



FORMER JOHN LEWIS DEPOT, LETCOMBE STREET, READING
(ALSO KNOWN AS JLP MILL LANE)

HERITAGE, TOWNSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT
STATEMENT OF CONFORMITY

SEPTEMBER 2025



PD14905/CM/KFH/BC

Anthony Scholes
Planning Department
Reading Borough Council
Civic Offices
Bridge Street
Reading
RG1 2LU

12 September 2025

Dear Anthony,

HERITAGE, TOWNSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT - LETTER OF CONFORMITY

This letter of conformity has been prepared in support of amendments to planning application ref. PL/24/1155 at Former John Lewis Depot, Letcombe Street, Reading (also known as JLP Mill Lane) (the 'Site').

The planning application was submitted in August 2024 and revised plans were submitted in July 2025. The application was supported by a Heritage, Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment ('HTVIA') prepared by Montagu Evans.

Since submission, there has been extensive post-submission engagement with Reading Borough Council (the 'Council') and other consultees, including the Reading Design Review Panel. As a result of this engagement and further design development, the scheme design has been amended in the following ways:

1. Change to the materiality design of the upper two storeys of the western block from metal cladding to brick. With this, the window treatment at the lower levels has also been extended to parapet level.
2. Increase in size of landscaped area at east end of the Site.
3. Minor change to internal layout and introduction of ramp to accommodate step free route.
4. Delivery of 16% affordable housing.

The height, massing, form and layout of the July 2025 scheme remains the same. The façade treatment of the eastern, 'conservation block', also remains the same.

The elements of the amended scheme which have the potential to affect the heritage, townscape and visual impact of the Proposed Development are the changes proposed to the façade. The focus of this statement of conformity is, therefore, the change in material and window treatment of the seventh and eighth storeys of the western block.

The relevant verified views (Views 1, 4B, 7 and 9) have been updated to present the amended scheme. These are included here and in Section 6.0 of the Design Addendum by CJCT.



Figure 1. Elevation of submitted July 2025 scheme (CJCT)



Figure 2. Elevation of amended September 2025 scheme (CJCT)

THE AMENDED SCHEME AND ASSESSMENT OF IMPACT

It is proposed to continue the brick façade treatment of the lower levels of the western block up the full extent of the building to parapet height. The parapet of the building would be clearly defined by a double string course. The window treatment at the lower levels, including Juliette balconies and inlaid diamond brickwork, would also be continued throughout the full height of the building.

The removal of the metal top and the application of a consistent brick and window treatment would improve the proportions of the building. The use of brick across the full façade would better respond to and reflect the character and appearance of the 19th century development as seen on London Street and elsewhere in the conservation area. This is demonstrated by View 1.



Figure 3. AVR View 1 - Cumulative

It is proposed to retain the vertical recessed elements, which would be metal clad. The retention of these vertical seams visually separates the brick elements and accentuates the tripartite nature of the elevation to Mill Lane. The stepped form of the building is also retained in the amended scheme. This form provides further relief and adds variety to the northern façade when viewed from the east and west (see Views 1 and 9).

The retention of the metal cladding treatment on the setback storey of the 'conservation block' to the east is successful and further reinforces the difference in character between the two blocks.

The amended scheme, comprising the change in material to the upper storeys in combination with the retained elements, would not increase the visual impact of height or massing to Mill Lane (View 1 and 9) or from the south, notably from within the Quaker Meeting House burial ground (View 4B). The continuation of the brick to the rear of the building responds to the existing built form which lines Crossland Road.



Figure 4. AVR View 9 - Proposed



Figure 5. AVR View 4B - Proposed

When viewed from the west, the change in façade material would be less appreciable. In View 7, the application of brick throughout the full height responds appropriately to the buildings in the immediate townscape as seen in this view, which incorporate red brick. The continuation of the window treatment at eighth storey would improve the proportions of the western elevation by introducing a verticality to the façade.



Figure 6. AVR View 7 - Proposed

CONCLUSION

The extent of change between the July 2025 scheme and the amended scheme is minimal, with only the change of materiality across two floors of the building (from metal to brick with associated detailing) and window treatment having the potential to affect the heritage, townscape and visual impact of the Proposed Development.

Overall, the change would not materially alter the impact of the Proposed Development on nearby heritage assets as assessed in the submitted July 2025 HTVIA. The change to brick is considered an improvement to the metal cladding previously proposed and provides a cohesive, complementary design response to the character of 19th century development within the conservation area. The HTVIA identified no harm to any heritage assets within the study area as a result of the Proposed Development. The findings remain the same.

It is noted that the Council's Conservation Officer has raised no objection to the amended scheme, citing a 'high-quality design showing more respect for the historic environment and integrity.' The

Officer further states that the amended scheme would provide a 'smooth and soft transition from new urban grain to the traditional one in the conservation area and the surrounding environment'.

The July 2025 HTVIA concluded that the Proposed Development would improve the appearance, character and function of the Site and wider area. That assessment also identified beneficial effects to the Townscape Character Areas 1, 2 and 3. The townscape benefits identified in the submitted HTVIA remain the same.

In terms of visual impact, the July 2025 HTVIA identified nil or beneficial effects across the range of visual receptors assessment. The proposed amendment does not alter that finding either.

Overall, the conclusions of the HTVIA do not change.

Yours sincerely,



Montagu Evans LLP