6 and 8. For clarification 'walkthrough' training involves trainers/tutors walking through scenarios with students as opposed to the more physical and hands-on scenario training exercises involving students.
- 3.2 The use of the site is to supplement TVP's existing training facilities at our main Training site at Sulhamstead (approximately 8 miles from the application site). The use of the buildings provides additional variety and opportunities to experience 'real world' scenarios for students. Training sessions would operate typically once or twice a week with a maximum of 14 students and 6 firearms instructors per day. Sessions would commence at 08:00, finishing at 16:00 and only operate during weekdays. TVP would look to utilise the existing car park on site but given the sustainable location of the site would promote students to utilise public transport. Instructors (based at Sulhamstead) would utilise a minibus to access the site as opposed to individual vehicles.
- 3.3 Firearms will utilise blank rounds with no live ammunition used. No kit and equipment would be stored on site with everything returning to secure storage at Sulhamstead at the end of each training day.
- 3.4 For clarification this application relates solely to the temporary use of the site for Firearms training, no additional Police training (Public Order, Forensics, Mounted Section) will take place on the site and the site will not be used for day-to-day policing purposes.

4.0 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

4.1 The following applications have been identified

PLANNING REFERENCE NUMBER	DESCRIPTION	DECISION & DATE
161079	Temporary change of use from Class C2a (Prison) to Class D1 (Art Exhibition & Event space) of part of ground, first and second floor, and associated works	Approved 25 th Jul 2016
161078 (LBC)	Temporary change of use from Class C2a (Prison) to Class D1 (Art Exhibition & Event space) of part of ground, first and second floor, and associated works	Approved 25 th Jul 2016
121397	Alterations to existing window openings, new apertures in the foot of the brick turret and installation of new plant and ducting, to provide new some extraction system.	Approved 10 th Oct 2012
121398 (LBC)	Alterations to existing window openings, new apertures in the foot of the brick turret and installation of new plant and ducting, to provide new some extraction system.	Approved 5 th Oct 2012
120974	Extract and air-supply louvers to provide a smoke control system to accommodation wings	Withdrawn 15 th Oct 2012
070259	Installation of satellite dish	Approved 19 th Feb 2008
070260 (LBC)	Installation of satellite dish	Approved 19 th Feb 2008
950813	Demolition of existing stores building and erection of a three storey accommodation block	Withdrawn 11 th Mar 1996
930652	All weather sports pitch and additional security fencing	Determined 1 st Nov 1993

- 4.2 The most recent approval on site, Application reference 161079. Demonstrates that the site is suitable for temporary alternative uses. In determining the application the Planning officer commented, *"....a temporary permission of this nature is not considered to compromise the future re-use/redevelopment of the site in any way"*.

5.0 PLANNING ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 Reading Borough Council's Local Plan (adopted 2019) sets out a number of planning policies of relevance to the determination of this application.
- 5.2 Policy OU1 states that Community Uses (and the supporting text identifies 'training' functions as a Community Use) will be supported on existing sites and in locations with a variety of different means of travel.
- 5.3 Policy EN1 seeks to protect and enhance the historic environment of Reading, proposals affecting Listed Buildings will be required to not adversely impact on their interest or setting.
- 5.4 Policy CR13a specifically identifies the heritage asset and opportunity to redevelop the Prison site itself. It identifies a number of potential opportunities for its future redevelopment.
- 5.5 Policy TR1 is an overarching Transport Policy that, amongst other things, seeks to ensure new development contributes 'appropriately' to the objectives of the most up to date Local Transport Plan.
- 5.6 An Outline Development Brief for Reading Prison was adopted by RBC in March 2015. This documents sets out the aspirations for the future re-use of the former prison site. It identifies the opportunity that reuse and redevelopment provides to enhance the wider Abbey area through the reuse of historic buildings for appropriate use.

- 5.6 The brief highlights a number of alternative uses that may be appropriate in the longer term including the opportunity to remove some of the less attractive modern buildings, to enhance the setting of the main Listed Prison building.
- 5.7 The proposed temporary use of the site will not impact on any future aspirations or opportunities for the reuse or redevelopment of the site. Furthermore the use will not give rise to any adverse impacts on the existing highway network or amenity of surrounding (predominantly commercial uses), given the low level of use proposed.

6.0 DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

- 6.1 This section sets out the design and access principles of the proposed temporary use.

Area/Floorspace

- 6.2 The application site measures approximately 0.7 Ha and comprises the entirety of the former prison site. As stated elsewhere in this report the scenario training exercises would take place in buildings 1, 3 and 7 (as shown on the attached site plan). Additional 'walkthrough' training may take place in buildings 4, 5, 6 and 8. The proposal does not seek to undertake any physical alterations to the buildings.

Layout and Scale

- 6.3 The temporary use will utilise the existing layout of the site and buildings, as set out above no new build or alterations are proposed.

Landscaping

- 6.4 No additional landscaping or alterations to existing landscaping is proposed.

Appearance

- 6.5 There are no proposed changes to the external or internal appearance of the site or buildings.

Access

- 6.6 Vehicular and pedestrian access will be via the existing arrangements to site. There will be no public access to the site with the temporary use only accessed by TVP staff and students.

Transport Management

- 6.7 Instructors will utilise a minibus access from Sulhamstead (TVP's main training facility) and students will be encouraged to utilise public transport given the sustainable location of the site. No vehicular movements from delivery or supplier vehicles will take place.

7.0 HERITAGE STATEMENT

- 7.1 Section 16 of the updated (December 2023) National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out guidance relating to the impact of development upon Heritage Assets. Paragraph 200 specifically states that;

In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance

- 7.2 Furthermore Paragraph 203 states;

In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account (inter alia) of:

- a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;*

- 7.3 The assessment of this proposal upon the Heritage Asset (the Grade II listed Victorian Prison building) should be proportionate.
- 7.4 As stated elsewhere in this report the proposals do not seek to undertake **any** alterations, additions or physical changes to any structures on site therefore there will be no adverse impact on the heritage interest and status of the building. The proposed use will assist in sustaining and utilising the site whilst plans for the longer term use of the site are developed.

8.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1 The proposed temporary nature of the use is considered sufficiently low-key so as not to impact upon the amenity of the site and surrounding area. As set out above the training functions will operate once or twice weekly and within traditional hours.
- 8.2 The proposed use will not impact on the historic interest or fabric of the site or Listed Building as no physical changes or alterations are proposed.
- 8.3 TVP has worked closely alongside the owner of the site, who have helped facilitate this opportunity to enhance training functions for TVP officers.

Appendix 1 – Site Layout

2.2 SITE LAYOUT

The main entrance to the prison site is to the north of the site from Forbury Road and via a modern gatehouse building constructed c.1970 (1). The perimeter wall along its northern and eastern stretches also dates from this period (2a). The modern administration building occupies the north of the site (3) and is connected to the main prison building at its northern extent and where the original entrance would have been located. A number of temporary buildings lie to the south and east of this building. The southern and western stretches of the perimeter wall contain 19th century brick but are believed to have been heavily repaired during the prison overhaul of the 1970's.

The main prison building dominates the site and is cruciform in plan with the four arms converging at a central octagon. It is arranged roughly north-south with the northern terminal of 'D' wing (4) connected to a modern administration building. 'A' wing (5) lies to the east of the site, and single storey modern building is located in its corner with 'D' wing. 'B' wing radiates to the south of the site (6), and is connected by a raised walkway to the modern amenities building which occupies almost the entire south-east of the site.

'C' wing projects to the west (8) and is connected to an early 20th century laundry/workshop building to the south (9).

The site is densely populated with buildings including a number of modern structures (10). Spaces between buildings are divided by high security fencing. Open spaces exist to the south of the gatehouse, to the south-west where there is a small all-weather games court, and to the north-east where there is an exercise yard. Apart from a small grassed area along the southern perimeter wall and in the south-west corner of the site, most areas are covered in asphalt.

- 1 Gatehouse
- 2 Perimeter walls and extent of site boundary
- 3 Administration Building
- 4 D Wing
- 5 A Wing
- 6 B Wing
- 7 Amenities Building
- 8 C Wing
- 9 Gym/Workshop
- 10 Modern Buildings

