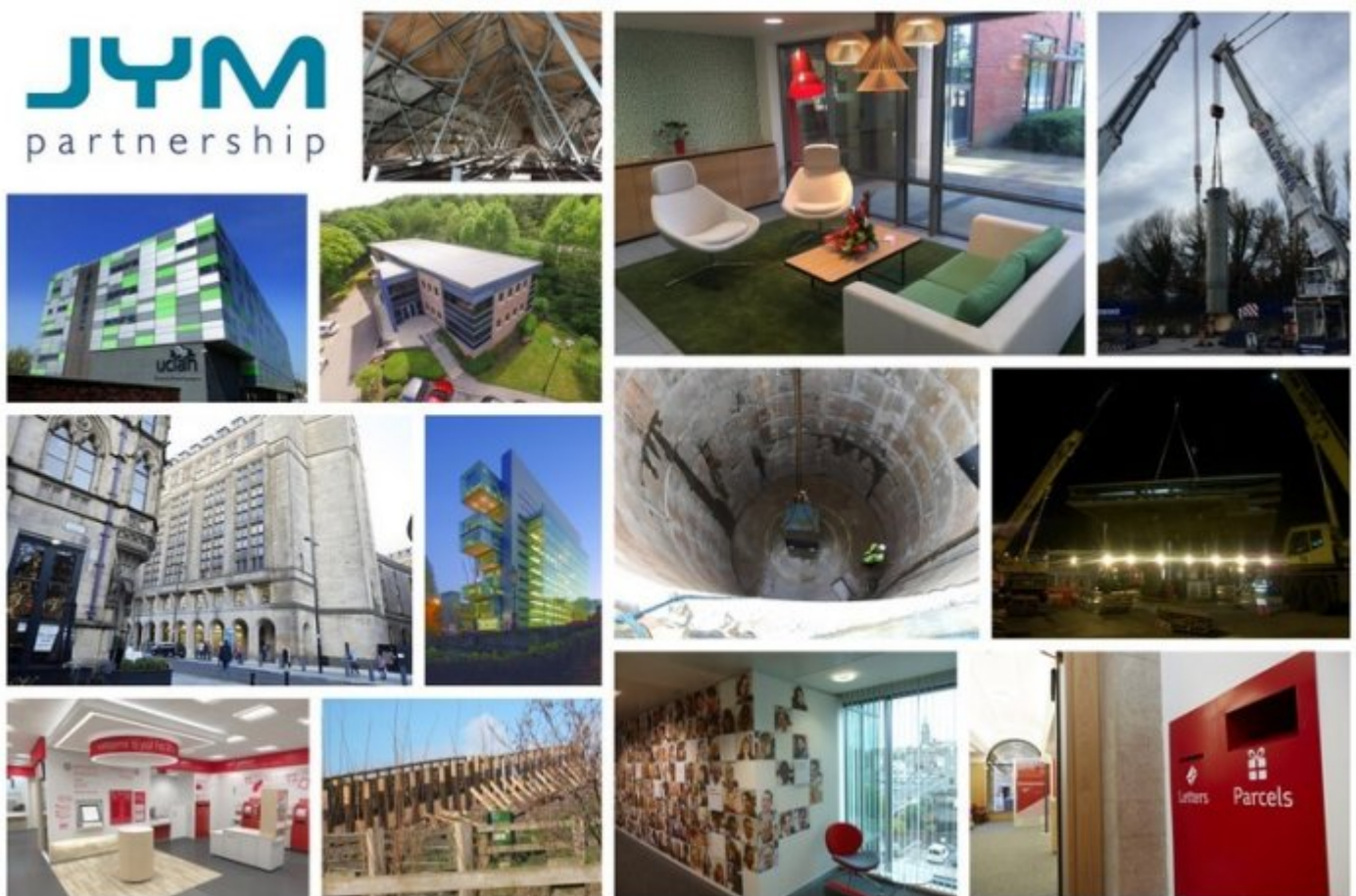




WILLOW HOUSE

Planning Statement for Proposed Modular Accommodation Willow House Lifehouse Willow Street, Reading, RG1 6AB



Project Managers

Architects

Quantity Surveyors

Building Surveyors

CDM Advisors



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Willow House Lifehouse
Willow Street, Reading, RG1 6AB

(SB/2306/12/03/16)

16th March 2026

Signed by S. Baird

Date 16th March 2026

Checked by M. McKevitt

Date 16th March 2026

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1.0 Introduction

The following report has been created to support the full planning application for the provision of a new modular building (NAPpad) to provide safe refuge and sleeping accommodation for homeless people.

2.0 Background

Willow House is located on the outskirts of the main retail and commercial district of Reading City Centre. The building is used to provide a safe and supportive environment for persons, helping them make positive choices about their current circumstances.

The Salvation Army Team at Reading Lifehouse aim to create a calm, supportive environment where their residents feel empowered and respected. The facilities include:

- *2/3 sit up beds (night shelter)*
- *4 emergency/assessment beds*
- *Up to 43 beds for singles and couples*
- *Laundry*
- *Hub space*
- *6 communal lounges*

The site delivers programmes designed to help their clients craft a new sense of self, renew their sense of independence and control, and realise their potential as members of the community. Services they offer include:

- *Resident meetings*
- *Prayer meetings*
- *Arts and craft*
- *Bio psycho social group programme*
- *Day trips*
- *Events (such as talks, quizzes and spa days)*
- *Catering training programme*
- *Sports activities*
- *These activities provide the opportunity for people experiencing homelessness to socialise, learn new skills, put in benefit claims and build self esteem*

The proposal would provide additional emergency sleeping accommodation in a safe environment.

3.0 Content and Structure of the Document

This Planning, Design and Access Statement, forms part of the application for planning permission, made on behalf of the Salvation Army to Reading Borough Council, and provides an overview and justification for the proposed additional facilities.

4.0 Pre-application consultation

It is understood that the Applicant has met with Reading City Council Planning Officer, Richard Eatough earlier in 2024, where the initial proposal was presented and discussed. Further details were subsequently issued to the Reading Planning Authority in the Form of a Pre App Ref 231743/PREAPP and Mr Eatough provided advice on items that should be addressed as part of a Planning Application. On 19th June 2024 a Planning Application was made and granted for the

proposed Cabin. Application ref PL/24/0790. The client then requested a change to the location of the proposed unit, discussing the same with the Local Authority, who advised that a complete new Planning Application would be required, making note of:

- *"Updated location plan – it is recommended by planning colleagues that the new application includes a general red outline indicating the location within the garden as well as the detailed rectangular outline showing the exact position of the NAPpad within that area.*
- *Revised planning statement (most content from the previous statement remains relevant and can be lifted and reused).*
- *Updated elevations (minor changes may be required).*
- *Inclusion of biodiversity and net gain information – this appears to be a new requirement but planning colleagues have advised they can support with what is needed here."*

The items above have been included/amended in this new Application.

5.0 Site Location/Description

Willow House is located on the outskirts of the main retail and commercial districts of Reading City Centre. To the north is a similar multi-occupancy residential building for people experiencing homelessness, to the East and South by residential accommodation and a main highway to the west.

6.0 Use

The use of the site will remain unchanged from the existing.

7.0 Flood Risk & Drainage

According to the Environment Agency's Flood map for planning, the proposed site is within Flood Zone 1; an area with a low probability of flooding. The disposal of foul water from the unit will be confirmed following receipt of below ground drainage CCTV/survey details, but it would be envisaged to utilise the existing below-ground foul drainage on site if available. Surface water from the roof will be discharged direct to the ground via soak-aways.

8.0 The Proposed Scheme

The NAPpad will be used to provide an alternative form of accommodation for those individuals who may not thrive in the busy environment of the main service and will also provide an improved service for those people who may need shelter in severe weather. (Severe weather provision is provided in the main building when temperatures are very low, very high – or there are severe rains, winds or storms.) The COVID-19 pandemic emphasised the need, not just for a safer alternative to the street; but also, for a safer alternative to dormitory style night shelters and to traditional 'sit up' and Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) services. The pilot NAPpad is very high specification; warm, safe and private – and embodies the values that TSA places on people who may otherwise end up sleeping rough. The accommodation will comprise of 4nos. lighted and heated micro-flats, each with their own toilet, handwashing facilities, a bed and will be fully equipped with signs of life technology (monitored from the main Willow House Lifehouse building).

The NAPpad is also part of The Salvation Army's wider commitment to a harm reduction strategy and give people who cannot live in traditional services a bed, individual handwash facilities and the opportunity to social distance or even self-isolate if required.

The unit will be positioned on an existing paved area toward the east of the main site. Access will be controlled via the secure front entrance and reception area in the main Willow House. The

unit will be coloured in Juniper Green to reduce visual impact. The NAPpad is also part of TSA's wider commitment to a harm reduction strategy and give people who cannot live in traditional services a bed, individual handwash facilities and the opportunity to access specialist support.

9.0 Proposed Daily Operations

The accommodation will provide temporary/emergency accommodation for up to four vulnerable people. Support will be provided to the residents to enable them to live safely in the scheme and gain skills to allow them to move on to living to more appropriate accommodation. Occupants are likely to remain at the scheme for short intervals and it is intended they are enabled to move on within a period of less than four weeks.

Support and staffing will be provided by TSA staff (located in Willow House). Willow House Lifehouse is currently staffed 24/7 with several support staff members, who provide experienced support and effectively manage any potential issues in the existing scheme. A nominated support worker from the existing staff team will be responsible for direct support to the NAPpads. The proposal will not increase any traffic or vehicular access, due to the use of existing staff and parking arrangements.

TSA will manage any challenging behaviour and ensure that an individual's support plan is in place, which will also address nonengagement with support to ensure appropriate outcomes. TSA will work alongside the local and wider community delivering on the Council's social values to create a positive impact and ensure the smooth transition of the scheme into the locality. The manager of Willow House will be the specific point of contact to the public, to enable queries to be dealt with promptly by TSA. On the above basis, impact on nearby residential properties' amenity should be acceptable in terms planning policy

9.0 The Proposal

The proposed scheme comprises of the following:

10.0 Amount, Size & Scale

- A prefabricated modular unit, approx. 23m².
- The unit will be positioned upon the existing paved area to the east of the main site.

11.0 Design & Materials

The panels to the modular unit are coloured in Juniper Green to limit the visual impact of the unit. The proposed site would be covered by CCTV installation and the main site is provided with both 24/7 CCTV and 24/7 staffing support.

Existing lighting in the area will be retained. The proposed unit is provided with bulkhead lighting over each door

12.0 Landscape

The NAPpad will be located in the existing gardens and will benefit from existing landscaping and outdoor space. The climbing plants and vegetation upon the fencing will be maintained to provide visual barrier from the neighbouring sites.

13.0 Access

It is not proposed to make the NAPpad unit fully accessible to the public, given its proposed external location. Additional accessible facilities within the main building may be offered to occupants, which will be of a design and quantity dictated by the need.

14.0 Highways

Impact on the existing infrastructure has been considered during the design of the proposals. Whilst there will be an addition in the sleeping accommodation on the site, this increase will have a minimum impact on highway capacity as staff numbers will remain the same.

15.0 Ecology

All existing landscaping, trees and hedgerows will be protected during the works. As detailed in 4.0, it was requested that a Bio Diversity and Net Gain Assessment of the proposal be undertaken. This was completed by Messrs Tyrer Ecological Consultants Ltd and report ref PR-26-0027 forms part of the Supporting Documents to the Application. In summary, the proposal would be exempt from the requirements as (the following is extracted from the same report):

*Based on the combination of the baseline habitat assessment and the site plans provided, the proposed development at Salvation Army (Willow House) is likely to be exempt from the Biodiversity Gain Pre-commencement Planning Condition, as outlined in the Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Exemptions) Regulations 2024, – **Developments below the threshold (de-minimis)**, which states the following:*

"A development that does not impact a priority habitat and impacts less than:

- 25 square metres (5m by 5m) of on-site habitat*
- 5 metres of on-site linear habitats such as hedgerows*

A development 'impacts' a habitat if it decreases the biodiversity value."

As is evidenced by the baseline assessment, only 11m² (0.0011ha) of "on-site habitat" is due to be impacted upon, with the remainder of the site being formed of hardstanding with no value in the Statutory Metric, which thus cannot have its biodiversity value decreased.

16.0 Heritage

It is not expected that the proposal would have an impact upon archaeology. The entire footprint of the structure will not be sunk into the ground with localised support provided only to 4no support legs at each corner.

17.0 Conclusion

The proposed scheme represents an enhancement of the facilities, as part of a comprehensive, long term strategy for the site, which is currently in need of improvement. The nature of the proposed scheme and its location has been considered as well as its impact upon ecology and the landscape. Climbing plants and vegetation on the fencing will help soften the development when viewed from the outside. Overall, the proposed scheme is considered to achieve benefits and accord with Reading Local development plan when considered as a whole. In addition, it is considered that the proposed scheme complies with the relevant policies of the NPPF and should therefore be approved in accordance with the "presumption in favour of sustainable development". The NAPpad will also help the local authority to meet the housing needs of people who are sleeping rough in the borough – or people for whom the existing homelessness provision does not work. This is in line with the strategic aims of the local authority.

18.0 Image Gallery



Image 1 – View to Rear Elevation From Parking Areas Towards North West



Image 2 – View to Existing Rear Elevation to West

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Image 3 – Existing Rear Garden Area to South



Image 4 – Existing Rear Garden Area to North West

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Image 5 – View from Site to the North East



Image 6 – Generic Image of Proposed Unit

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