



Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee
23 April 2026

Dear Jonathan Markwell

OBSERVATIONS ON OUTLINE PLANNING APPLICATION PL/25/1706 FORBURY RETAIL PARK

Reading CAAC previously submitted observations on application PL/23/0822 to create a residential development on the area currently occupied by the Forbury Retail Park. At that time we noted the strong objection submitted by the Berkshire Gardens Trust, the advice of Berkshire Archaeology and that Historic England did not offer any advice.

Our observations on this application are very similar.

1. HERITAGE

1.1 Forbury Gardens

1.1.1 Forbury Gardens is a Grade II heritage Park and Garden within which are situated a number of Grade II listed structures. The gardens as we know them today are as laid out in the Victorian era but form part of the scheduled monument of Reading Abbey.



Figure 1 Forbury Retail Park from the north east corner of Forbury Gardens

1.1.2 Forbury Retail Park is visible from the north east corner of the gardens and vice versa. This proposal has the potential to improve the view from the park and we request that a visualisation of the view is provided by the applicant so that the impact can be assessed (policy EN7).

1.1.3 We understand that this is an outline application, with all matters reserved except for access, but because of the sensitivity of the view from the gardens the design should be of the highest quality. Taking into account that the park is in a town centre setting, the height, design, massing and materials of 1 & 2 Forbury Place adjacent to the Forbury Retail Park do not cause harm to the view from the park.



Figure 2 1 & 2 Forbury Place from the northern edge of the Forbury Gardens

1.2 Other heritage assets in the area

1.2.1 We note the Heritage Asset Plan overlain with the Zone of Theoretical Visibility which includes includes the whole of the Abbey Quarter and parts of the Market Place/London Street and St Mary's Butts Castle Street conservation areas.

1.2.2 The site is very close to Reading Gaol and the development of this site should not inhibit the potential future uses of the Gaol as set out in the Local Plan (CR13a) or the emerging partial plan update.

1.2.3 Redevelopment of the retail park has the potential to improve the setting of the heritage assets within the Abbey Quarter as a whole (policy EN1). To achieve this, we believe that the layout, massing and density of development of twelve blocks on the site should be improved upon from that which is shown in the bird's eye views below. The current proposal, with a set

back of the upper floors and reduction in height of some blocks along Forbury Road and a wider landscaped strip, is an insignificant improvement on the original (see below).



Proposed Illustrative Scheme aerial view

Figure 3 Birds eye view of the proposed King's Meadow view development as previously submitted PL/23/0822



Figure 4 Birds eye view of the proposed King's Meadow view development as currently submitted PL/25/1706

2. The IDR

2.1 The route of the IDR passes along Forbury Road to the south of the retail park. The change from retail to residential and the proposed up to 700 residential units gives an opportunity for an improvement of this section. This should be seized upon to improve the quality of life and amenity of future residents of the development and other nearby residents along Kenavon Drive and at Huntley Wharf and improve the setting and readability of the northern edge of the Abbey Quarter (policy CC8).



Figure 5 Excavation of the IDR. Image Gareth Thomas 1989. Courtesy Reading Borough Libraries. The (now demolished) Metal Box building and Apex Plaza are on the right, St James's Church and Forbury Gardens on the left.

2.2 We would support the new accesses onto Forbury Road and Kenavon Drive proposed for pedestrians and cycles. The image below from the Design & Access Statement indicates the positioning of these accesses. We would be grateful for confirmation that the location of these access points is to be agreed as part of this application.

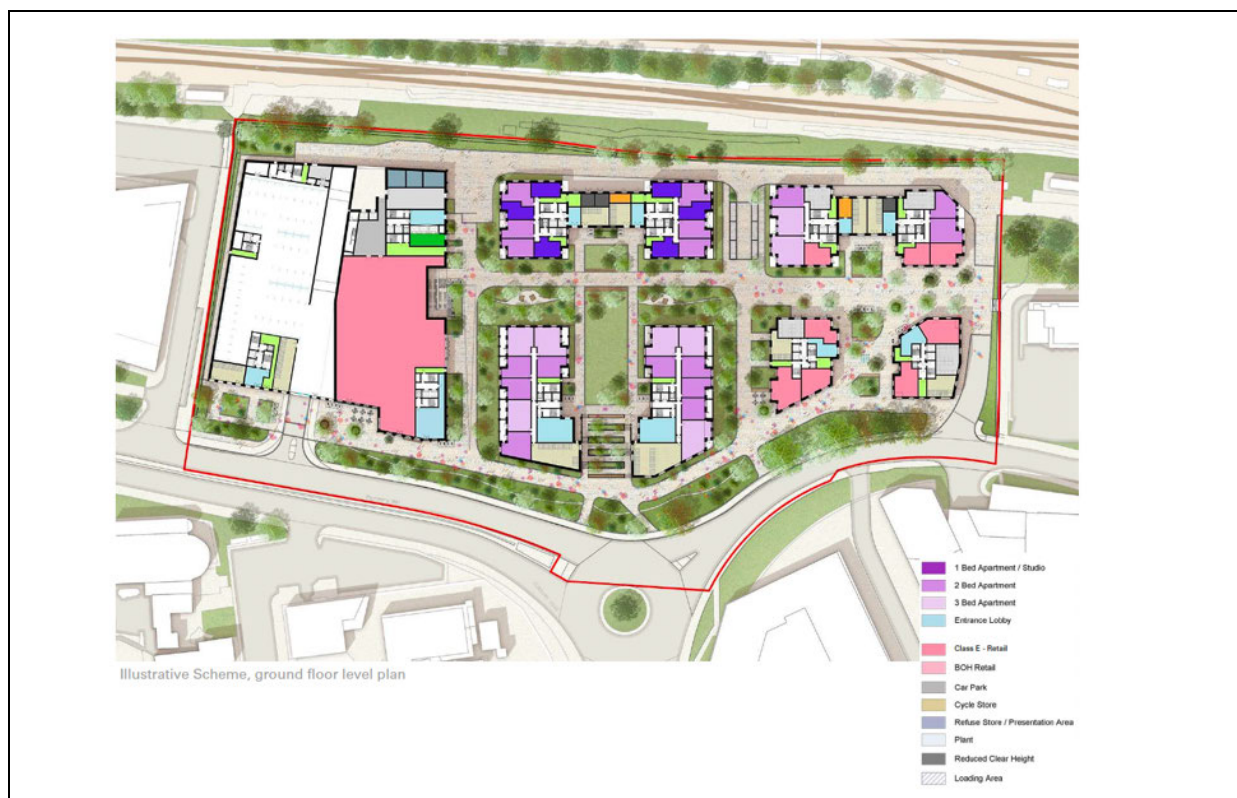


Figure 6 Pedestrian access onto Forbury Road and Kenavon Drive

The site is sandwiched between a railway line and the IDR, any opportunity that can be taken to reduce the feeling of being hemmed in by the IDR to access the town centre should be taken.

2.3 Reading's City Centre Framework 2008 (p22) states 'The barrier effect of the IDR currently contributes to the segregation of communities from the central area both physically, socially and visually' and that 'All future developments should seek address the problems of the IDR that treat the IDR as a place and not simply a traffic corridor.' We request that consideration should be given to physically, socially and visually reducing the barrier of the IDR in this location.

2.4 The line of the plummery wall is marked in the centre of the IDR by a length of reconstructed brick wall which becomes metal barriers and then planters to the west. Options should be explored to improve the appearance of the section of Forbury Road between the roundabout at the junction with Kenavon Drive and the roundabout at the junction with Vastern Road beyond the boundary of the site (CC9 securing infrastructure).

3. Access for members of the public

3.1 A large number of documents have been submitted as part of this application which we have attempted to digest. Our expectation from these, is that there will be public access to and through all parts of the site apart from residents' gardens and the residential blocks themselves and that this is not a gated development. We would be grateful if this could be confirmed.

4. Non-residential units

4.1 This development will put additional pressure on Reading's oversubscribed town centre doctor's surgeries. We note that retail units are proposed on the ground floor of some of the

blocks and suggest that Forbury View might be a suitable location for consideration of the provision of a medical centre for the use of residents and the wider community.

5. Conclusion

5.1 We hope that our observations can be considered in making a decision on this application and the development of this site in the future.

Yours Sincerely

Evelyn Williams

Chair Reading CAAC

On behalf of Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee

