

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Whitley Ward

App Ref: PL/25/0149 & PL/25/0211 Full planning permission

Address: ATLANTIC HOUSE, IMPERIAL WAY, READING

Proposal:

PL/25/0149 – Erection of enclosure and associated structures to east elevation of building

PL/25/0211 – Erection of enclosure and associated gates around car park deck

Applicant: Thames Valley Police

Received date and Target Decision date:

PL/25/0149: 11/02/2025 – 18/04/2025 (EXT)

PL/25/0211: 27/02/2025 – 24/04/2025 (EXT)

Case Officer: Huimin Chen

1. SITE DESCRIPTION

The two application sites land surrounding a late 1980s office building located to the south of Reading. It is one of a pair of buildings (Pacific House being the other) that are accessed via Worton Drive and front directly onto Imperial Way.

The building sits within a well-established employment area, and the surrounding area is predominantly made up of other office buildings, storage and distribution and industrial units. To the south of Imperial Way is a mixed-use development known as Worton Grange consisting of commercial uses and residential units.

2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

A pre-application was submitted (ref: PL/24/1460) to seek advice for the proposal on the east elevation of Atlantic House and the car park, and relevant improvements are noticed under the submission of these two applications. The assessment would be made based on the submission of latest plans and information.

Therefore, the proposals under these two applications are to install a security fence and gates around the existing car park and provide a secure area to the east side of Atlantic House. As shown in Fig. 2, the proposed security fence would enclose $\frac{3}{4}$ of the existing car park area, indicated by a blue line. Two bifold gates and one pedestrian gate would be proposed at the three-quarters position to separate the car park. As shown on Fig. 3, the proposed development on the east side of the building includes new block paving (PT-02), proposed shrub planting (PL-01), two smoking shelters to be retained and relocated, four smaller size storage containers, one larger storage container, one cycle shelter and one bike storage. The proposal would also install mesh security fencing incorporating timber slats to enclose the east side of Atlantic House, with one pedestrian and vehicle security gates in the north and one pedestrian security gate in the south, colours are to match the existing bricks piers.

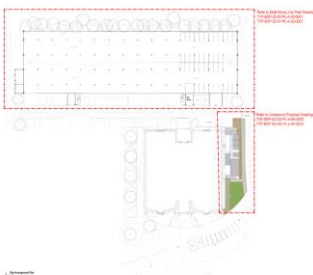


Fig 1: Drawing No. TVP-BDP-10-00-PL-A-20-0001 P01 – Site Arrangement Plan

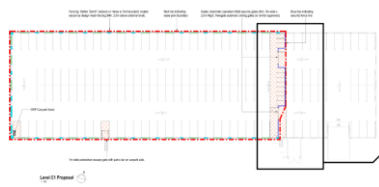


Fig 2: Drawing No. TVP-BDP-20-01-PL-A-20-0001 P03 – Car Park Level 1 Proposed

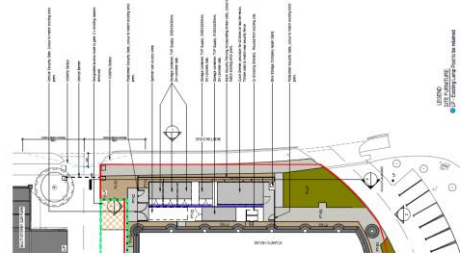


Fig 3: Drawing No. TVP-BDP-XX-XX-PL-A-94-0003 P03 – Proposed Compound Elevations and Block Plan

Under this address, planning permission was granted under ref: 200110 for the erection of an additional car parking deck to create 48 extra parking spaces, a cycle shelter, and minor alterations to the external elevations. This has now lapsed. Based on the documents submitted under pre-app ref: PL/24/1460, and a site visit conducted by the officer on 13th March 2024, the proposed additional car parking deck element of the approval for permission ref: PL/20/0110 has not been implemented. However, the officer further confirmed with the agent that the proposed alterations to the external elevations and the erection of the cycle shelter were implemented in 2021 via email dated 13th December 2024, but work paused due to issues with their appointed contractor. According to the site visit conducted on 13th March 2025, the officer could confirm that the previous permission has been partially implemented.



Fig 4 & 5: Views from the south of the car park and the east of Atlantic House, taken by the officer on 13/03/25

Plans/Documents Considered:

Atlantic House:

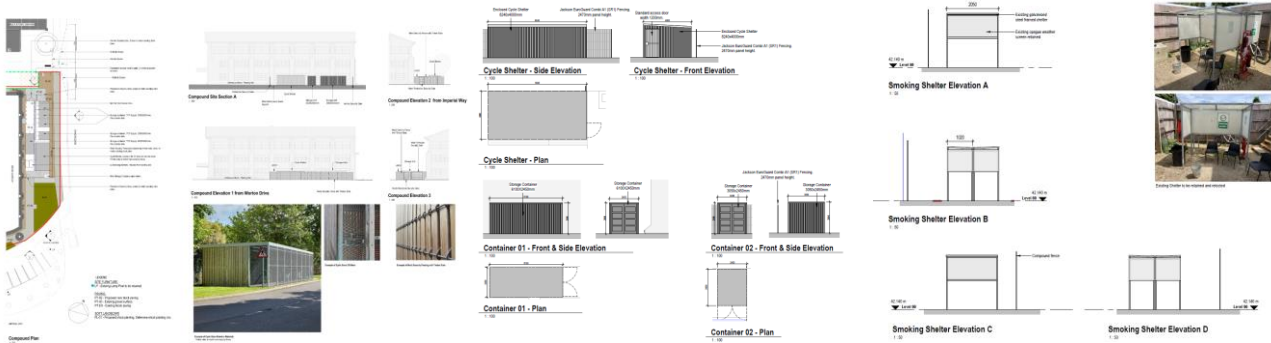
- ~~Application Form~~
- Location Plan
- Covering Letter dated 29/01/2025
- Atlantic House 2_SSM_3fab_metric
- Atlantic House 2_SSM_3fab_report – Biodiversity Survey and Report
- Drawing No. TVP-BDP-XX-XX-PL-A-94-0003 P03 – Proposed Compound Elevations and Block Plan
- Drawing No. TVP-BDP-XX-XX-SA-L-94-0020 – Planting Schedule
- CIL Questions Form
- Received on 29th January 2025
- Drawing No. TVP-BDP-10-00-PL-A-20-0001 P01 – Site Arrangement Plan
- Received on 31st January 2025
- Drawing No. TVP-BDP-XX-XX-PL-A-94-0004 P01 – Compound Smoking Shelter
- Drawing No. TVP-BDP-XX-XX-PL-A-94-0005 P01 – Compound Storage Units Elevations
- Received on 11th February 2025.
- Updated Application Form received on 14th April 2025.

Car Park:

- ~~Application Form~~
- Location Plan
- Atlantic House 1_SSM_728c_report – Biodiversity Statement
- Drawing No. TVP-BDP-20-XX-DT-A-31-0004 P02 – Fence Details
- Drawing No. TVP-BDP-20-01-PL-A-20-0001 P03 – Layout Plan (Car Park Level 1 Proposed)
- Drawing No. TVP-BDP-20-XX-SE-A-20-0002 P08 – Proposed Site Sections
- Atlantic House 1_SSM_728c_metric
- Drawing No. TVP-BDP-20-XX-EL-A-20-0002 P09 – Proposed Elevations
- Drawing No. TVP-BDP-20-XX-EL-A-20-0001 P03 – Existing Elevations
- Arboricultural Statement

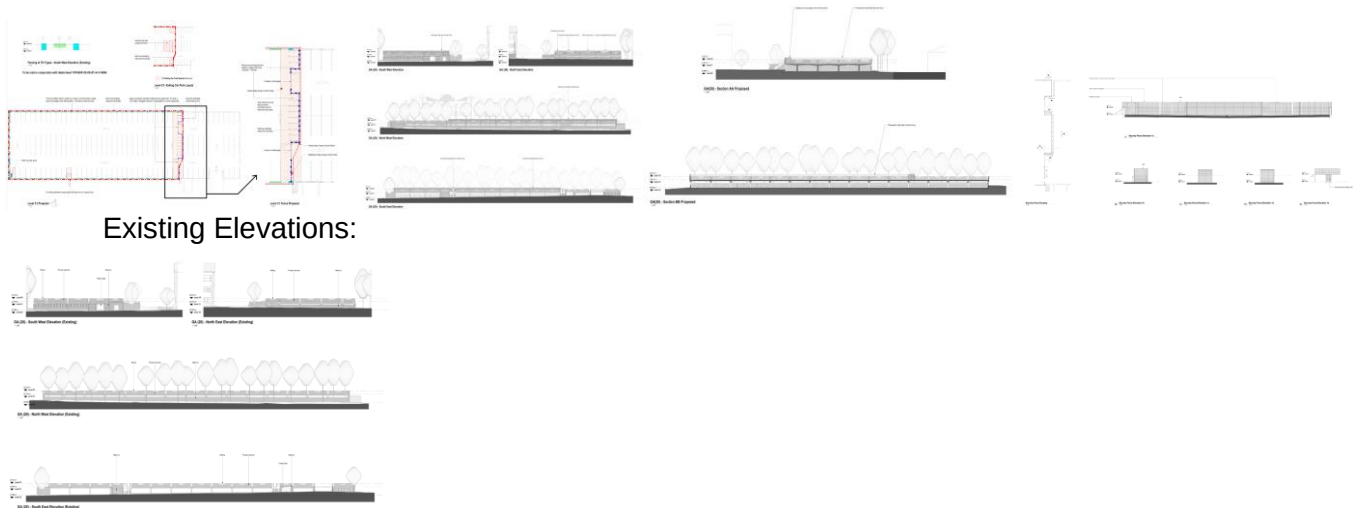
- CIL Questions From
- Drawing No. TVP-BDP-20-XX-GA-A-31-0001 P05 – Detail Drawing (Car Park Fence/Gates Scoping)
- Drawing No. TVP-BDP-10-00-PL-A-20-0001 P01 – Mixed/Combined Plans (Site Arrangement Plan)
Received on 10th February 2025.
- Updated Application Form received on 14th April 2025.

Atlantic House proposed plan and elevations:

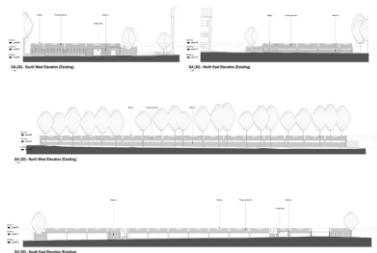


Car Park:

Proposed plans and elevations:



Existing Elevations:



Relevant Planning History

- PL/01/0841 – 1 no. 5 metre vertical identification sign and 1 no. 2.5m horizontal sign. Approve on 13/9/2001
- PL/04/1195 – 1 non-illuminated free standing mono-curve sign and 1 non-illuminated panel sign on posts. Refuse on 8/7/2024
- PL/17/0217 – Change of use from office (Class B1a) to booking office for a taxi firm (Sui-Generis) of office no. 213B. Approve on 27/3/2017
- PL/19/0856 – Proposed change of use from office building (use class b1) to new Police base (use class sui generis). Approve on 13/9/2019
- PL/20/0110 – Erection of additional car parking deck to create 48no. extra parking spaces, erection of cycle shelter and minor alterations to external elevations. Approve on 10/7/2020

- PL/24/1460 – Pre-application advice for proposed security fence and gates around existing car park and provision of secure area to side of building.

3. CONSULTATIONS

- Reading Borough Council, Transport: No objection
- Reading Brough Council, Natural Environment (Trees): Conditions would be required to secure landscaping amenity and protection of street trees.
- Site Notice: Two site notices were displayed near the application site. The 21-day consultation period ended on 12th March 2025 and 3rd April 2025, respectively. No letters of representation have been received.



Fig 6: Site Notice Photos

Equality Act 2010:

In determining this application the Council is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. However, there is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that the protected groups identified by the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular planning application. Therefore in terms of the key equalities protected characteristics it is considered there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the development.

4. LEGAL AND PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy framework (NPPF) - among them the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'. The following local and national planning policy and guidance is relevant to this application:

National Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
National Planning Policy Guidance

Reading Borough Council Local Plan (2019)

Policy CC1 – Presumption in favour of sustainable development
Policy CC2 – Sustainable design and construction
Policy CC3 – Adaptation to climate change
Policy CC7 – Design and the Public Realm
Policy CC8 – Safeguarding Amenity
Policy TR1 – Achieving the transport strategy
Policy TR3 – Access, traffic and highway-related matters
Policy TR4 – Cycle routes and facilities
Policy TR5 – Car and cycle parking and electric vehicle charging

Policy EN14 – Tress, Hedges and Woodland
Policy EN16 – Pollution and water resources

SPD

Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD 2011
Sustainable Design and Construction (2019)

Local Plan Update

The current version of the Local Plan (adopted in November 2019) turned five years old on Tuesday 5th November 2024. The Local Plan was reviewed in March 2023 and around half of the policies in the plan are considered still up to date. However, the rest need to be considered for updating to reflect changing circumstances and national policy. A consultation version of the draft updated version of the Local Plan was published on 6th November 2024.

Although there is a five-year period for carrying out a review of a plan after it is adopted, nothing in the NPPF or elsewhere says that policies automatically become “out of date” when they are five years old. It is a matter of planning judgement rather than legal fact whether a plan or policies within it are out-of-date. This will depend on whether they have been overtaken by things that have happened since the plan was adopted, either on the ground or through changes in national policy, for example.

Officer advice in respect of the Local Plan policies pertinent to this application is that they remain in accordance with national policy and that the objectives of those policies remains very similar in the draft updated Local Plan. Therefore, they can continue to be afforded weight in the determination of this planning application and are not considered to be ‘out of date’.

5. APPRAISAL

The main issues to be considered are:

- a) Design and impact on the character of the area and street scene
- b) Impacts on residential amenity
- c) Sustainable development
- d) Transport
- e) Tree
- f) Biodiversity Net Gain

a) Design and impact on the character of the area and street scene

Policy CC7 requires that all development be of a high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located.

There was an application for the erection of an additional car parking deck that was approved under ref: 200110. The approved proposal included the same position for the proposed gates and a higher fence around part of the existing car park. Given that the proposed development around the car park is smaller than the approved ones, it is still considered acceptable.

The appearance of the proposed fence would not harm the commercial character. The proposal would introduce a uniformed fence around the car park area at a uniformed height of 2.m above the existing level. Additionally, the retention of the adjacent line of trees and hedges to the new structure would mitigate the impact to an acceptable degree. The eastern part of the proposed fence, which would integrate two vehicle gates and one pedestrian gate, would not be visible from the street due to its position being $\frac{3}{4}$ into the car park.

Additionally, the proposed mesh security fencing, incorporating timber slats, would be located on the east side of Atlantic House, enclosing most of this side of the building, making it prominent in the street scene. It is worth to note, the colour of the security fencing would match the existing brick piers. Apart from the cycle shelter, which timber slats are to match new security fence, the majority of the proposed schemes would be behind a fenced enclosure. Therefore, it is unlikely that there would be harm to the overall character of this largely commercial area or the appearance of the building.

b) Impacts on residential amenity

The proposed development is not considered to have a detrimental impact on the living environment of existing residential properties in terms of residential amenities, as the closest residential area (Worton Grange) is approximately 67 meters away from the application site, in compliance with policy CC8.

c) Sustainable development

Policy CC1 & CC2 states that new development will be acceptable if the design of buildings and site layouts use natural resources (energy, water, materials, etc.) efficiently and responsibly, considering climate change impacts. Policy CC3 highlights the importance of incorporating trees and planting in landscape schemes to provide shading, connect habitats, and use native, adaptable plants that can thrive under predicted climate conditions. EN16: Development will only be permitted where it would not be damaging to the environment and sensitive receptors through land, noise or light pollution.

The retention of trees and the proposed shrub planting would be a positive contribution to sustainable development. There are no other identified risks that would harm sustainable development.

d) Transport

Policies TR1, 3, 4 and 5 state that all development proposals should ensure adequate accessibility and safety for all modes of transport, particularly public transport, walking, and cycling, in line with an agreed transport assessment. Proposals that involve constructing a new site access or significantly increasing the use of an existing access onto the Classified Highway Network will not be accepted if they encourage short local trips or compromise traffic safety and flow. Development of new cycling facilities, such as cycle hire points and parking, is encouraged. Additionally, car and cycle parking should be provided in proportion to the accessibility of the site to sustainable transport options, especially public transport.

The proposals have been reviewed by the Transport team and confirms that there are no transport objections to this application.

With regard to the application for the erection of enclosure to the east elevation of building for the provision of ancillary units including a cycle storage unit along with storage capacity for property. It is proposed to erect a 2.4m high fence along the eastern boundary with associated gates. The existing footway and verge along Worton Drive will not be impacted by the proposal and driver visibility from the site access will not be affected. Provision for 40 bikes will be provided within the proposed cycle store on two tier racks.

With regard to the application for the erection of an enclosure and associated gates around TVP's allocated car park area at the rear of the building. The proposal consists of 2m high mesh fencing around the car park, secured with a vehicle bifold gate with a control panel for entry. The vehicle gate access control panels will be positioned to ensure they do not conflict with the opening of the gate if vehicles are waiting to enter or leave the site. A separate pedestrian gate access and control panel will be provided into the car parking area from the pedestrian steps. Additional keep clear markings will be provided to prevent vehicles parking in the access areas. The car park layout has been amended to reduce any loss of parking bays as a result of the proposal.

There is insufficient manoeuvring depth to access the 3 northern spaces, however, the layout is acceptable as these spaces have been marked as motorcycle spaces.

Therefore, the proposals are considered acceptable overall from a transport perspective.

e) Tree

Policy EN14 states that new development shall make provision for tree retention and planting within the application site, particularly on the street frontage, or off-site in appropriate situations, to improve the level of tree coverage within the Borough, to maintain and enhance the character and appearance of the area in which a site is located, to provide for biodiversity and to contribute to measures to reduce carbon and adapt to climate change. Measures must be in place to ensure that these trees are adequately maintained.

The proposal does not include the removal of any trees or hedges, which contribute significantly to the site. However, during the pre-application (ref: PL/24/1460), the officer noted that the proposed developments, such as the proposed fence around the car park, are adjacent to several street trees, which could potentially impact their growth. The Proposed Compound Plan (PL-01) also indicates that shrub planting would be proposed to the southeast of Atlantic House. Relevant arboricultural information was advised for submission.

Under these two applications, the Arboricultural Statement prepared by Martin Jones from BDP confirms that *'the fence will not affect the existing trees as its fixed directly to the car park structure and therefore will not disturb the tree roots. There may be a need for minor pruning of branches locally to allow installation of the fence.'* Additionally, a Planting Schedule for the proposed shrub planting (PL-01) has been submitted.

The Natural Environment officer confirms that the proposals would need to provide pruning details for the street trees adjacent to the car park, and a Soft Landscaping Scheme would be required for the proposed shrub planting area. With regard to the shrub planting area, there should be at least one tree in the bed.

Following communications with the agent, one pre-commencement condition and one prior-occupation condition have been agreed upon to secure the tree matters raised above.

f) Biodiversity Net Gain

Both original Application Forms indicate that BNG would apply if permissions are granted. However, based on the plans and site visits, both proposals are unlikely to result in a loss of habitat.

The Ecology team also confirms that the proposal would not require a BNG calculation, as it would not affect any existing habitat. From Google Maps, it appears that the site is predominantly hardstanding. Additionally, the guidance regarding the types of development that will be exempt from mandatory biodiversity net gain states that:

Developments below the threshold

A development that does not impact a priority habitat and impacts less than:

- *25 square metres (5m by 5m) of on-site habitat*
- *5 metres of on-site linear habitats such as hedgerows*

A development 'impacts' a habitat if it decreases the biodiversity value.

Following communications with the agent, updated Application Forms were submitted on 14th April 2025, stating that BNG would not apply.

6. CONCLUSION

The proposed development has been assessed as set out above and is considered to be acceptable on that basis, subject to the following conditions.

7. RECOMMENDATION

Approve with Conditions

Recommended Conditions:

- PL/25/0149 – Erection of enclosure and associated structures to east elevation of building
Time limit
Approved plans
Materials (As Specified)
Landscaping Small Scale (To Be Approved)
- PL/25/0211 – Erection of enclosure and associated gates around car park deck
Time limit
Approved plans
Materials (As Specified)
Arboricultural Method Statement (To Be Submitted)