

4th June 2025

Our Ref: 333102228

Reading Borough Council,
Civic Offices,
Bridge Street,
Reading,
RG1 2LU

BY PLANNING PORTAL: PP- 13963757

Dear Sir or Madam,

**SPORTS PARK CYCLE STORE, UNIVERSITY OF READING WHITEKNIGHTS CAMPUS, READING
FULL PLANNING APPLICATION**

On behalf of our client, the University of Reading, we are pleased to submit a planning application to Reading Borough Council ('RBC') for the erection of a replacement cycle store at land south of the Sports Park, University of Reading Whiteknights Campus, Reading.

The proposed description of development for which full planning permission is sought is as follows:

"Removal of existing cycle store and erection of a new cycle store"

The following documents are submitted in support of the planning application:

- Planning Statement
- Location Plan (484-ACG-XX-RF-DR-A-1002 Rev A)
- Existing (484-ACG-XX-RF-DR-A-1050 Rev A) and Proposed (484-ACG-XX-RF-DR-A-1052 Rev A) Site Plan
- Existing (484-ACG-XX-00-DR-A-0001 Rev A) and Proposed (484-ACG-XX-00-DR-A-2000 Rev A) Floor Plan
- Existing (484-ACG-XX-RF-DR-A-0004 Rev A) and Proposed (484-ACG-XX-RF-DR-A-2001 Rev A) Roof Plan
- Existing (484-ACG-XX-ZZ-DR-A-0100 Rev A, 484-ACG-XX-ZZ-DR-A-0101 Rev A) and Proposed (484-ACG-XX-ZZ-DR-A-4000 Rev A, 484-ACG-XX-ZZ-DR-A-4001 Rev A) Elevations
- Arboricultural Impact Assessment, Arboricultural Method Statement and Tree Protection Plan
- Biodiversity Net Gain Note
- Great Crested Newt Statement

This application has been submitted electronically via Planning Portal (ref: PP-13963757).

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This Planning Statement provides an assessment of this proposal in consideration of the relevant policies of RBC's Development Plan and national policy (i.e., the National Planning Policy Framework ('NPPF')) to demonstrate that the proposed cycle store is in accordance with local and national planning policy.

Site and Surrounding Area

The University of Reading's Whiteknights Campus is set in 130 hectares of parkland, featuring a lake, open grassland spaces, woodlands and the Harris Gardens, in addition to its academic and student accommodation buildings. The Campus is located to the southeast of central Reading, bounded by Shinfield, Elmhurst, Upper Redlands, Whiteknights and Wilderness Roads and Pepper Lane. The southeastern part of the Campus is situated within Wokingham Borough and the northwestern part of the Campus is located within Reading Borough.

The Sports Park is located within the northwestern part of the Campus, north of car park one which is situated to the north of Queen's Drive. Queen's Drive is the main vehicular access point into the Campus from Shinfield Road to the west of the Campus.

The existing cycle store is located adjacent to the southern elevation of the Sports Park building. It comprises Sheffield cycle stands enclosed by steel frames with curved polycarbonate panels across the back and over the top of the stands. The store is open at the sides and front. There are 58 cycle spaces. The store is located on top of existing hardstanding. There is a row of trees to the south of the existing stores and beyond this is car park one. To the west is the Sports Park building and to the east is an area of open grassland.

The Campus is subject to a site-specific planning policy within the Reading Local Plan (ER2: Whiteknights Campus). The application site is not subject to any specific planning or environmental designations.

An online search has been undertaken and no relevant planning history to the planning application was found.

The Proposed Development

The proposed development comprises a detailed application for:

"Removal of existing cycle store and erection of a new cycle store"

The University is seeking to improve the availability, quality and security of cycle store provision on the Campus. This full planning application seeks approval for the removal of the existing sports park cycle store which has 58 existing cycle spaces and its replacement with a new cycle store with 60 cycle spaces.

The cycle store will be fully enclosed, with timber panels on the rear (north) elevation and toughened glass on the other elevations. It will have a grey PVC roof.

Due to repeated bicycle thefts from existing stores and the growing demand for cycling on Whiteknights Campus, it is proposed that the existing cycle store will be replaced with a more modern and secure design. This facility will ensure safe and secure bicycle storage, optimise space usage and seamlessly integrate into the surrounding area. The cycle store is located directly adjacent to the sports park with easy access from car park one, allowing a range of users to use the cycle store when cycling to the sports park and other facilities nearby. The enhanced cycle facilities will encourage more people to cycle,

promoting physical activity and public health, while reducing traffic congestion and emissions. This aligns with the University of Reading's sustainability goals and RBC's Local Plan vision and policies.

The form, massing and materials of the proposed development have been carefully designed to respond to the key characteristics of the surrounding area, with no impact on the surrounding trees, vegetation and adjacent pathway. The replacement cycle store is a similar scale and footprint to the existing store in this location.

Planning Policy Context

This section sets out the national and local planning policy relevant to the planning application.

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 sets out that applications must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Reading Borough Council Development Plan

The adopted Development Plan for RBC comprises:

- Reading Borough Local Plan (adopted 2019) along with the Proposals Map; and
- Central and Eastern Berkshire Minerals and Waste Plan

There is no made neighbourhood plan which includes the Campus.

Reading Borough Local Plan

RBC's Local Plan was adopted in November 2019 and contains the policies for how Reading will develop up to 2036, which is the end date of the Plan.

The planning policies contained in the Local Plan that are most relevant to the proposed development are provided in full below.

Policy CC1 (Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development) applies the NPPF's presumption in favour of sustainable development and confirms that the Council will work proactively with applicants to find solutions which mean that proposals can be approved wherever possible, and planning applications that accord with the policies in the development plan will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Policy TR1 (Achieving the Transport Strategy) requires that new development should make appropriate provision for works and contributions to ensure an adequate level of accessibility and safety by all modes of transport from all parts of a development, particularly by public transport, walking and cycling, in accordance with any agreed transport assessment submitted as part of the application.

Policy TR3 (Access, Traffic and Highway-related Matters) sets out that when determining proposals involving a new or altered access onto the transport network, improvement works to the transport network, the creation of new transport infrastructure or the generation of additional trips on the transport network, consideration will be given to the effect on safety, congestion and the environment. Development must not be detrimental to the safety of users of the transport network, including pedestrians and cyclists.

Policy TR4 (Cycle Routes and Facilities) states that:

“Developments will be expected to make full use of opportunities to improve access for cyclists to, from and within the development and to integrate cycling through the provision of new facilities. Development of new facilities for cycling, such as cycle hire points and cycle parking, will be acceptable.

The cycle routes identified in the most up-to-date Cycling Strategy will be maintained, enhanced and added to or extended. Development will not detrimentally affect an identified cycle route. Where opportunities exist, improvements to that route, including the provision of connecting routes, and/or cycling facilities will be sought within developments or through planning contributions.”

Policy ER2 (Whiteknights Campus, University of Reading) outlines the Whiteknights Campus as a focus for development. The complete policy is set out in full below:

“The University of Reading is a national and international educational establishment of strategic importance which will continue to adapt and expand over the plan period. The Whiteknights Campus as shown on the Proposals Map will continue to be a focus for development associated with the University of Reading. Such development may include additional staff, teaching, research and enterprise accommodation, infrastructure and services, and sports and leisure facilities among other uses. Access to and within the site will be improved where necessary.

Where development would result in a material need for additional students to be housed, it should be supported by an appropriate increase in existing or planned student accommodation. Provision of new student accommodation on the Whiteknights Campus, or as a reconfiguration or extension of nearby dedicated accommodation, will therefore be acceptable subject to other policies in the Plan.

Development will accord with the following criteria:

Areas of wildlife significance and current or potential green links will be retained or enhanced, and not detrimentally affected by development, including through light effects;

The safety of those using the campus will be maintained or enhanced;

There will be no significant detrimental impact on the amenity of neighbouring residential properties; and

The loss of undeveloped areas on the site will be weighed against the benefits of development to the wider community.”

Policy CC3 (Adaptation to Climate Change) specifies that all developments will demonstrate how they have been designed to incorporate measures to adapt to climate change.

Policy CC7 (Design and the Public Realm) sets out that all development must be of high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located.

Policy EN12 (Biodiversity and the Green Network) relates to the maintenance, protection, consolidation, extension and enhancement of the Green Network including sites with identified or potential biodiversity interest. It states that development should not result in a net loss of biodiversity and geodiversity and should provide a net gain for biodiversity wherever possible.

Policy EN14 (Trees, Hedges and Woodlands) seeks to protect trees, groups of trees, hedges and woodlands from damage or removal where they are of importance and seeks the provision of new tree planting within new developments.

Supplementary Planning Documents

There are no SPDs which are relevant as key material considerations to the assessment of the proposals.

Emerging Local Plan

RBC is preparing a Local Plan Partial Update. It consulted on the Pre-Submission Draft of the Partial Update to the Local Plan through a Regulation 19 consultation which concluded in December 2024. The Local Plan Partial Update was submitted to the Secretary of State for independent examination on 15th May 2025. It therefore has limited weight in decision making.

The RBC Submission Draft of the Partial Update to the Local Plan contains draft policy ER2 (Whiteknights Campus, University of Reading). This policy mirrors the text of adopted policy ER2 but references the provision of development that contributes to reducing the University's carbon emissions. The full policy is set out below.

“The University of Reading is a national and international educational establishment of strategic importance which will continue to adapt and expand over the plan period. The Whiteknights Campus as shown on the Proposals Map will continue to be a focus for development associated with the University of Reading. Such development may include additional or replacement staff, teaching, research and enterprise accommodation, infrastructure and services, sports and leisure facilities and development to reduce the University’s carbon emissions among other uses. Access to and within the site will be improved where necessary.

Where development would result in a material need for additional students to be housed, it should be supported by an appropriate increase in existing or planned student accommodation. Provision of new student accommodation on the Whiteknights Campus, or as a reconfiguration or extension of nearby dedicated accommodation, will therefore be acceptable subject to other policies in the Plan.

Development will accord with the following criteria:

Areas of wildlife significance and current or potential green links will be retained or enhanced, and not detrimentally affected by development, including through light effects;

The safety of those using the campus will be maintained or enhanced;

There will be no significant detrimental impact on the amenity of neighbouring residential properties; and

The loss of undeveloped areas on the site will be weighed against the benefits of development to the wider community.”

The National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024)

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was originally published on 27th March 2012, however, has since been subsequently updated in 2018, 2019, 2021, 2023 and 2024. It is a material consideration in determining planning applications and the chapters of the NPPF that are most of relevance in this instance include:

- Chapter 2 – Achieving sustainable development
- Chapter 8 – Promoting healthy and safe communities
- Chapter 9 – Promoting sustainable transport
- Chapter 12 – Achieving well-designed places
- Chapter 14 – Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change
- Chapter 15 – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

The key paragraphs of the NPPF relevant to the proposals are listed below.

The presumption in favour of sustainable development at the heart of the NPPF is outlined in paragraph 11 (within chapter 2). This states that for the purposes of decision-taking this means:

“c) approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or

d) where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date⁸, granting permission unless:

i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for refusing the development proposed; or

ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination.”

Chapter 8 - Promoting healthy and safe communities

Paragraph 96 states that planning policies and decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which promote social interaction, enable and support healthy lives and are safe and accessible.

Chapter 9 – Promoting sustainable transport

Paragraph 109 seeks to ensure that potential impacts of development on transport networks are addressed, opportunities from existing or proposed transport infrastructure and changing transport technology and usage are realised, appropriate opportunities to promote sustainable transport modes are identified, the environmental impacts of traffic and transport infrastructure can be identified, assessed and taken into account and patterns of movement, streets, parking and other transport considerations are integrated into the design of schemes.

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.

Paragraph 117 states that applications for development should give priority first to pedestrian and cycle movements, and second, to facilitating access to high quality public transport. The needs of people with disabilities and reduced mobility should be addressed and places should be created that are safe, secure and attractive, minimising the scope for conflicts between pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles and responding to local character and design standards.

Chapter 12 – Achieving well-designed places

Paragraph 131 states that the creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve, and outlines the importance of good design as a key aspect of sustainable development, creating better places in which to live and work.

Paragraph 135 emphasises that planning decisions should ensure that developments will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, are visually attractive, are sympathetic to local character and history, establish or maintain a strong sense of place, optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible.

Paragraph 136 emphasises the important contribution trees make to the character and quality of urban environments, and can help mitigate and adapt to climate change. Planning policies and decisions should ensure that new streets are tree-lined, that opportunities are taken to incorporate trees elsewhere in developments (such as parks and community orchards), that appropriate measures are in place to secure the long-term maintenance of newly-planted trees, and that existing trees are retained wherever possible.

Chapter 15 – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

Paragraph 187 states that planning decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment, including minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity.

Paragraph 193 states that significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development must be adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for otherwise planning permission should be refused. Development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and that a suitable compensation strategy exists.

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

The PPG was first published in March 2014 and, alongside the Framework, provides guidance notes on various matters including design, natural environment, biodiversity net gain, and sports and recreation facilities.

National Design Guide

The National Design Guide sets out the fundamental principles for good design and demonstrates what good design means in practice, covering ten characteristics including context, identity, built form, movement, nature, public spaces, uses, homes and buildings, resources, and lifespan.

Planning Assessment

This section of the Planning Statement assesses the proposals against relevant national and local planning policy.

Principle of Development

Policy ER2 of the Local Plan sets out that the Whiteknights Campus will be a focus for development associated with the University of Reading including additional infrastructure and serves and the improvement of access to and within the site where necessary. The provision of a new cycle store with 60 cycle parking spaces will provide key cycle infrastructure for a range of users on the Campus, improving accessibility and encouraging people to cycle. The new cycle store will be secure and covered, thereby ensuring the safety and convenience of campus users. Strategically located in a well-lit and easily accessible area, the cycle shelter will offer a high-quality environment for staff and students to park and secure their bicycles, and an improvement to the existing facility.

Policy ER2 further sets out that development on the Whiteknights Campus will accord with the following criteria:

- Areas of wildlife significance and current or potential green links will be retained or enhanced, and not detrimentally affected by development, including through light effects;
- The safety of those using the campus will be maintained or enhanced;
- There will be no significant detrimental impact on the amenity of neighbouring residential properties; and
- The loss of undeveloped areas on the site will be weighed against the benefits of development to the wider community.

The proposal meets these criteria as follows:

- The proposal is not located within an area of ecological significance and will not have any direct impact on the Local Wildlife Site located in the campus. The nature of the proposal which is on existing hard landscaping means that it would not impact biodiversity, and does not require Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). A Great Crested Newt (GCN) Statement has been submitted and concludes that there is an absence of GCNs and very low risk of an offence being committed, nonetheless works will follow a method of working set out in the statement.
- The proposal will improve the safety of those using the campus through the provision of a secure and covered cycle store which will discourage theft. The proposal will not have an impact on highway safety and no changes to access are proposed. Appropriate safety measures during and after construction will be implemented to ensure the development does not affect the safety of those using the Campus.
- The application site is located away from neighbouring residents. The proposal will not have any impact on vehicular parking or traffic on the Campus. Noise during construction will be minimal and no noise impacts are anticipated during operation.
- There will be no loss of undeveloped areas. The proposal is to replace an existing cycle store in the same location and on a similar footprint.

Furthermore, this proposal is consistent with policy TR4 of the Local Plan which explicitly states that “development of new facilities for cycling, such as cycle hire points and cycle parking, will be acceptable”. It is also in accordance with the general principles sets out in policies TR1 and TR3. National policy is also supportive of development which support healthy lives, promotes sustainable transport modes and which prioritises pedestrian and cycle movements.

As set out in draft policy ER2 of RBC’s emerging Local Plan, Whiteknights Campus will remain a focal point for development, thereby necessitating the support of enhanced infrastructure, such as cycle facilities. The inclusion of the reference to reduce the University’s carbon emissions is a new addition to the policy and aligns with the net zero sustainability targets of the University. This cycle store will encourage site users to switch to more sustainable modes of transport, reducing dependence on private vehicles.

The proposal supports the strategic importance of the University of Reading Whiteknights Campus through the provision of improved, high quality, secure cycle infrastructure thereby encouraging the use

of cycling as a means of transport into and through the Campus. The development proposal is therefore considered appropriate development within the Whiteknights Campus in accordance with Local Plan policy ER2. The provision of cycle parking is also consistent with Local Plan policy TR4. Furthermore, the proposal complies with national planning policy relating to sustainable transport and healthy communities. The principle of development of the removal of the existing cycle store and the erection of a replacement cycle facility on the Site is therefore considered to be acceptable.

Design

Policy CC7 of the Local Plan states that all development must be of high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located. Chapter 12 of the NPPF emphasises that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development.

The proposed development is to provide a total of 60 cycle parking spaces, in the form of a covered and secured shelter, replacing the current existing cycle shelter. The existing and proposed cycle stores are both situated on existing hard landscaping, and the development will not project into any grassed areas. The new cycle store is a similar height and footprint to the existing cycle store and is located adjacent to an existing building, and will therefore integrate successfully into the Site, maintaining its character and appearance.

As detailed in the Proposed Elevations Plans, the frame and pads will be galvanised steel, and the cladding partly timber (*Sustainably Sourced European Redwood PAR Slat with Pressure Treated (Green) Preservative*) and partly toughened glass. The roofing sheets will be made out of PVC Plastisol coated steel strips. It is considered that these contemporary materials are high quality and appropriate to the location. Furthermore, it is considered that the new cycle store will improve the appearance and character of the area, as it will replace an outdated and lower quality cycle store structure.

The design of the proposed development has been informed by an analysis of the current cycle shelter and surrounding area, ensuring it maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area and comprises high quality design in accordance with Local Plan policy CC7 and chapter 12 of the NPPF.

Arboriculture

Policy EN14 of the Local Plan sets out that individual trees will be protected from damage or removal where they are of importance.

An Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Arboricultural Method Statement have been prepared by Challice Consulting Ltd in support of this application and have been carried out in compliance with BS 5837:2012. The report includes a Tree Protection Plan which sets out the surveyed trees and hedges around the Site and their Root Protection Areas (RPAs), as well as the tree protection measures required.

The report identifies five trees in total – three category B trees and two category A trees which are all located outside the application site immediately to the south. The trees are not located within a conservation area nor are they subject to Tree Protection Orders. The RPAs of these trees extend into a small part of the existing area of hardstanding covered by the existing cycle store.

The proposed development is restricted to the extent of the current hardstanding and no additional hardstanding will be constructed in closer proximity to the trees. The arboricultural impact of the proposed scheme is minor as no trees are to be removed as a result of the development and minimal pruning is required to enable construction works to be completed.

The Arboricultural Method Statement identifies the measures that will be taken to safeguard the surveyed trees during the development works. This includes tree protective fencing and ground protection to

safeguard RPAs, and any removal of existing hard surfacing and excavation for foundations within the RPAs are to take place by hand to limit root disturbance to an acceptable level.

The proposal is therefore considered compliant with policy EN14 set out in RBC's Local Plan, which seeks to protect trees from damage or removal where they are of importance. It also accords with paragraph 136 of the NPPF which seeks the retention of trees wherever possible.

Biodiversity and Ecology

Policy EN12 of the Local Plan states that development should not result in a net loss of biodiversity and should provide a net gain for biodiversity wherever possible

A Biodiversity Net Gain Note and Great Crested Newt Statement have been prepared by EPR and are submitted as part of the planning application.

The Site is not subject to any ecological designations, and it is considered that the development will not affect any nearby designated sites. The Site is comprised entirely of hard standing and there are no habitats with a biodiversity value greater than zero. Therefore, in accordance with The Biodiversity Gain Requirement Regulations 2024 (No. 47, Regulation 4), the Site meets the conditions of the de minimis exemption, rendering a full BNG metric calculation unnecessary.

The Site lies within a green risk zone in relation to the Great Crested Newt (GCN), as identified on the NatureSpace Partnership Impact Risk Zones. The site consists entirely of hardstanding, however there are suitable habitats for GCN in the wider campus. There are no records of GCN within the site or the wider campus. The works would not damage any terrestrial habitat within 500m of potential breeding ponds. There is a very low risk of an offence being committed even if GCN were present within nearby ponds. However, in the unlikely event that GCN are present, the development will follow methods of working set out in the GCN Statement to avoid harm or injury.

The proposed development will not result in the loss, deterioration or harm to habitats or species of importance to biodiversity and is therefore in accordance with policy EN12 of the Local Plan and chapter 15 of the NPPF.

Summary and Conclusion

This Planning Statement is submitted in support of a full planning application at the land south of the Sports Park, University of Reading Whiteknights Campus, for:

“Removal of existing cycle store and erection of a new cycle store”

The proposed development will replace an outdated and lower quality cycle store which has 58 cycle spaces. The new store will provide additional secure storage for 60 bicycles, increasing the cycle storage capacity at the University. Through the provision of dedicated cycle storage spaces, the proposal encourages transport by more sustainable modes thereby reducing private vehicle usage and its associated adverse effects. It will also improve the quality and security of cycle storage provision in this location.

It has been demonstrated that the principle of development within this location is acceptable, that the proposed design is appropriate to the character of the Site and surrounding area, and that there are no unacceptable impacts on trees or biodiversity, meeting the requirements of RBC's Local Plan and the NPPF.

We trust that the submission is in order and that the planning application can be validated promptly. However, should you have any queries in relation to any of the enclosed, please do not hesitate to contact me on 01189 520337 or by email – ilaria.sutton@stantec.com .

Yours sincerely,



ILARIA SUTTON
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