

3.5.11 Pre-application meeting 3 feedback

The following pages set out the comments received from officers and detail how the design developed to respond to those comments:

Comment

Use:

1

Commercial Use - Need to be wholly clear as to what use(s) are proposed for the commercial unit(s).



Response

Use-class E proposed for flexibility



Layout:

2

Building footprint - Form and layout of the proposed development does not respond positively to the site and surrounding area, with tall, dense urbanisation via a city block. Exploration, evolution and justification over other forms not given.

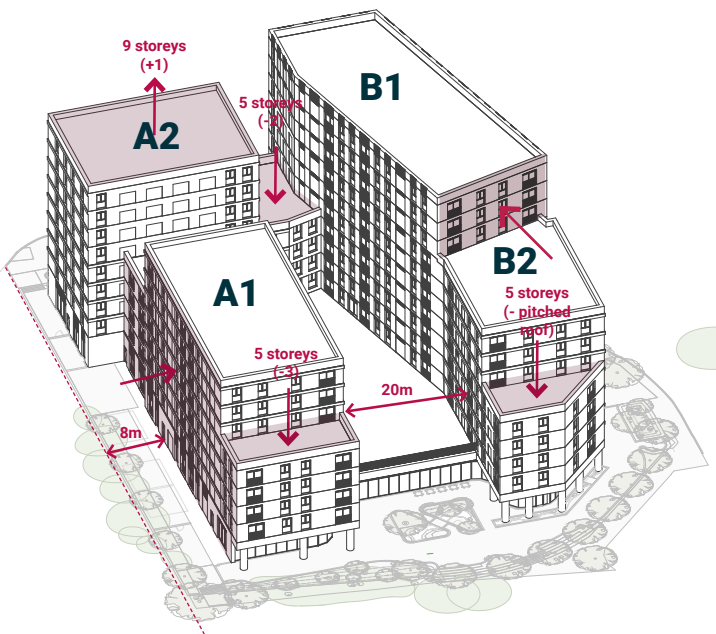


Buildings A1, A2 and B2 have been slimmed to 17.5m in width. Building heights have been further refined to create a 5 storey datum to the links creating further separation between the buildings and buildings A1 and B2 step down to 5 storeys on the river.

4

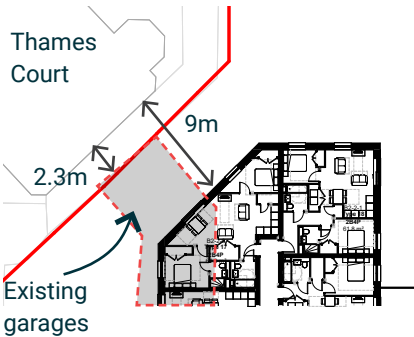
Proximity to Clearwater Court - Visual outlook, dominant/overbearing, daylight/sunlight, redevelopment. Increase to 8-10m from boundary

Distance from the boundary has been increased to 8m.

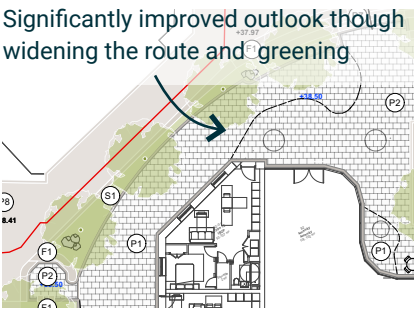


3

Proximity to Thames Court - Detrimental amenity impacts for occupiers, privacy/overlooking, outlook/sense of enclosure, visual dominance, daylight and sunlight.



At it's closest point, the proposal is 9m from Thames Court. SL/DL studies have been undertaken and the impact is considered minimal for a small number of secondary windows. Moreover, if the 45 degree test is applied in plan the building does not break the line.

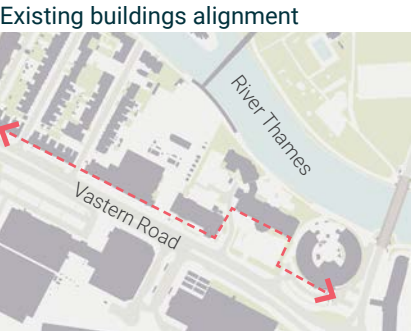


Comment

Form & massing:

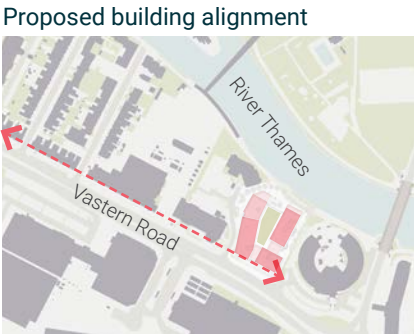
5

Vastern Road alignment - Building further back from Vastern Rd - prevailing / future (55 Vastern Road) context



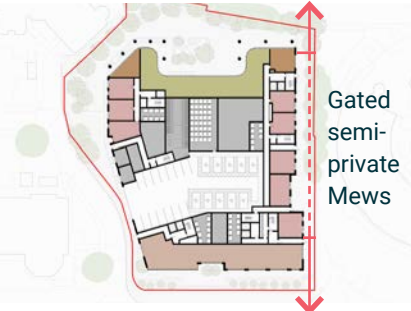
Response

Vastern Road building alignment is designed to respond to the primary frontage and is positioned in line with 55 Vastern Road frontage.



6

Eastern boundary units - Gating of the external space

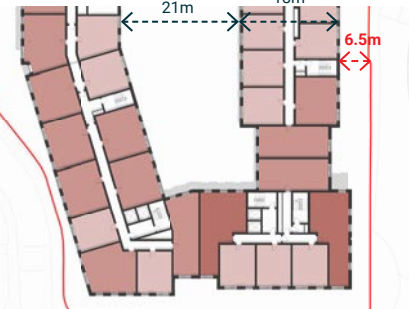


Noted. Mews street has been developed to be open with entrance porches providing dedicated external entrances for apartments along the east. This creates interest at street level as well as private amenity space for residents at first floor. Whilst the space is not gated, it still provides an alternative amenity space for children to ride bikes / play and provides defensible space for residents at ground floor. The space is framed by mature trees and affords views of the river. The street is a quieter secondary route to the river.



7

Podium Width - Overlooking and loss of privacy concerns. 20m minimum



Predominant distance across the courtyard is 20m, this does narrow towards the south however, A1 is inset at this point and B1 is positioned at an angle to avoid direct overlooking. The narrowest point is 15m which is not uncommon in urban settings. Defensible space is provided to apartments at courtyard level. Angled apartments will benefit from a river view. Apartments to the east benefit from being dual aspect.



8

Podium Use - Harm to occupiers of units facing podium from possible noise, disturbance, overlooking and loss of privacy



The podium gardens will be designed to provide defensible space to residents directly fronting the podium. The intended uses will be considerate of potential noise and privacy issues for residents with more active amenity spaces provided at 8th floor. Calmer more reflective uses proposed to the courtyard space at first floor.



Apartment quality & mix:

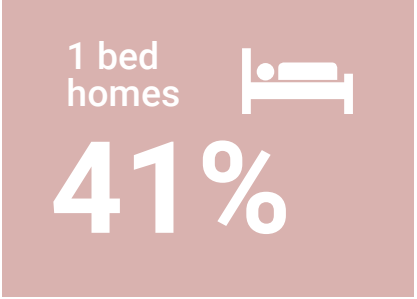
9

Unit Mix - 1-bed units decreased from 55% to 46%, still significantly exceeds the 40% max. Viability case required to demonstrate proposed scheme is viable, but one with policy level one beds would not be.

Affordable Housing - Urge you to seek to provide a policy compliant level of affordable housing as part of your emerging scheme



Viability report to be provided to demonstrate justification for one beds provided. The report will also seek to justify an element of affordable housing



Comment

Form and massing:

11

Massing - Lacking commentary and detailed analysis to further justify concerns raised with the scale and massing of the proposed buildings along Vastern Road (both the 8 and 11 storey buildings), appearing out of scale with neighbouring buildings and dominant along the streetscene.



Response

Proposal is similar in scale to both the approved 55 Vastern Road and proposed schemes along the south side of Vastern Road. The 11 storey building acts as a wayfinding point to a key corner along Vastern Road and well used pedestrian and cycle connection to the river.



12

11 storey building - Justification for a marker/wayfinding building at this site required. 36m building height queried.



Norman Place is a recognised cycle route, the proposal seeks to improve this route, a marker building is justifiable to create clear legibility and highlight this route in townscape terms.



13

Density - Too many residential units on this constrained and sensitively located site. Provide detailed commentary on each of the factors referenced in Policy H2 to seek to justify the subsequent density.



The proposed quantum of development needs to be balanced with the benefits it offers, particularly around the enhanced rivers edge and pedestrian / cycle route.

Response to Policy H2:

- The character of the development has been carefully considered and developed in response to thorough consultation with local residents, key stakeholders and the local authority.
- Creation a new public space, as well as ground floor uses, provide significant benefit to both existing and proposed residents with the potential for co-working space, cafe and deli/local shop. The route through to the river has been significantly widened and enhanced with planting improving the pedestrian experience from Vastern Road through to the river.
- Key views have been tested and both a townscape and heritage assessment will be submitted as part of the application (please refer to these reports).
- The site is well located in terms of public transport and accessibility as it is directly adjacent to a national cycle route and less than 5mins walk from Reading Station.
- The design has been developed in response to the local context, stakeholder consultation and Design South East meetings. The initial direction was to take reference from the industrial heritage of the site however, this has been a common theme with recently consented schemes and this was raised at the last pre-application meeting. As a result, the proposal has developed in response to the river and landscape setting.
- The site maximises efficiency of land use providing a significant contribution to Readings housing targets.
- The proposal is for a highly efficient, fabric led 'all electric' energy strategy with no fossil fuels, provides a biodiversity net gain of 12% and working towards Home Quality Mark certification.



Comment

Architecture and heritage:

Response

14 Roof form - Narrative put forward of utilising historic roof forms appear to be in their infancy - far more detailed commentary and analysis for this to be explicitly explained in your future submissions



Noted. Roof forms have been simplified to flat roofs and the design narrative focused around the river setting. The character of the river has been brought into the site via the landscape and architectural details. The ripples of the water have informed profile of curved pre-cast concrete panels and the tonal colour palette has been influenced by subtle greens and greys of the river and surrounding green infrastructure.



15 Architectural character - More design development is required in order to incorporate a series of genuine characterful features into the proposals



Architectural language has been developed further to create a narrative that brings the river setting into the architectural character and differentiates the proposal from surrounding new developments and creates a local language as suggested at the Design South East review panel.



16 Juliette balconies - Questioned from an initial air quality, noise/disturbance, ventilation and odour perspective given the proximity of the site to Vastern Road



Detailed analysis has been carried out to inform the positioning of Juliette balconies to demonstrate accommodation can provide a comfortable environment for occupier. The number of Juliette balconies provided has been reduced to those facing the river at the lower levels maximising aspect and positioned to the quieter riverside of the site.



17 Heritage - The proposed development should be reduced in footprint and height and should bring design elements that would have a positive impact on the setting of listed buildings and the existing physical fabric.



Listed buildings are located some distance from the proposed site. The consented proposals at 55 Vastern Road intend to demolish the listed building. Scale sits comfortably with the existing and emerging context.



Landscape and public realm:

18 Encourage more soft landscaping, DDA access.
Drainage - Principles of strategy accepted. SuDS provision should maximise ecological benefits, link into the existing Green Network, incorporate tree planting and landscaping and avoid damage to existing significant trees, including through changes to the site hydrology.



Fire tender route required to the north of the site, greenery has been increased where it does not detrimentally affect this route.

