



Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee
13 August 2025

Dear Anthony Scholes

APPLICATION PL/24/1155 JOHN LEWIS DEPOT – OBSERVATIONS ON REVISED PLANS

We are grateful to the John Lewis Partnership team for the opportunities to meet with them several times as they worked on the scheme and acknowledge that they have worked hard to engage with members of the local community and groups and respond to their feedback.

SUMMARY

We objected to the original application because:

- The proposal did not enhance the special heritage and architectural interest of the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area and the listed buildings within it. Harm was caused to the setting of buildings particularly in some of the views included in the Heritage, Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment and so the proposal did not comply with policies EN1 and EN3.
- The site merited a more innovative and exceptional design and did not comply with policy EN6.
- The proposal failed to recognize the harm caused by this proposal to the communal value of the site and surrounding area.

Observations on the revised application:

- The reduced height and design of the revised proposal greatly reduce harm to the setting of listed buildings and impact on views including those along Deansgate Road from Southampton Street. On balance we are satisfied that reasonable adjustments have been made to improve compliance with policies EN1 and EN3.
- We still feel a more innovative and exceptional design is merited on this site so the proposal does not fully comply with policy EN6.
- In relation to harm caused to the communal heritage value of the site and surrounding area we pleased to note that a green wall has replaced the proposed mural and will respect the setting of Black History Mural.

1. HERITAGE

1.1 The applicant is of course right to point out that the proposal site sits in an area immediately south of the town centre that is negatively impacted by the Inner Distribution Road (IDR) and two one-way north-south routes to and from the town centre.

1.2 For many years, the route of the IDR in this area remained undecided and works were suspended at the flyover at the foot of Southampton Street. The route and the junction at the foot of London Street was finally decided on after many years of proposals and discussions with Reading Civic Society and London Street businesses.

1.3 The creation of the Market Place/London Street CA in 1972 was a significant step towards the recognition of the importance of Reading's heritage in those early days of the conservation movement.

1.4 The area is still challenged by the negative impact of the road but we continually look to improve the area and new developments must contribute to this. The landscaping of the boundary with Mill Lane and Crossland Road may go some way to mitigate the issue.

1.5 The Queens Road & London Street junction illustrative project included in the draft Reading Town Centre Public Realm Strategy October 2024 would help make the location less hostile for residents and benefit the wider community. We request that improvements to Mill Lane might also be possible should this illustration ever move towards a potential realisation.

2. DESIGN

2.1 The design has improved in these revisions but what is important on this site is a development which will add to the character of the area and thereby attract residents.

2.2 The site alongside the IDR is both a challenge and an opportunity to present a building which will surprise passers-by and goes beyond the usual bland and boring flat developments that are expected in Reading.

2.3 Reading is the third of three sites where John Lewis is undertaking residential development, the others being Ealing and Bromley, and inevitably there will be ongoing comparisons between the three.

3. CONCLUSION

3.1 This site deserves better and should this application be granted, we hope that John Lewis will work with Reading Borough Council to reduce the impact of the IDR on residents of the development to improved their quality of life.

Evelyn Williams
Chair Reading CAAC
On behalf of Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee
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