



as from 69 Baker Street, Reding RG1 7XY

6 October 2025

Dear Anthony Scholes

Planning Application PL/24/1155 John Lewis Depot Observations on Revised Plans

First of all an apology for this late submission, resources/ resources. So I keep it focused.

Overall Reading Civic Society supports this application.

1. Civic Society Members along with CAAC Members and members of the Katesgrove Community Association have been engaged very positively several times, at key points in the process, by the JL team. They have explained carefully their approaches and challenges of the site. They have adapted their design / layout in response to comments we have made, and also of course comments made by the Design Review Panel and Council officers.
2. This underutilised site is in very accessible location.
3. The range of "Affordable" Housing Options which were explained to us seemed positive.
4. As is highlighted in the CAAC submission 13 August (to which we contributed) the current design and, in particular, the recent reduction in height represents a better fit within the Conservation Area/ Listed Buildings.
5. As per the CAAC point, so often we hope for innovative / exceptional design. We felt the site being so visible from the IDR presented an opportunity for a building with a "Wow factor" which would be additional draw to potential residents, over and above the John Lewis brand and facilities. However, we acknowledge the design has been carefully developed and enhanced during the planning process and is acceptable.
6. The CAAC and we had concerns about the frontage on Mill Lane, the gap between the pedestrian area and the building seemed to be relatively narrow. The company have highlighted to us (6 Oct) that ***"... the proposed building sits back from the existing building line of the warehouse and in addition to the current footpath, which is retained, there will be a secondary footpath on JLP land land, along the building façade, which provides an alternative route for pedestrians, with ramped and stepped access to either end. This along with the new planting and generous trees, much of which we hope will absorb car pollution, should, we believe, create a significantly improved experience along Mill Lane."*** The area alongside the pavement the moment is a mess and often a barrier for pedestrians. The changes and landscaping to Mill Land and Crossland Road sides of the development, provided they are actively managed over time, offer the potential much needed significant improvement/ enhancement of the area.
7. We were positively encouraged from the start by the proposal to include **2 gardens**, shielded by the building from the IDR. The initial idea to open one of them to the community was perhaps "Brave", we were not surprised to see TVP objection. The presence of the building, with residents' oversight on Crossland Road may be beneficial.
8. The **facilities proposed to be offered to residents with some opened to local groups**, along with what we understand will be 24/7 staffing, we feel are good. We were engaged by the team about their ideas for using the "meeting space" not just for residents but their wish to open it, on a managed basis, to local groups. It is understood that they are setting up a **Community Partnership**, including KCA, RISC and

Berkshire Youth. With regard to Berkshire Youth we are aware how, following the decimation of Youth Clubs, hard they are searching for a community space for young people. The space may be relatively small but it may be a start.

9. **Impact on NHS Infrastructure.** Reading continues to expand its residential population without any adjustment to the capacity of Town Centre medical practices,.

During the recent update to the Local Plan we, jointly with one of the directors of the Eldon Square Surgery, raised with the Head of Planning & the NHS ICB BOB that many of the town centre surgeries are in old / historic buildings which are impossible to expand or improve to meet the modern standards expected by the NHS. Our challenge was that new modern buildings for surgeries are required to replace these out of date facilities and that NHS needed to get a management and financial grip on this issue.

We understand the surgery in London Street is a prime example of the problem. This scheme and the Oracle's flats will add to the pressure. We recognise however that individual schemes are unlikely to be able to solve the problem. We note that this scheme contributes circa £150K to assist to address the resource gap.

In summary on balance we support this scheme.

Best wishes

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Richard Bennett", with a horizontal line underneath.

Richard Bennett DL

Chairman