



Planning Statement

Village Hotel, Reading

May 2025

Prepared for:
VUR Village Trading No.1 Ltd.

Planning Statement – Village Hotel, Reading

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Planning Statement – Village Hotel, Reading

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1 Introduction

1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared by Stantec on behalf of VUR Village Trading No.1 Ltd (the “Applicant”) in support of a full planning application at the Former Crowne Plaza Hotel, Richfield Avenue, RG1 8BD, Reading (the “Site”).

1.2 This application seeks full planning permission for:

Single storey, flat roof extension at the ground floor level to the front of existing hotel to create extension to fitness suite Health & Wellness Club and replacement of canopy over to main entrance and associated landscaping and parking.

1.3 VUR Village Trading No.1 is the trading name of ‘Village Hotels’. Village Hotels acquired the Crowne Plaza Hotel in 2024 and wish to continue operating it as a Hotel under the Village Hotels brand. With 33 locations, Village Hotels seeks to offer more than a traditional hotel. All Village Hotels include a Health & Wellness Club with state-of-the-art equipment, pool and award-winning classes alongside a bar, grill, meeting rooms and Starbucks coffee shop. The above facilities are available for guests, members and the local community to enjoy.

1.4 The application Site forms a part of the former Crowne Plaza Hotel, and specifically relates to the frontage facing Richfield Avenue. Following the acquisition of Crowne Plaza, the facilities within it are currently closed whilst renovation works take place.

1.5 The proposed new front extension, which will extend the ground floor to create new studio spaces, will cater to Village Hotels core offer which provides health and wellness facilities within their hotels. The studio space will create a new enhanced frontage for the hotel at this prominent location of Richfield Avenue, Reading.

1.6 Alongside this Planning Statement, the following documents have been submitted with this application:

- Design and Access Statement prepared by LRW;
- Arboricultural reports prepared by Viewpoint Associates;
- Ecology and BNG Statement prepared by Viewpoint Associates;
- Landscape Visual Assessment prepared by Stantec;
- Landscape Plans, prepared by Viewpoint Associates;
- Transport and Highway Technical Note prepared by Stantec;
- Sustainability Statement prepared by Stantec;
- Lighting Assessment prepared by Stantec;
- Construction Method Statement; and
- Air Quality Statement prepared by Stantec.

1.7 This Planning Statement is structured as follows:

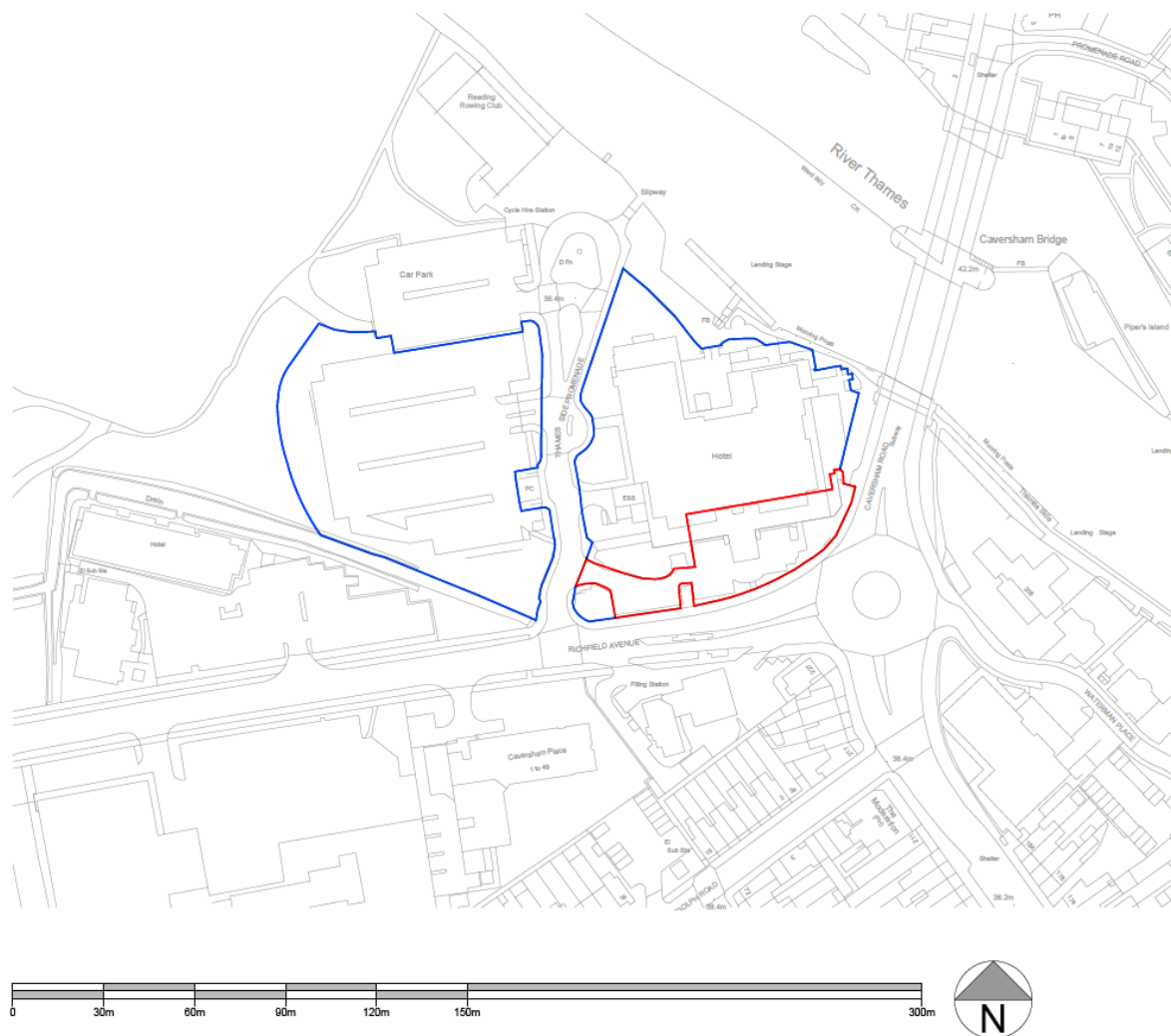
- Chapter 2 (Site Description and Surroundings) details the physical characteristics of the Site and its immediate surroundings;
- Chapter 3 (Planning History) sets out the planning history of the Site;
- Chapter 4 (Proposed Development) explains what is proposed as part of the development at the site.
- Chapter 5 (Planning Policy) summarises the relevant policies from the Development Plan
- Chapter 6 (Planning Assessment) provides the planning assessment of the proposed development including overall compliance with adopted Development Plan policies and other material considerations; and
- Chapter 7 (Summary and Conclusions) sets out the conclusions of this Statement.

1.8 This Statement demonstrates that the proposed development is a suitable form of development in this location which accords with national policy and the meets the requirements of Reading Borough Council ('RBC') Development Plan.

2 Site Description and Surroundings

2.1 The Site

- 2.1.1 The Site lies 1km to the north-west of Reading Town Centre. The hotel is nestled between Richfield Avenue to the south, the A4155 to the east, the River Thames to the north and the Thames Promenade Car Park to the west. Vehicular access into the Site is via Thames Side Promenade.
- 2.1.2 The Site comprises of the former Crowne Plaza Hotel and Conference Facility (use class C1). Parking for hotel guests is provided in the Promenade Car Park to the immediate west. The hotel is characterised by its red brick, pitched roof structure, and generous overhanging eaves.
- 2.1.3 The Site lies within a mixed-use area comprising existing hotels, residential and other commercial uses including cafes/restaurants, BP garage, and offices. To the southwest lies the Cardiff Road/Richfield Avenue Industrial Estate which is a designated employment area within the adopted Reading Borough Local Plan. The Site is a 15-minute walk from Reading Town Centre and Train Station. Trains can reach London in less than 30 minutes, whilst the M4 motorway is four miles away, providing easy access to Heathrow Airport (LHR) in just over 40 minutes.
- 2.1.4 Reading Borough Council's interactive map indicates that the Site lies within an Air Quality Management Area (Policy EN15) and a Major Landscape Feature (Policy EN13). Other designations to note include that the Site sits just outside of the Reading Central Area and approximately 10m from the St Peters Conservation Area (Policy EN3) which includes Caversham Bridge and the north bank of the River Thames. In addition, the Thames Footpath and cycle route passes immediately to the north of the site on the south bank of the River Thames. All built form is located within flood zone 1.



2.1.5 Figure 1: Site Location Plan

3 Planning History and Pre-Application Advice

3.1 Planning History

- 3.1.1 An online planning history search has been undertaken and is summarised below. Further planning application history is available online but is considered historic, or not relevant to this planning application.
- 3.1.2 **Planning reference: 191088.** Redevelopment of former Crowne Plaza Hotel (Promenade) car park and construction of new 132-bed hotel (Use Class C1), with associated access, car parking and landscaping. Refused, 13/12/2019.
- 3.1.3 **Planning reference: 181056.** Redevelopment of former Crowne Plaza Hotel (Promenade) car park and construction of new 132-bed hotel (Use Class C1), with associated access, car parking and landscaping (referred to above). Application Withdrawn, 01/10/2018.

3.2 Pre-Application Advice

- 3.2.1 Pre-application advice has been sought from Reading Borough Council on this proposal prior to the submission of the planning application at the Site to ensure early and effective engagement with RBC officers. Advice provided by officers has been taken into consideration in the preparation of this planning application.

4 Proposed Development

4.1.1 The proposals seek to create:

Single storey, flat roof extension at the ground floor level to the front of existing hotel to create extension to fitness suite Health & Wellness Club and replacement of canopy over to main entrance and associated landscaping and parking.

4.1.2 The design rationale, and proposals are set out in detail in the Design and Access statement, prepared by LRW which accompany this planning application; however they can be summarised as follows:

4.1.3 The proposals relate to the front of the building only, and comprise a single storey flat roofed extension of width 20.1m and depth of 12.25m totalling gross external area of 241sqm. The extension will house a new fitness suite and will sit to the immediate east of the existing entrance canopy.

4.1.4 The existing entrance canopy will be replaced by a revised flat roofed canopy of width 8m, depth 9.8m (when measured from the single storey pitched roof surrounding the building) and height of 5.95m. A single column will support the outer edge of the canopy.

4.1.5 Materials will comprise of:

- Extension elevations: Primary Brick Structure of Vertical Stack Bond, Brick Panel & Extruded Brick and Windows & Doors of Powder Coated Aluminum
- Extension and Canopy Roof: Primary Support Structure of Powder Coated Steel, Canopy Roof Structure of Powder Coated Aluminum Cladding and Roof Covering Single-Ply Membrane

4.1.6 A comprehensive landscape scheme has been submitted with the proposals (drawing ref: 1610a-01) which includes the addition of 11 trees and details of a green wall system on the east and part north elevations of the proposed extension. A BNG matrix demonstrates that BNG of 10% can be achieved.

4.1.7 Vehicular access will remain off Thames Side Promenade to the west of the hotel, and pedestrian access will remain directly to the front of the canopy entrance from Richfield Avenue. The proposed extension will displace 2 of the 5 existing disabled parking bays and the cycle parking provision. The cycle parking provision will be relocated in 1 of the existing disabled parking bays and will provide for 20 spaces (effectively doubling the number already provided). The 3 disabled parking bays (2 displaced by the proposed extension and a further space displaced by

the new cycle space provision) will be relocated opposite the retained existing disabled parking bays, providing a total of 5 disabled spaces.

5 Planning Policy

- 5.1.1 This Section sets out the national and local planning policy framework relevant to the Site and the proposed development. The Applicant has sought to ensure that the proposed development complies with all the relevant national and local planning policies whilst having regard to relevant guidance.
- 5.1.2 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Act 2004 requires that the determination of planning applications must be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 5.1.3 National policy is set out in the form of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2024). It is supplemented by the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) which is updated on a regular basis. These documents carry significant material weight.
- 5.1.4 The National Design Guide sets out the fundamental principles for good design and demonstrates what good design means in practice, covering ten characteristics including identity, built form, movement, nature, public spaces, context, uses, homes and buildings, resources, and lifespan.
- 5.1.5 The Development Plan for Reading Borough Council consists of:
- Reading Local Plan (2019) along with the Proposals Map; and
 - Central and Eastern Berkshire Minerals and Waste Plan.
- 5.1.6 The Applicant has also had regard to the Supplementary Planning Guidance adopted by RBC including:
- Sustainable Design and Construction SPD (2019);
 - Affordable Housing (2021);
 - Revised Parking Standards and Design (2011);
 - Planning Obligations under S106 (2015); and
 - Sustainable Design and Construction.

5.2 National Planning Policy Framework 2024

- 5.2.1 At a national level, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2024) sets out the overarching national planning policy principles, providing guidance for local planning authorities and decision-takers. The NPPF has been subsequently updated with the most recent update published in December 2024. It is a material consideration in determining planning applications and the relevant paragraphs are outlined below.

- 5.2.2 With regard to decision-taking, Paragraph 11 of the NPPF states that plans and decisions should approve development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 5.2.3 Chapter 8 relates to promoting healthy and safe communities. Paragraph 96 emphasises that planning policies and decisions be focused on promoting healthy, inclusive and safe places.
- 5.2.4 Chapter 9 relates to transport issues. It seeks to ensure that potential impacts of development on transport networks are addressed at an early stage to understand and address any potential impacts of development on the transport network. Paragraph 116 states that development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.
- 5.2.5 Paragraph 117 outlines variables to be considered within applications for development. Most notably, development should prioritise active travel and public transport, 'address the needs of people with disabilities and reduced mobility, 'allow for the efficient delivery of goods, and access by service and emergency vehicles' and 'be designed to enable charging of plug-in and other ultra-low emission vehicles in safe, accessible and convenient locations.'
- 5.2.6 Chapter 12 relates to achieving well-designed places. Paragraph 131 emphasises the importance of creating high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings. Good design is considered to be a key aspect of sustainable development by creating better places to live and work.
- 5.2.7 Paragraph 135 emphasises that planning decisions should ensure that developments will function well and add to the overall quality of the area for the lifetime of a development and to create a sense of place.
- 5.2.8 Paragraph 139 emphasises that development will be refused if it does not reflect local design policies and government guidance on design, local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes. Significant weight would be given to outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability.
- 5.2.9 Chapter 15 relates to conserving and enhancing the natural environment. It states at paragraph 187 that planning decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment.

5.3 Local Planning Policy

- 5.3.1 The Local Plan was adopted in November 2019 and identifies the amount of development that will take place, the areas and sites where development is expected to be accommodated, and where it will be restricted, and sets out policies for how planning applications will be decided. The relevant policies are listed below:

- 5.3.2 Policy RL1 (Network and Hierarchy of Centres) supports that the vitality and viability of the network of centres identified on the proposals map should be maintained and enhanced. The following improvements will be acceptable in all centres such as accessibility and transport improvements; broadening range of facilities; residential use of upper floors; and environmental enhancements.
- 5.3.3 Policy EN1 (Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment) supports that all proposals will be expected to protect and where possible enhance the significance of heritage assets and their settings, the historic character and local distinctiveness of the area in which they are located. Proposals should seek to avoid harm in the first instance.
- 5.3.4 Policy EN3 (Enhancement of Conservation Areas) states that development proposals within Conservation Areas must make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness. Positive consideration will be given to proposals which take opportunities to enhance the character of conservation areas.
- 5.3.5 Policy CC1 (Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development) supports a positive approach to considering development proposals as contained in the NPPF. This Policy further states that planning applications that accord with the policies in the development plan will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 5.3.6 Policy CC2 (Sustainable Design and Construction) states that proposals for new development 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 the effects of climate change.
- 5.3.7 Policy CC3 (Adaptation to Climate Change) requires all developments to demonstrate how they have been designed to incorporate measures to adapt to climate change either through design or provision of landscaping.
- 5.3.8 Policy CC7 (Design and the public realm) supports high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located. In addition, developments should respond positively to their local context, create safe and accessible environments, are accessible and are visually attractive.
- 5.3.9 Policy CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity) seeks to ensure development does not cause harm to the living environment of existing properties, in terms of loss of privacy, overlooking and visual dominance, amongst other things.
- 5.3.10 Policy EN12 (Biodiversity and the Green Network) states development should not result in a net loss of biodiversity and geodiversity, and should provide a net gain for biodiversity wherever possible. It is important to note, since this policy was written, mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) has been introduced. All developments therefore need to provide 10% BNG unless they

were made before mandatory BNG was introduced on 12 February 2024, or unless they fall below the relevant thresholds. This includes development that does not impact a priority habitat and impacts less than: 25 square metres (5m by 5m) of on-site habitat or 5 metres of on-site linear habitats such as hedgerows.

- 5.3.11 Policy EN13 (Major Landscape Features and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty) sets out the requirement for development proposals to maintain and preserve the natural beauty and visual amenity of designated Major Landscape Features and National Landscapes. The policy identifies a total of 5 MLFs across the borough of Reading, designated at a local level and characterised as natural features that remain largely undeveloped and feature as a backdrop of particular importance.
- 5.3.12 Policy EN14 (Trees, hedges and woodlands) emphasises 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.
- 5.3.13 Policy EN15 (Air Quality) emphasises that development should have regard to the need to improve air quality and reduce the effects of poor air quality. Development that would detrimentally affect air quality will not be permitted unless the effect is to be mitigated.
- 5.3.14 Policy TR5 (Car and cycle parking and electric vehicle charging) emphasises that development should provide car parking and cycle parking that is appropriate to the accessibility of locations within the Borough to sustainable transport facilities, particularly public transport.

5.4 The Central and Eastern Berkshire Minerals and Waste Plan (2023)

- 5.4.1 The Joint Minerals and Waste Plan was adopted by Reading Borough Council on 31st January 2023.
- 5.4.2 Bracknell Forest Council, RBC, the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead and Wokingham Borough Council (collectively referred to as the Central and Eastern Berkshire Authorities) have worked in partnership to produce a Joint Minerals and Waste Plan to guide minerals and waste decision making in the Plan area.
- 5.4.3 The Joint Minerals and Waste Plan establishes the future levels of provision of minerals and waste development to meet national and regional policy targets and objectives. It sets out a vision of how this will be achieved and provides details of strategic sites that will deliver the vision.

5.5 Sustainable Design and Construction SPD (2019)

- 5.5.1 This SPD is intended to guide developers and decision-makers on the implementation of key sustainability policies set out in the Reading Local Plan, namely policies CC2 - CC5 and H5.
- 5.5.2 This document also brings together relevant national guidance. It provides practical advice on forms of sustainable design and construction, as well as waste minimisation that will meet these policy requirements.

5.6 Community Infrastructure Levy Charging Schedule (2015)

- 5.6.1 Under Reading Borough's CIL Charging Schedule January 2025 it states that hotels have a charging rate of £120 per m2.

5.7 Planning Obligations under Section 106 (2015)

- 5.7.1 This Guidance sets out the Council's approach towards seeking planning obligations, alongside the introduction of the Council's Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule. It is a general guide, as development proposals will be assessed on a site-by-site basis with the individual circumstances of each site being taken into consideration.

5.8 Local Plan Update - Emerging Policy

- 5.8.1 The Local Plan was adopted in November 2019. RBC carried out a review in March 2023 where they decided to undertake a Partial Update of the Local Plan. The first stage of the Partial Update (Regulation 18) was carried out between November 2023 and January 2024.
- 5.8.2 RBC most recently consulted on the Local Plan Pre-Submission Draft Partial Update (Regulation 19) which ran until 18th December 2024. The Reading Borough Local Plan Partial Update was recently submitted for examination on early May 2025.

6 Planning Assessment

6.1 Principle of development

- 6.1.1 The proposal is for a ground floor single storey front extension to the existing Hotel to accommodate studio spaces. The extension will be subservient to the principal building and has been designed, following pre application advice, to compliment the existing building design. All Village Hotels include a Health & Wellness Club with state-of-the-art equipment, pool and award-winning classes alongside a bar, grill, meeting rooms and Starbucks coffee shop. These facilities are available for guests, members and the local community to enjoy. The proposed development will facilitate three fitness studios in the front extension of the existing Hotel. The proposals also include a replacement canopy at front entrance.
- 6.1.2 The site sits within the West Reading and Tilehurst area, just outside the Central Reading Area and Town Centre, and to the south of the Caversham District Centre as defined by Policy RL1 of The Local Plan. Whilst the proposals are for a 'main town centre use', the principal building is existing. In addition, the proposals are for a modest extension providing 241 sqm of additional floor space and therefore do not fall to be considered under Policy RL5. The proposals support the Council's Vision at paragraph 2.1.8 of the Local Plan which states that: ***[Reading] will be a clean, green, healthy, safe and desirable place in which to live, work, study and visit.*** They are also in accordance with paragraph 96 of the NPPF which states that Planning Policies and Decisions should ***'enable and support healthy lives, through both promoting good health and prevent ill health, especially where this would address identified local health and well-being need'***. Therefore, it is considered that the proposal is acceptable in-principle.

6.2 Design

- 6.2.1 The application is supported by a Design and Access Statement which sets out further details regarding the proposals. The design of the proposed development was refined through internal workshops and feedback sessions, including a pre-application meeting with RBC. A key issue raised by the officer in their pre-application feedback was that the proposed extension created a pinch point towards the South-East corner of the site. In response to this a chamfer was added to eliminate the 'pinch' point in this area and open up the space for further landscaping to embed the studio into the surrounding greenery.
- 6.2.2 To further enhance this softened edge, a green wall has been incorporated on the chamfered facade, providing visual interest and a more sympathetic interface with the surrounding context.
- 6.2.3 Following the pre-application advice, the roof profile has been revised to a flat form, and the previously proposed pyramidal rooflights have been omitted to create a more restrained and integrated roofline. The entrance canopy has also been raised to enhance legibility and

prominence, acting as a clear visual cue and establishing the entrance as a distinct and welcoming feature in relation to the new extension.

- 6.2.4 The proposed extension comprises 241m² GEA and introduces three dedicated wellness studios—Spin, Burn, and Reformer—designed to enhance the Hotel's fitness offering. These are connected to the main hotel via an internal corridor, which allows easy access between the existing and new facilities and also serves as a fire escape route. In addition to the new extension, an extra studio space is located within the existing hotel, further supporting the overall fitness and wellness offering.
- 6.2.5 The roof of the proposed studio extension incorporates parapet walls, which help to define the building's overall form and integrate the new structure with the existing hotel. These parapet walls serve both an aesthetic and functional purpose, providing a clean, finished edge to the roofline while also contributing to the building's weatherproofing and structural integrity.
- 6.2.6 Recessed elements were incorporated into each elevation. These recesses serve to articulate the façade and break down the overall scale of the building, introducing depth and shadow that enrich the visual rhythm of the elevation and enhance the architectural legibility of the proposal.
- 6.2.7 The canopy has been articulated as a distinct form, its massing elevated above the roofline of the proposed studio. This deliberate separation enhances legibility between the two elements, establishing the canopy as a visual marker and clearly signifying the entrance to the building.
- 6.2.8 The proposed extension responds to the existing hotel building through the continued use of brick as the primary external material, ensuring visual consistency and cohesion across the site. While the material remains consistent, the extension introduces variety and texture through different brickwork treatments, including vertical and horizontal bonds, as well as extruded brick details adjacent to the windows. These variations help to break up the massing, add depth and shadow to the façade, and subtly highlight key architectural features such as window openings.
- 6.2.9 In contrast, the canopy structure is articulated using exposed steel supports, providing a lightweight, modern counterpoint to the solid brickwork of the extension. This material distinction helps to define the canopy as a separate architectural element, while still maintaining a strong visual relationship with the extension and the existing building.
- 6.2.10 The proposed development is therefore in compliance with local plan policy CC2, CC7 and CC8 and the relevant policies of the NPPF 2024.

6.3 Arboriculture

- 6.3.1 The application is supported by a Tree Survey, Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Arboricultural Method Statement. The following is a summarised commentary based on the three reports.

- 6.3.2 The construction proposals necessitate the removal of a single Category B tree (No. 35), as it is located within the building's footprint, however, as indicated in the landscape section below, the proposal looks to provide 11 new trees which supports the proposals in achieving 10% biodiversity net gain. Tree Nos. 34, 37 and 39 to 42 have specified 'root protection areas' (RPA) that encroach within or immediately about the proposed extension.
- 6.3.3 To mitigate for potential root damage, a combination of tree protection fences, ground protection, the utilisation of the existing tarmac car park areas as ground protection, and the implementation of alternative construction methodologies will need to be implemented.
- 6.3.4 Tree No 34 will be retained as its root protection area does not encroach beneath the new building. Further details and mitigation for any direct root damage has been covered in the submitted Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Arboricultural Method Statement.
- 6.3.5 Prior to construction, essential tree fence and ground protection methods will need to be implemented around the trees, as referenced within the Tree Protection Plan, with regular monitoring implemented to ensure full adherence to the protection plan during the construction stage.
- 6.3.6 As part of the landscape improvement works, two sections of the existing carpark are to be removed to form landscape beds. One is located immediately to the south of the new fitness studios and the other comprising of two parking bays is situated west of Tree No. 40. Further details of mitigation are covered in the submitted Arboricultural reports. .
- 6.3.7 As indicated within the survey schedule, the recommended tree surgery work principally comprises the removal of all dead/dying trees, the removal of Ivy and the removal of deadwood and damaged and fractured limbs from those trees designated for retention, the reduction of canopy spreads of those trees with indicated structural or physiological defects and the management of boundary trees to maintain the integrity of perimeter security fences.
- 6.3.8 The proposed development will be in compliance with local plan policy EN14 and the relevant policies of the NPPF 2024.

6.4 Landscaping Proposals

Landscape Proposals

- 6.4.1 The proposed development is supported by submitted landscape plans ref:1610a-01 and 1610a-02 which shows the proposed soft landscaping details for the proposal. Such landscape details include the addition of 11 trees which will support the proposals in achieving 10% biodiversity net gain.

Landscape and Visual Impact



- 6.4.2 The Site has a localised visual envelope within the surrounding landscape, with views of the façades of the existing built form limited to areas within its locality. Near distance open views are available from Richfield Avenue immediately to the south, while views from the Thames Path to the north are limited to oblique glimpses. Where visible, the existing built form of the Site is not uncharacteristic within its surrounding context. Longer distance views are largely curtailed by intervening built form, and the undulating topography of the surrounding context does not afford elevated views toward the Site.
- 6.4.3 Overall, the Site is predominantly characterised by built form, with some planting including mature trees. The existing boundary vegetation provides containment of the Site, and as such, the majority of built form is not readily perceptible from the green space of Rivermead Park to the west. There is no intervisibility with the Site from the more sensitive locations of St Peter's Conservation Area.
- 6.4.4 The Site is situated on the eastern edge of the Thames Valley Major Landscape Feature (MLF), adjacent to Reading City Centre and the setting of St Peter's Conservation Area. The proposed development will be perceived as a very limited increase to the total built form within the Thames Valley MLF, at a scale that is characteristic of its setting. Whilst the change will be irreversible and long term, the containment afforded by the existing built form will result in a barely appreciable change to the openness of the wider Thames Valley MLF. Additionally, the location of the introduced built form will not serve to degrade the habitat function, biodiversity, or natural beauty of the Thames Valley MLF, introducing urban features that are not uncharacteristic of the receiving setting or existing land uses.
- 6.4.5 The introduced features observe an appropriate scale that does not increase the overall quantum of built form within views, nor break the existing roofline. As such, there will be no reduction in intervisibility into the Thames Valley MLF, therefore preserving and maintaining its natural beauty and visual amenity.
- 6.4.6 Roof profiling and form sympathetic to the existing development will help to ensure that the extension is in keeping with the character of built form within its surroundings, and that its visual envelope is kept to a minimum. Orienting the extension to the front of the hotel complex will additionally minimise impact on the visual receptors with a higher sensitivity to the north, whilst enhancing the character of views from Richfield Avenue.
- 6.4.7 Other receptors have the potential to be subject to adverse effects, such as the trees within the Site to the south, along the Site boundary. As such, existing trees will be retained (bar one Category B tree which lies within the footprint of the proposed extension) and protected during construction in accordance with BS 5837:2012, mitigating any potential effects.
- 6.4.8 With particular consideration to the Thames Valley MLF, due to the considered location and strong containment of the Proposed Development, impacts will be very limited in nature and will

not result in a degradation of character or visual amenity. The proposed development is therefore in compliance with local plan policies EN1, EN3, EN13 and relevant policies of the NPPF 2024.

6.5 Ecology

- 6.5.1 A preliminary ecological assessment (PEA) was carried out to support the application and has been submitted along with the application. The desk study returned no internationally designated statutory sites within a 5km radius of the application site and no nationally designated statutory sites within a 2km radius. Two locally designated non-statutory sites, one of which is a complex comprising six sites, were highlighted within a 1km search radius of the site which are listed in Table 1 of the PEA.
- 6.5.2 Considering the nature, scale and distance of the redevelopment, no adverse effects are anticipated on the locally designated non-statutory sites.
- 6.5.3 No evidence of bat presence and no potential roost sites were identified in relation to the frontage of the hotel that is to be impacted by the proposed studio extension. The application site offers potential flight paths and foraging habitats for bats adapted to an urbanised setting, particularly with the mature London planes in the wider hotel grounds which connect to the River Thames to north. The use of the site for the hotel will not change so it is unlikely that there will be any significant change in light levels.
- 6.5.4 The risk of Great Crested Newt present on site is extremely low and therefore no adverse effects on this species are anticipated. The application site and the immediate urban setting have no suitable habitat for dormice. Therefore, the presence of hazel dormouse on site is considered highly unlikely.
- 6.5.5 Hedgehog has been recorded locally and could forage and take cover on site within the patches of introduced shrub. The development proposals will maintain opportunities for hedgehogs to forage and take cover on site.
- 6.5.6 The risk of reptile presence on site is extremely low and therefore no adverse effects on this species are anticipated.
- 6.5.7 The patches of introduced shrub provide limited nesting opportunities only for common and widespread birds of urban areas, such as the feral pigeon; no evidence of nesting birds in the tree canopies was identified during the survey.
- 6.5.8 The proposed habitats derived from the proposed landscaping plan are listed in Table 2 of the submitted Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA). A plan of these proposed habitats for the Statutory Biodiversity Metric calculation is illustrated in Appendix 3 of the PEA.

- 6.5.9 The soft landscaping in the mixed shrub beds on the eastern side of the site includes a small Himalayan birch (*Betula jacquemontii*) (32) and blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*) (33) (Photograph 5 of PEA); a pair of small Himalayan birch (*B. jacquemontii*) (34 & 35) (Photograph 6 of PEA); and a Norway spruce (*Picea abies*) (36). The habitat condition of these urban trees has been assessed as poor (see habitat condition assessment sheets); the trees are not of ecological value beyond the scale of the site and are not identified within any strategic green infrastructure policies, therefore have been assigned low strategic significance.
- 6.5.10 There is a very large London plane (*Platanus x hispanica*) (37) and a small common lime (*Tilia x europea*) (38) in the central part of the site (Photograph 7 of PEA). The habitat condition of these urban trees has been assessed as moderate (see habitat condition assessment sheets); the trees are part of a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) so have been assigned high strategic significance.
- 6.5.11 The soft landscaping proposals result in a net increase of introduced shrub on site. The proposed studio extension and increase in soft landscaping results in a small net decrease of developed land on site. A small section of introduced shrub is to be replaced by gravel beneath the frontage of the hotel building. The proposed studio extension will feature green wall covering an area of 22 sqm. A Himalayan birch (*B. jacquemontii*) (35) will be removed to facilitate the proposals; the remaining trees will be retained. Eleven small ornamental birch trees will be planted as part of the soft landscaping proposals.
- 6.5.12 The biodiversity metric tool has been used to assess the feasibility of the proposed site layout and landscaping in delivering a minimum 10% net gain for biodiversity. The biodiversity metric tool shows that the landscaping proposals will deliver a total net change of 12.15% in habitat units (see Figure 1 of PEA).
- 6.5.13 The planning proposals provide opportunities for the enhancement of the site's biodiversity value and is in compliance with local plan policy EN12, EN14 and the NPPF 2024.

6.6 Transport, Highway and Parking

- 6.6.1 The application is supported by a Transport and Highways Note. The existing car parking provision is 16 spaces and 5 disabled spaces adjacent to the hotel, and a further 164 car parking spaces accessed off Thames Side Promenade.
- 6.6.2 A review of the PIC data highlights that there are no clear trends and patterns that have occurred on the local highway network in the direct vicinity of the site. The small increases in traffic flow due to the development proposals is not anticipated to have any meaningful impact on the likelihood of road traffic accidents in the vicinity of the site.
- 6.6.3 The proposed extension will displace 2 disabled parking bays and the cycle parking provision. The relocated cycle parking provision will displace 1 existing disabled car parking space. The 3

disabled parking bays will be relocated opposite the retained existing disabled parking bays, displacing 5 existing standard spaces. In addition to this, there will be a further loss of 2 car parking spaces to accommodate for BNG requirements. The loss of these parking spaces will be compensated by the provision of spaces to the west of Thames Side Promenade in the existing car park.

- 6.6.4 The cycle parking provision will be relocated adjacent to the main hotel entrance. The existing cycle parking provision will be retained (10 spaces), and additional cycle parking provision will be provided to accommodate the gym expansion (10 spaces, in line with RBC guidance). The 20 cycle parking spaces will be provided as Sheffield Stands as per RBC guidance.
- 6.6.5 The existing off-street servicing and delivery strategy will be retained and is sufficient to meet the needs of the proposed extension. This uses a designated delivery and servicing bell mouth access off Thames Side Promenade that provides direct access to the existing building.
- 6.6.6 The gym expansion is expected to generate a marginal increase in peak hour trips that will not have a material impact on the highway network. A parking accumulation exercise has identified that there is sufficient capacity to accommodate the additional demand from the proposed development.
- 6.6.7 Therefore, the proposed development is in compliance with local plan policy TR5 and the NPPF 2024.

6.7 Sustainability

- 6.7.1 The Energy and Sustainability Statement demonstrates that the Proposed Development has been designed to be sustainable considering economic, social and environmental aspects which have been categorised into the components summarised in the table below.

Management

- 6.7.2 During construction, the Site will be managed through a Construction Method Statement, which outlines measures that protect the environment on Site and reduce impacts to the local community. During operation, the Proposed Development will be managed through a manned entrance which will reduce the opportunity for and the fear of crime.
- 6.7.3 The extension to the Village Hotel will be managed according to the Applicant's ESG and Sustainability Strategy, which sets sustainability standards for all hotels to adhere to.

Health and Wellbeing

- 6.7.4 The Proposed Development will be designed to improve the quality of life of the local community, contributing to the overall sustainability. This considers the safety, physical and mental wellbeing of users of the Site during construction and operation.

6.7.5 The construction of the Proposed Development will establish opportunities for healthy working including:

- Establishing health & safety goals for the project to protect the health, safety and welfare of people working on Site and the local community;
- Well maintaining equipment to reduce risks of hazards;
- Protecting workers and the local area against exposure to noise, vibration and dust;
- Incorporating regular breaks and job rotation on Site during construction; and
- Establishment of 'Welfare Areas' for construction staff.

6.7.6 A hierarchical approach to energy consumption will be adopted following the principles of the energy hierarchy (see Figure 3.1 of the Sustainability Statement).

Transport

6.7.7 The Proposed Development will increase the number of cycle parking spaces from 10 to 20 to accommodate the gym extension and facilitate sustainable modes of transport to and from the Site.

Water

6.7.8 The Site is at a low risk of flooding and therefore the Proposed Development will not require design measures to reduce flood risk. Where possible, the Proposed Development will consider measures where rainwater can be harvested and reused. Due to the size and scale of the hotel extension, there is no predicted impact on the increase of water consumption and therefore the consumption target does not apply to the Proposed Development.

Materials

6.7.9 The Proposed Development will seek to incorporate a series of measures to conserve material resources, and to manage waste safely and effectively.

6.7.10 The proposed extension will continue the use of brick as the primary external material, this will ensure that the Proposed Development maintains local character. The sourcing of materials will be driven by reducing embodied carbon and ensuring a low environmental impact.

Waste

6.7.11 A Construction Method Statement has been prepared to monitor and reduce the amount of waste produced by the construction of the Proposed Development. During operation of the Village Hotel, storage will be provided for recycling of waste for both hotel guests and Health &

Wellness Club users. As detailed in the Village Hotel ESG and Sustainability Strategy, 98% of waste from Village Hotels are diverted from landfill through recycling measures.

Land Use and Ecology

- 6.7.12 The Proposed Development will include a planting scheme which will retain the existing vegetation on Site and improve the natural environment. The planting scheme will deliver a minimum of 10% BNG on Site.

Pollution

- 6.7.13 The Proposed Development will reduce pollution during the construction phase by a package of mitigation measures which will reduce dust, noise and light pollution. Precaution will also be taking for nesting birds, hedgehogs and a sensitive lighting scheme for bats to reduce any impacts to the local environment.
- 6.7.14 There will be a minimal impact on traffic associated with the increase of health and fitness services and hotel guests. Therefore, there will not be an increase of air pollution resulting from traffic. Additionally, users of the Proposed Development will be encouraged to use sustainable modes of transport through the provision of extra cycle parking and multiple pedestrian access points, decreasing air pollution.
- 6.7.15 In regard to surface water pollution, the Proposed Development is not in an area of high flood risk and due to the small size of the extension, there will be no increase in pollution which could negatively impact the water environment.

Innovation

- 6.7.16 Recognition of innovation regarding design has been considered for the Proposed Development. The design of the extension has adopted innovative approaches by incorporating a massing and scale which improves the setting of the hotel. This also includes innovative features such as the green living wall. Innovation in procurement, management process and technology does not apply to the Proposed Development due to the nature of the extension.
- 6.7.17 The Proposed Development is therefore considered to be in compliance with local plan policies CC3 and the relevant policies of the NPPF 2024.

6.8 Air Quality

- 6.8.1 The application is supported by an Air Quality Assessment. The Air Quality Management Area covers the town centre, areas along all the major radial roads into Reading (including J11 of the M4) and along railway lines where they pass through built-up areas. The Site lies within the AQMA.

- 6.8.2 The construction activities have the potential to create dust. During construction it is recommended that in accordance with the Institute of Air Quality Management (IAQM) guidance a package of mitigation measures is put in place to minimise the risk of elevated PM10 concentrations and dust soiling in the surrounding area. With mitigation in place the construction impacts are judged as being 'not significant'.
- 6.8.3 The Proposed Development will generate approximately 87 Average annual Daily Traffic (AADT) during the operational phase. As such, traffic generated by the Proposed Development falls below the Environmental Protection United Kingdom (EPUK) / IAQM screening criteria and, therefore, the impacts of operational traffic generated by the development on existing human receptors within the study area is considered to be 'not significant' and no additional mitigation is therefore required.
- 6.8.4 Pollutant concentrations at the Site are anticipated to be below the relevant (National Air Quality Objectives) NAQOs. Therefore, the Site is considered appropriate for the proposed end-use without the need for further air quality mitigation.
- 6.8.5 The Proposed Development is therefore considered to be in compliance with local plan policies CC8, EN15 and the relevant policies of the NPPF 2024.

6.9 Lighting

- 6.9.1 The application is supported by a Lighting Assessment. The Site is considered to fall within an E3 "Suburban" Environmental Lighting Zone. Operational lighting is required throughout the Proposed Development to provide the minimum level of lighting to prevent crime, and to meet highway safety standards. A plan showing the lux and uniformity levels for the areas within the redline boundary can be found in Appendix C of the submitted lighting report.
- 6.9.2 External lighting will be modern energy efficient LED lighting. External lighting will be connected to a dedicated distribution board and will have centralised photocell and time switch control such that external lighting will be activated at low ambient lighting and switched off during daylight hours.
- 6.9.3 All external lighting will be mounted horizontally so that the light source is aimed directly downwards, with full cut-off optics, meaning the luminaire emits no direct upward light. This is to include any building mounted 'bulkhead' luminaires. Any lit signs will be consistent with the requirements for the Environmental Lighting Zone and ILP PLG05. Uplighting to signage is to be avoided.
- 6.9.4 Consideration is needed to reduce the potential for light spillage, so that light is directed to the areas which require illumination only, and away from key green spaces and boundaries. This will be done by the use of shielding or cutting light, which can be achieved through the design of the luminaire itself or with accessories such as hoods, cowls, louvers and shields.

- 6.9.5 Lighting for the car park at the south side of the Site will be aimed directly downwards and shielded. Lighting for the entrance should be mounted to the underside of the porte-cochere, so that the light source is hidden from view from outside the Site boundary.
- 6.9.6 Emergency lighting will be required so that illuminance on the entrance steps is maintained in the event of an emergency.
- 6.9.7 Uplighting of trees, hedges and other vegetation within the redline boundary will be avoided as to not disrupt commuting or foraging bats & wildlife.
- 6.9.8 Due to the location of the extension in relation to the rest of the Site, it is anticipated that any potential impact from construction & operational lighting will be to the residents along the A4155 / Caversham Road and on any habitats within the boundary vegetation. As set out in the lighting strategy, good practice measures detailed in Section 3 should be incorporated in regards to the external lighting for the Site. Lighting controls, lower colour temperature and considered orientations of luminaires will be utilised to minimise and negate the impact on residents and habitats.
- 6.9.9 The Proposed Development is therefore considered to be in compliance with local plan policies CC7, CC8 and the relevant policies of the NPPF 2024.

7 Conclusion

- 7.1.1 This Planning Statement is submitted in support of a full planning application at the Former Crowne Plaza, Richfield Avenue, RG1 8BD, Reading for:

“Single storey, flat roof extension at the ground floor level to the front of existing hotel to create extension to fitness suite Health & Wellness Club and replacement of canopy over to main entrance and associated landscaping and parking”.

- 7.1.2 The proposals adopt a proportionate and sustainable approach that meets the objectives of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019) and SPD.
- 7.1.3 The application is supported by a full suite of technical documents which demonstrate that there are no technical or environmental reasons why the planning application should not be approved.
- 7.1.4 This Statement demonstrates that the proposed development is an acceptable form of development within this location which meets the requirements of National Planning Policy Framework, Reading Borough Council Development Plan, as well as taking into account other relevant material considerations. In accordance with NPPF, the development should be approved without delay.

