



ET Planning

Planning Statement

Client:

La Baguette (Reading) Ltd

7 Blagrove Street, Reading, RG1 1PJ

Demolition of the existing building (façade retained) and erection of a five-storey building with a café, bed and breakfast, and ancillary spaces

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This statement is produced to support a planning application for the demolition of the existing building (façade retained) and erection of a five-storey building with a café, bed and breakfast, and ancillary spaces at 7 Blagrove Street, Reading, RG1 1PJ.
- 1.2 This application is the resubmission of a previous scheme for the site which was assessed under planning application ref: 230328. This application was withdrawn to allow amendments to be made to the proposals to make it more acceptable.
- 1.3 This planning statement will cover the background to the application and provide the necessary information to enable its determination by officers at the Council. It will consider the proposal in light of relevant planning policies and other material considerations. The conclusion reached is that key material considerations and the wider objectives of National and Local planning policy support the grant of permission.
- 1.4 In addition to this planning statement, the application is accompanied by the appropriate planning application forms and ownership certificate, duly signed and completed, and the following plans and documents:
 - Location and Site Plan
 - Proposed – Front Elevation
 - Existing – Front Elevation
 - Proposed – Rear Elevation
 - Existing – Rear Elevation
 - Proposed – Side Elevation

- Existing – Side Elevation
- Proposed – Ground Floor Plan
- Existing – Ground Floor Plan
- Proposed – First Floor Plan
- Existing – First Floor Plan
- Proposed – Second Floor Plan
- Proposed – Third Floor Plan
- Proposed – Fourth Floor Plan
- Roof Plan
- Design and Access Statement
- Daylight and Sunlight Assessment
- Energy Statement
- BREEAM Pre-Assessment Estimator Report
- Air Quality Assessment
- Heritage Statement
- Noise Report and Noise Survey Measurement Locations
- Preliminary Roost Assessment and Emergence and Activity Bat Survey

1.5 The relevant application fee will be submitted by the applicant separately.

2. Site Location and Description

- 2.1 7 Blagrove Street comprises of a two-storey building which is occupied by a café on the ground floor with bed and breakfast rooms above. It is located within the defined Market Street/London Street Conservation Area.
- 2.2 The building itself is not listed however it is identified as being a building of Townscape Merit within the Conservation Area Appraisal. The building is located opposite the Grade II Listed Municipal Buildings Art Gallery and Museum and the Grade II Listed Municipal Buildings Concert Hall.
- 2.3 The site is located within Central Reading as defined on the Proposals Map.
- 2.4 The site is located within Flood Zone 1 which carries the lowest risk of fluvial flooding. It is located within the Reading Air Quality Management Area.

3. Planning History

- 3.1 Application Ref: 910880 - Erection of office building (B1) with provision for retail (A1) on part of ground floor at corner of Friar St & A2/B1 office on remainder of ground floor at Blagrove St, & basement car parking. Refused 17/12/92.
- 3.2 Application Ref: 940326 - Erection of an office building (B1) with provision for Class A3 (food and drink) on part ground floor at corner of Friar Street (Demolition of existing). Withdrawn.
- 3.3 Application Ref: 950892 - Erection of an office building (B1) with provision for Class A1 (retail use) on part ground floor at corner of Friar St and basement car parking. Withdrawn
- 3.4 Application Ref: 960833 - Temporary change of use from A2 to place of worship (D1) and ancillary uses. Granted 17/10/96.
- 3.5 Application Ref: 980760 - Change of use of premises from use class A2 to use class A3. Granted 25/09/98.
- 3.6 Application Ref: 060086 - Retrospective application for bed and breakfast accommodation on first floor. (Coffee shop on ground floor to be used for breakfast). Granted 27/03/2006.
- 3.7 Application Ref: 151345 – Erection of basement and 5 storey building to provide café (Class A3) at basement and part ground floor level and 23 bed & breakfast rooms (Class C1) at part ground floor and upper floor levels, following demolition of existing 2 storey building (café and 5 bed & breakfast rooms) barring partial retention of front façade. Appeal dismissed 10/02/2017.

- 3.8 Application Ref: 230328 – The demolition of the existing building (façade retained) and erection of a five-storey building with a café, bed and breakfast, and ancillary spaces. Application withdrawn 8 September 2024.
- 3.9 Feedback was sought from the Planning Officer through the determination of the application. The following comments were made in which it was based to withdraw the planning application so amendments could be made to the proposed development to make it more acceptable.

- 1) *In respect of impact to heritage assets, the front elevation of the extended building is confused in its layout with the windows offset from each other. The Inspector for the previously dismissed appeal at this site noted that the window openings of adjacent buildings along this side of Blagrove Street are uniform in their alignment and appearance which makes a positive contribution to the Conservation Area. The heights of the floor plates/ceilings for each floor also does not correspond well to the adjoining building as they are set at different heights to the neighbouring buildings. It is also not clear how the proposed timber beams respect the existing brick and glazing materials characteristics of the conservation area. As such, the development is considered harmful to the character and setting of the conservation area and with the site lying within the setting of the listed Town Hall building, the development is also considered harmful to the setting of this designated heritage asset thereby failing to comply with Policies EN1, EN3 and EN6.*
- 2) *The daylight/sunlight assessment shows the development will reduce sunlight on 21st March to the neighbouring gardens at 9-15 Blagrove below BRE guidance. The assessment states this should attract little weight because of the design of the gardens being below ground level. However, this is an existing circumstance that the development should not further harmfully impact or worsen. The harm to the level of external amenity experienced by the occupiers of these dwellings means the development fails to comply with Policy CC8.*

3) *The development includes second floor terracing on the north side that will overlook the rear gardens of 9-15 Blagrove Street and afford views into the rear windows of the nearest dwellings within this building. Furthermore, the only outlook provided for rooms 8, 13 and 18 within the development is a single side facing window that is enclosed on both sides and provides limited outlook into the rear of 1-5 Blagrove Street. For these reasons, the development is harmful to the amenity of neighbouring residents and to the amenity of future occupiers of the development and fails to comply with CC8.*

3.10 The response to these comments made by the Planning Officer are detailed within this Planning Statement and also within the Design and Access Statement.

4. Development Proposals

- 4.1 The proposed development seeks to demolish the existing building, retain the current façade and erect a five-storey building with a café, bed and breakfast, and ancillary spaces.
- 4.2 The current building has a café on the ground floor and a use class of C1 Bed and Breakfast rooms on the first floor.
- 4.3 The proposal is to increase the building from its current 2 storey structure to a new 5 storey building. The additional floor levels 1-4 for the C1 use provide additional accommodation for the Bed and Breakfast business. 15 bed and breakfast rooms will be accommodated.
- 4.4 The previous scheme included areas of external amenity space within the proposals however this updated scheme proposes only a private terrace for units 7 and 8 on the second floor. Other terraces on the rear of the property will not be accessible by the public or hotel guests and will only be accessed only for maintenance purposes.
- 4.5 A pre-application request (ref: 220117) was submitted to Reading Borough Council in January 2022 with a written response received in June 2022. The proposed development has been designed to respond to the comments made within the written response, primarily through the retention of the existing façade.
- 4.6 Further information relating to the proposals, including the changes to the proposals as a result of the feedback on the most recent application, can be found within the Design and Access Statement submitted in support of this application.

5. Policy Assessment

- 5.1 **National Guidance:** The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is a relevant material consideration to the application.
- 5.2 The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. So that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Paragraph 38 of the NPPF states that “Local planning authorities should approach decision on proposed development in a positive and creative way” and *“at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible”*. Paragraph 123 of the NPPF comments that planning should promote an *“effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions.”*
- 5.3 Paragraph 8 identifies the three objectives of sustainable development, as economic, environmental and social.
- 5.4 Paragraph 131 identifies that *“Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities”*.
- 5.5 Policy CC2 of the local plan states how proposals for new development, including the construction of the new buildings and the redevelopment and refurbishment of existing building stock, will be acceptable where the design of buildings and site layouts use energy, water, minerals, materials and other natural resources appropriately, efficiently and with care and take account of those of the effects of climate change.

- 5.6 Policy CC6 states how the scale and density of development will be related to its level of accessibility by walking, cycling and public transport to a range of services and facilities, with the densest and largest scale development taking place in the most accessible locations.
- 5.7 Policy EM4 states how a range of types and sizes of units should be present in the borough and developments should maintain or enhance this range.
- 5.8 Policy CR2 states how applications for development within central reading should demonstrate how the development will build on and respect the existing grid layout structure of the central area, providing continuity and enclosure through appropriate relationships between buildings and spaces.
- 5.9 Policy CR4 of the NPPF states how development that encourages leisure inside the centre of reading will be encouraged.
- 5.10 **Principle of Development:** Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that planning applications be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 5.11 The site is located within the Central Area boundary as shown on the Proposals Map and within the Central Core. Town centre uses, including hotels and other types of visitor accommodation, are acceptable within this area.
- 5.12 The overall principle of development is acceptable subject to other considerations which are discussed further in this statement.
- 5.13 **Heritage:** No. 7 Blagrove Street, Reading is a two-storey building of late nineteenth-century date, which is locally-listed, in view of the architectural interest of its distinctive street frontage. The building

interior has been considerably altered, and retains little heritage value, so that the significance of No. 7 relates almost entirely to its ornate street frontage.

- 5.14 It is proposed to add three additional floors of modern design, but to retain the existing street frontage *in situ*. The upper, glazed levels of the new building are proposed to be progressively stepped-back from the line of the street frontage, to limit the visibility of new construction in inward views, and to emphasise the value of the retained façade. The proposed redevelopment of No. 7 will entail the demolition of rear elements of the building which are of relatively little heritage value, and the retention of the ornate street frontage which overwhelmingly embodies the principal significance of the building.
- 5.15 The effects of the proposed redevelopment of No. 7 Blagrove Street on the settings of individual elements of the imposing, late nineteenth-century Town Hall complex have been assessed. These include the Grade II*-listed Town Hall, designed by Waterhouse, and adjacent Grade II-listed Museum and Concert Hall. The retention *in situ* of the existing street frontage of No. 7 would considerably limit effects on neighbouring heritage settings, and would preserve much of the existing character of this side of Blagrove Street, which includes a mix of architectural styles. The stepping-back of the upper levels of the three additional floors would limit their visibility and any perceptions of massing within inward views.
- 5.16 The setting of the Grade II-listed Museum would potentially be the most affected, although the overall impact would be slight, and any resulting harm to would be within the lower range of less than substantial. Visual connections between No. 7 and the other two listed buildings of the Town Hall complex are more oblique, and at greater distance, which would considerably limit the visibility of the

upper storeys of the proposed new building, these two buildings. No other heritage settings would be affected by the proposed redevelopment of No. 7 Blagrove Street and the overall effect on this part of the Conservation Area would be slight. There would be no harm to heritage settings, and the design of the proposed development would enhance and repair the street scene. This is currently the only building of two storeys on the street frontage, while others are all of four or five storeys.

- 5.17 On the basis of the assessment presented in the Heritage Statement, it is considered that the proposed changes to this locally-listed building are proportionate to its scale and level of significance, and would result in an acceptably low level of harm to such significance. In addition, these changes would result in acceptably low levels of harm to the significance of visually-linked heritage assets, through change to their wider setting. Such proposals are in accordance with the statutory requirements stated in Sections 66 of the Planning Act, the NPPF and Policies EN1, EN3 and EN6 of the Local Plan.
- 5.18 **Transport and Parking:** The site is located within the centre of Reading with the area defined as having the best transport hubs, with both the main railway station and also bus interchanges at the station and within Friar Street and other streets surrounding the town centre. The area also contains the largest proportion of public car parking spaces.
- 5.19 In accordance with the Council's adopted Parking Standards and Design SPD, the development should provide 0.5 spaces per bedroom and 1 space for the proprietor. However, no on-site parking facilities are associated with the existing uses, and on-site parking could not be provided due to the location and the site constraints.

- 5.20 Given that the site is located in the Reading Central Area where there are extensive parking controls preventing on-street parking and good connections to public transport services, the non-provision of parking was considered acceptable by the Planning Officer a previous application was assessed (ref: 151345).
- 5.21 No provision of parking for the proposals is considered to still be acceptable and it was acknowledged and accepted within the pre-application response that a car free development is acceptable given the sustainability of the site and the local parking restrictions in place.
- 5.22 Cycle storage is accommodated within a bike store located on the ground floor for both staff and guests.
- 5.23 The proposed development is therefore in accordance with Policy TR5 of the Local Plan.
- 5.24 **Daylight and Sunlight:** A Daylight and Sunlight Report has been prepared by T15 Design to ascertain the effects of the proposal at 7 Blagrove Street and the levels of change in daylight and sunlight for the windows of the neighbouring properties.
- 5.25 The main criteria used in this analysis to show compliance are the Vertical Sky Component and No Sky Line for daylight impacts and Annual and Winter Probable Sunlight Hours for sunlight impacts
- 5.26 As has been shown within the report, the effect on VSC (Vertical Sky Component) is within the guidance values in all cases. There will therefore be no adverse impact on neighbouring residential properties in terms of daylight.
- 5.27 In terms of sunlight, all of the assessed windows retain 80% of existing values both annually and over the winter months.

- 5.28 The neighbouring gardens retain in excess of 80% of their existing area which receives 2 hours or more of sunlight on March 21st.
- 5.29 The scheme is therefore fully compliant with BRE guidance in relation to sunlight impacts.
- 5.30 The new residential unit and hotel rooms will benefit from daylight levels in excess of the requirements of BS EN 17037:2018.
- 5.31 From a planning perspective therefore, it is the conclusion of the Daylight and Sunlight report that the proposed development is broadly considered acceptable and line with the BRE guidance, in daylight and sunlight terms.
- 5.32 **Air Quality:** An Air Quality Assessment has been prepared to address the effects of air pollutant emissions from traffic using the adjacent roads, and emissions associated with the development of the site. In addition, a risk-based assessment of the likely impact of construction on the air quality of the local environment has been conducted.
- 5.33 Baseline pollutant concentrations on site have been investigated using both existing monitoring data and through predictions using the ADMS-Roads Detailed Dispersion Model methodology. In the baseline year (2019), concentrations of all pollutants are below the Air Quality Objectives, with the exception of NO₂, which exceeds the annual mean objective at 1st floor level and below.
- 5.34 However, in the proposed opening year (2024), concentrations of all pollutants are modelled to be below the National Air Quality Objectives, even allowing for high levels of traffic growth and unchanging background concentrations. This is a reflection of the future year emissions factors, which consider that the composition of the fleet will become less polluting over time with regards to NO_x emissions.

- 5.35 In order to assess the impact of the proposed development on local air quality, the IAQM/EPUK Guidance Land-Use Planning & Development Control: Planning for Air Quality has been utilised. The scoping stage has determined that due to the size of the development, a full assessment of the impacts of the proposed development on local air quality is not required.
- 5.36 With regards to the impacts of construction on air quality, dust and other pollutant emissions from the construction and demolition phases of the construction of the proposed development, the site is designated as a "Medium Risk Site". However, with risk-appropriate mitigation, residual effects will not be considered significant.
- 5.37 Since it has been shown that the proposed development meets the guidance contained within Technical Guidance on Local Air Quality Management (LAQM) (TG16), IAQM/EPUK's Land-Use Planning & Development Control: Planning for Air Quality and IAQM's Guidance on the assessment of dust from demolition and construction, it is considered that the proposed development adheres to the principles of the NPPF since the new development will not be *"put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution"*.
- 5.38 Since it has been shown that in terms of air quality, the proposals adhere to local and national planning policy, it is considered that the air pollution should not be a constraint on the proposed development.
- 5.39 **Noise:** A Noise Report has been prepared and submitted alongside this application.
- 5.40 The application plans show that good use of internal layout of the proposed B&B accommodation is incorporated to minimise the effect of road traffic noise and other environmental noise sources on the amenity of future occupiers.

- 5.41 The construction of the proposed building would ensure that mitigation measures including site layout and façade treatment including construction detail should result in a good standard for the living conditions of future guests. A night-time maximum noise level 45dB for bedrooms should be achieved to maintain consistency with earlier standards.
- 5.42 The internal noise levels are subject to final detailing of the building insulation including glazing and ventilation specification and the overall resultant sound insulation provided by the façade. The window frame system must provide no less sound insulation than the glazing.
- 5.43 Residential noise standards will be met in line with the latest technical advice. Internal noise criteria as advised in BS8233:2014 Sound Insulation and Noise Reduction for Buildings will be achieved.
- 5.44 The proposed development is therefore in accordance with Policy CC8 of the Local Plan which seeks to safeguard amenity.
- 5.45 **Ecology:** A Preliminary Roost Assessment and Emergence and Activity Bat Survey have been submitted alongside the planning application.
- 5.46 Due to the significant activity recorded to the rear of the building, and the limitations on the survey, it is recommended that a precautionary approach is taken and the clay hung tiles to the rear are removed under an Unlicensed Method Statement.
- 5.47 In terms of Biodiversity Net Gain, the proposed development is subject to the de minimis exemption as it is a development that does not impact a priority habitat and impacts less than 25 square metres of onsite habitat, or 5 metres of linear habitats such as hedgerows.
- 5.48 **Sustainability and Energy:** The proposed development is required to demonstrate a design approach which addresses energy efficiency

and sustainability. As a minor development there are no specific targets however it should be demonstrated that the design makes use of principles which follow the energy hierarchy of fabric first followed by consideration of low carbon technology. The development is also presumed to be required to meet Part L 2021 new-build regulations.

- 5.49 Energy modelling software has been used to calculate a baseline and then proposed energy and CO2 emissions.
- 5.50 The proposed development will be designed to limit energy demand through the inclusion of a thermally efficient building fabric and energy efficient services.
- 5.51 Low carbon technology will be incorporated and is to comprise air source heat pumps for heating and hot water.
- 5.52 This technology will generate an estimated 55% of total energy demand as well as ensuring compliance with Part L 2021.
- 5.53 This Energy Statement therefore demonstrates that the proposed development complies with Policy CC2 of the Local Plan and the Design and Construction SPD (2019).
- 5.54 **Community Infrastructure Levy:** The relevant forms have been prepared and submitted alongside this application.

6. Conclusion

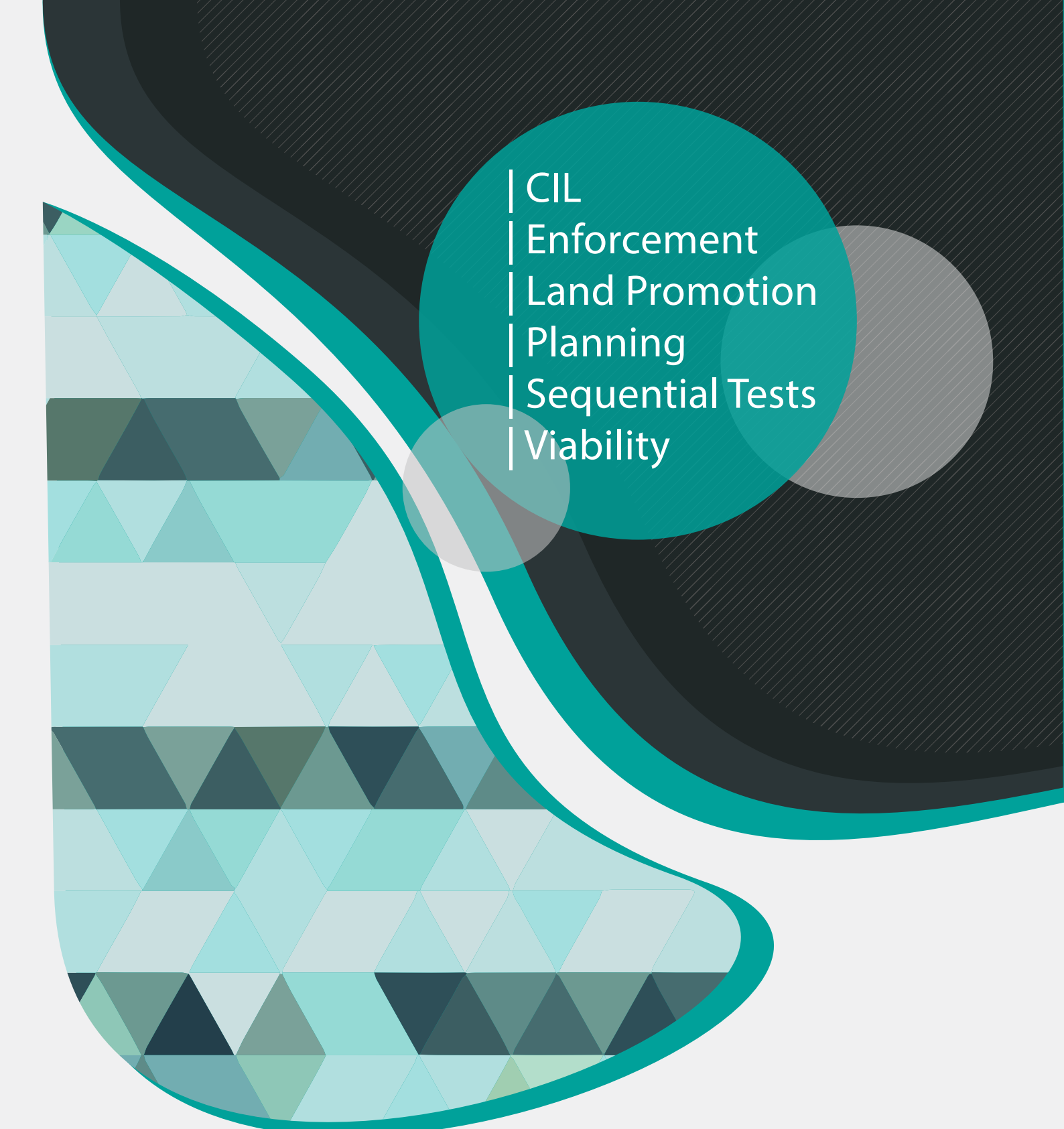
- 6.1 This statement has demonstrated that the proposed development is acceptable in principle and makes an efficient use of land.
- 6.2 Material planning considerations have been carefully considered and analysed, as evidenced in section 5 of this statement and the supporting plans and documents. It is considered the proposed development ensures that high-quality bed and breakfast accommodation and a café is retained in an important location for visitors without adverse effect on the character of the area or the amenity of neighbouring residents.
- 6.3 Amendments to the scheme previously considered by the Council have resulted in a more in keeping development that responds positively to the context that the site sits within.
- 6.4 It is considered that the proposed scheme complies with relevant Development Plan Policies and is further supported by National Guidance. Therefore, it is respectfully requested that planning permission is granted.

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