

Updated Planning Balance Note

September 2025



1.0 Planning Balance Note

- 1.1.1 This section provides an assessment of the planning balance having regard to the matters raised by the Council and the Applicant. The factors requiring a planning balance have been weighed in the consideration of relevant planning matters and the overall recommendation of whether planning permission should be granted. Each significant matter associated with this Proposed Development has been considered and given an appropriate weighting in our overall consideration of the planning issues which is set out in the table at the end of this Section.

Public Benefits

- 1.1.2 This scheme will provide a number of public benefits including social, economic and environmental benefits. These are set out below and their weight considered in the Planning Balance Table.

- Approximately up to 226 direct full-time equivalent jobs during the construction phase of the development, with a further 181 indirect and induced construction jobs supported in the construction supply chain. The construction phase could generate up to £150m and a proportion would be spent through local contracts and frameworks, alongside the opportunity for the creation of skilled and training opportunities during construction. It is estimated that on-site construction employment would generate £47.2m GVA during the construction phase.
- There will be a commitment to local supply chain through the introduction of apprenticeship schemes.
- Bowmer & Kirkland (B+K) are a well-established local business, having had a Reading office for around 12 years, employing over 150 staff. Our long-standing presence within the Reading locality has enabled B+K to develop a thorough understanding of the dynamics of the local borough, support local people with employment opportunities, and contribute to the local economy of Reading.
- B+K's (Reading Office) commitment to social value is evidenced by:
 - £143m social value add achieved and delivered
 - 39% local workforce employment achieved across their projects
 - 575 local full-time equivalent employment opportunities supported across our sites
 - £120m spent with local supply chains
 - 110 apprentices supported across our sites in collaboration with our supply chain partners
 - 13 T-Level students supported with industry placements



- As a local employer, they are committed to their existing employees and the creation of new job opportunities within Reading. Of the current 153 employees employed, over 20% have been with the company for over 5 years, with an average employment duration of 12 years. This demonstrates that people working within our organisation enjoy their working ecosystem and we are keen to ensure that more people locally, with specific needs, can equally benefit from this ecosystem.

Social value KPIs for Napier Court

- Bowmer + Kirkland (B+K) will undertake reasonable endeavours to meet the following targets:
 - Employ 25% local labour, within 30 miles of site, including 7 FTE (full time equivalent), or 850 employment weeks, as new vacancies to local residents.
 - Seek to procure, where reasonable and cost effective to do so, within 30 miles of site, targeting £20m spend with local subcontractors
 - Notify the Reading Jobcentre Plus of all site vacancies.
 - Engage 39 apprentices on the project, or 1000 trainee weeks, prioritising local residents for all new opportunities.
 - Provide work experience opportunities including T Levels on the project, totalling 120 weeks to local residents
 - Divert at least 85% of waste from landfill

In addition, B+K will:

- Offer career insight days to local schools (e.g. “hidden roles” in construction, mock interviews, CV workshops) targeting 75hrs
- Offer site visits to local schools/colleges (Reading College & Newbury College) targeting 15hrs
- Support Meet the Buyer event
- Support local charity Launchpad, a charity that support homelessness with employability support – 30hrs
- Support the Careers and Enterprise Network as a Cornerstone employer and with staff volunteering time to support school engagement activities
- Support with volunteering and fundraising activities

Measuring and Reporting

- B+K is a member of the Social Value Portal and will be using the TOMs (Themes Outcomes and Measures) methodology to calculate the social value contribution (in £) on the project and track progress against its economic, social and environmental measures. Not all social value can, nor



should, be quantified. Therefore, they will build a portfolio of case studies to represent their social impact activities.

- The site will be registered with the Considerate Constructors Scheme to ensure compliance with industry standards and work towards best practice; all monitored by independent industry experts. The project will aim to achieve a 43/45 overall score and a 15/15 Community score before completion.

Social value contact

- B+K will provide a dedicated Social Value Coordinator to provide more information about this plan and ensure its delivery.
- The development of the Site for residential use will contribute towards delivering new rental homes to meet Reading's housing and employment requirements, in a highly sustainable location.
- The provision of up to 576 residential units will generate convenience (£2.9m), comparison (£4.4m) and leisure services (£1.9m) expenditure in the local area per annum.
- The proposed development will generate approximately £1.4m of additional Council Tax revenue per annum for Reading Borough Council
- The development will provide a mix of housing including; 192 x 1B2P; 19 x 1B accessible; 299 x 2B4P; 10 x 2B accessible; 56 x 3B5P units.
- The provision of new residential units will support the creation of a vibrant City Centre.
- The provision of high quality, spacious apartments which exceed the national space standards and have been designed so that there is space within the living rooms for a desk for homeworking, supported by a high-quality IT infrastructure.
- The proposed development incorporates amenity areas for future residents including a ground floor gym studio, lounge area and cinema as well as a roof top sky lounge which promotes opportunities for better healthy and active lifestyles and co-working space to encourage social cohesion between residents.
- The site is within the existing built-up city centre area, and as such a large number of shops, services and employment opportunities are located within walking and cycling distance or via existing public transport routes, thus reducing the need for private car use.
- In landscape terms, the proposed enhancement of King's Meadow and overall improvements to



the children's playspace which will provide an environment for healthy outdoor interaction and also improve the setting of the Lido.

- Beneficial townscape and visual effects associated providing a landmark building with enhanced permeability between the public realm locations associated with King's Meadow. The Conservation Officer has recommended that the development's relationship with the Lido could be improved which will be addressed at the detailed design stage.
- Enhancing a key arrival point into the City Centre and positively contributing to the City's skyline providing visual interest and variety
- The reuse of previously development land within a highly sustainable City Urban Area; best and efficient use of land
- Provision of sustainable drainage principles, including green roof areas, permeable paved areas and soft landscaping. The potential for the introduction of rain gardens is to be examined at the detailed design stage.
- A commitment to sustainable construction principles, and measures to target a reduction in carbon dioxide emissions by at least 27.13% against the Target Emission Rate of the Building Regulations (Part L) (2013).
- The apartments have been designed with low energy requirements. The estimated target emissions rate of the proposed development is 11.20 (annual kg CO₂/m²) with a projected betterment rate of 71.2%.

Negative effects

1.1.3 Adverse effects were previously identified in the assessment of sunlight provision. We have reviewed the revised consultant documentation and revised design and consider the previous negative position to have been significantly improved upon. That is not to say this will result in there being no negative impact on aspects of sunlight. Based upon the two reports provided and in terms of a general position, 200 is seen to be relevant for task lighting and 150 for general ambient lighting. In terms of development plan policy and assessing compliance, the relevant policy appears to be CC8 which sets out a number of criteria for assessing whether there are 'acceptable' living conditions and this is given as a factor of:

- Privacy and overlooking;
- Access to sunlight and daylight;
- Visual dominance and overbearing effects of a development;



- Harm to outlook;
- Noise and disturbance;
- Artificial lighting;
- Vibration;
- Dust and fumes;
- Smell;
- Crime and safety; or
- Wind, where the proposals involve new development of more than 8 storeys.

1.1.4 The Policy looks at amenity in the round, with daylight access only one factor contributing to this. The resident amenity provision and the outlook from the low number of affected apartments within a high quality BtR scheme offers a positive balancing factor in the overall weighting that can be given to the various bullet points with Policy CC8. The limited nature of the negative impact again on a limited number of apartments is wholly outweighed by the very positive matters arising from providing 'high quality' living accommodation rather than just 'acceptable' accommodation.

1.1.5 The Council's Heritage Assessment identifies potential harm to several heritage assets within close proximity to the site. Given the scale of the proposed development and its location, a degree of harm to heritage assets is inevitable in a transitional urban town centre location, and the wider area has been subject to change with modern development such as the Thames Quarter tall building scheme. Nonetheless, the level of harm identified is considered 'less than substantial' under the terms of the NPPF and Paragraph 199 of the NPPF is therefore engaged. The subsequent design review assessment clearly and comprehensively considers the Council's heritage officer's comments and concludes that the potential for harm is overstated. We agree with this additional review and agree that the proposed offer of additional landscaping is a benefit and not required to make the scheme acceptable in heritage terms.

1.1.6 The public benefits of the proposed development as set out above are collectively considered significantly and demonstrably sufficient to outweigh the level of harm identified within the Heritage Assessment to the designated heritage assets.

1.1.7 The planning Authority has raised concerns regarding the external design in terms of its overall quality (they are suggesting it is of a low quality), alongside a design request/requirement for a lower overall height and a stepped feature along the site frontage that would require a reduction in unit numbers. The Council are arguing that in the context of the site-specific planning policy CR11i that the proposals are non-compliant in design terms and may argue that the proposals are over development.



1.1.8 Planning Policy cr11i states:

“CR11i, NAPIER COURT: This area will be developed for residential. The design must avoid detrimental effects on the adjacent Thames Valley Major Landscape Feature, and building heights should reduce from west to east across the site. Land on the Napier Road frontage will be safeguarded for Mass Rapid Transit. Development of the Network Rail depot will be dependent on an alternative location at the railway triangle to the west of the centre becoming available. Development should take account of mitigation required as a result of a Flood Risk Assessment.

Site size: 1. 62 ha Indicative potential: 210-310 dwellings”.

1.1.9 The Council is insistent that to meet the planning policy wording the proposal should include a stepped element. The lack of a stepped element is considered a substantial adverse impact in terms of their planning and urban design aspirations for the location and Reading Town Centre.

1.1.10 A further step would be expected to a low-rise element beyond the planning application area; to the land outside of the planning application but remaining within the policy designation area. The proposals have been to Design Review Panel twice and on both occasions the proposal has been the subject of differing views as to the scale and design approach. The DRP comments have already been provided previously but read as a positive review of the design approach taken by the Architects.

1.1.11 The Council Officers have also now raised a potential objection related to a perceived impact on the safeguarded MTC. In response, the design has been amended to demonstrate how the revised proposal could safeguard the delivery of the MTC. This is set out within the Design and Access Statement.

1.1.12 The proposed scheme meets the Highway Authority needs and includes how a footpath alignment can be accommodated when they construct the MRT.



Planning Balance and Weighting

1.1.13 The weighting of significant matters in our overall consideration of the planning issues is set out in the Table below.

Table: Planning Balance

Issue	Weighting
Principle of Development	Very Positive +
Design and Appearance	Positive +
Townscape and Visual Impact	Positive +
Quality of Space and Design	Positive +
Quality and Quantity Residential Development and Amenity	Positive +
Need for Additional Residential Development (Provision of 570 Residential Apartments).	Positive + Moderate +
Affordable Housing Provision has been offered and is the subject ongoing discussions (Viability Assessment has been accepted and agreed, allowing the proposed development to be considered in a positive policy context)	Positive +
Site Accessibility and Connectivity	Very Positive +
Provision of Construction Phase Employment Opportunities	Very Positive +
Policy Compliance – Development Plan and NPPF	Positive +
Sustainability	Positive +
• Economic	Positive +
• Social	Positive +
• Environmental	Positive +
Building Sustainability	Positive +
Transport	Positive +
Biodiversity and Ecology	Positive +
Drainage and Flood Risk	Neutral
Contamination	Neutral
Air Quality	Neutral
Daylight/Sunlight	Neutral
Noise	Neutral
Fire	Neutral
Heritage (including landscaping)	Limited +

KEY:



Scale		
Positive Negative	Very Positive	
	Positive	
	Moderate	
	Limited	
	Very Limited	
	Neutral	
	Very Limited	
	Limited	
	Moderate	
	Negative	
	Very Negative	

- 1.1.14 In summary, the Planning Balance Assessment concludes that where the design approach is considered to comply with policy CR11i there are very positive and positive benefits of the scheme that weight in favour of the overall positive planning balance such that planning permission should be granted. The benefits of developing an allocated area of currently underused land for residential use, providing residential apartments (including family sized units) within easy access to a major town centre on a highly accessible road are positive.
- 1.1.15 The ability to offer an affordable housing element in the form of rented units in the light of an agreed Viability Assessment act as a positive effect.
- 1.1.16 The provision of sustainable design and construction phase employment (which have been rated as 'positive') carry positive weight in the planning balance.
- 1.1.17 The revised design mitigates and significantly reduces the quantum of apartments impacted in terms of daylight and sunlight. This is considered a neutral impact on the overall high quality apartment living conditions proposed.
- 1.1.18 In overall terms, the Applicant has made quantifiable improvements to the proposal and looked to mitigate and negate previous identified areas of concern.

