Emma Gee
Interim Executive Director Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services

Civic Offices, Bridge Street,
Reading, RG1 2LU

☎ 0118 9373787
Our Ref: 230407
Direct: ☎ 07855 174 358

e-mail: Beatrice.Malama@reading.gov.uk

22 June 2023

Feilden and Mawson LLP
6 Clifton Court
Clifton Road
Cambridge
CB1 7BN

Your contact is: Beatrice Malama, Planning

Dear Feilden and Mawson LLP,

PRE PLANNING APPLICATION ENQUIRY RESPONSE

Enquiry Reference: 230407
Address: 20-30 Kings Road, Reading, RG1 3EX
Proposal: Pre-Application advice for Proposed Change of use from Office Space to HMCTS County Court. New external signage.

Thank you for your recent pre-applicant enquiry.

Site Description

The site is within the central area of Reading Borough. The site is just north of the River Kennet and falls within an area of archaeological potential and an Air Quality Management Area. Part of the site on the western side falls within the Market Place / London Street Conservation Area. The area is characterised by tall buildings mainly retail and commercial office buildings.

The site is 20-30 Kings Road located on the corner of King's Road and Highbridge Wharf. The main building frontage faces onto King's road, with the main entrance facing west towards the city centre at the corner of King's Street. The site consists two buildings; the Carbon Building which is a five storey office building and Highbridge House, a three storey Grade II listed building and dates from the early 19th century with traditional red brick, timber sash windows and tiled roof. The most notable feature is the stone portico over the front door.

The Carbon Building was until recently used as an office building however it is currently unoccupied since it was refurbished in 2020 together with the adjoining Highbridge House. The two buildings are connected by an internal link at ground floor level however this was blocked during the recent refurbishments.

Proposal

The proposal is for the change of use from Class E(g)(i) office to Class F1(g) Law Court. The proposal includes the following:

- A new ramped entrance to the rear of the building and a new canopy
- A new ramp to the side of Highbridge House
- Change in fenestration using obscured window films to the existing glazing
- Streetscape security features such as bollards
- Advertising for the Court Crest and building signage.
- New gated entrance into the car park to replace the existing and provide level access into the side entrance of Highbridge House

In addition, internal works would include partitioning of internal floor spaces to create smaller office spaces and installation of an internal lift within the Carbon building. New plant equipment would also be installed

Other works include reopening of the old connection between the two buildings and a new first floor structural opening to form a new link between the buildings.

Policies

CC1: Presumption In Favour Of Sustainable Development
CC2: Sustainable Design and Construction
CC3: Adaptation to Climate Change
CC7: Design and the Public Realm
EN15: Air Quality Management Area see
CR10: Tall buildings cluster policy; policy ref: CR10c
CR1: Central Core policy
EN1: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment
EN2: Area of Archaeological potential policy
EN3: Enhancement of Conservation Areas
EN4: Locally important Heritage Assets
EN17: Noise Generating Equipment
TR3: Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters
TR5: Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging
OU4: Advertisements

Assessment

The main issues to be considered are as follows:

a) Design, character and appearance
b) Impact on the Heritage Asset
c) Environmental Protection
d) Access and Parking
e) Archaeology
f) Sustainability and Climate Change

a) Design, character and appearance

The site is surrounded by multi storey retail and commercial office buildings with varying designs and styles. The street comprises of both traditional red brick Victorian buildings and contemporary modern structures.

The site's main frontage is on King's Road and the main car park entrance on Highbridge Wharf which leads to the building's rear side.

Given that the majority of the proposed development works would be to the rear side of the property, it is considered unlikely that the development would adversely impact on the character of the building nor harm the appearance of the immediate surrounding area.

The proposed change in fenestration using obscured window films to the existing glazing is not considered to adversely alter the character and appearance of the building. The proposal would include bollards and a replacement of the existing gated entrance into the car park however the design and finishing details of the new bollards and the gate and the exact location of the bollards have not been included therefore it is difficult to comment on this. Similarly, the application documents have mentioned advertisement and new signage however details of the proposed signage are not provided. Any future planning application should ensure that all the relevant details are provided. In addition, any proposal that affects the exterior fabric of the building should be designed so as to be in keeping with the existing buildings on and around the site.

b) Impact on the Heritage Asset

Part of the proposed development works would be to the Highbridge House which is a Grade II Listed building. Listed Building Consent would be required for those particular works.

Listing Details

> *HIGH BRIDGE WHARF 1. 5128 House at rear of Nos 18 and 20 Kings Road SU 7173 SE 3/499 II 2. Early C19 detached. 3 storeys. 3 bays, glazing bar sashes. Red brick with stone cills and stone courses over 2nd floor to flat eaves. Hipped slate roof with 4 side chimneys. Projecting Greek Doric porch with fluted columns etc and entablature. 6 panel door with plain rectangular overlight. Ground floor windows blocked and sliding garage doors inserted between.*

The works to the building would include reopening the former ground floor connection between the Carbon building and Highbridge house and formation of a new first floor structural opening to form a new connection; internal partitioning and new services for conditioned ventilation; new DDA compliant access along the side of the building.

Given the nature of the proposed works to the listed building, the external fabric and the setting of the listed building would unlikely be affected. However, care must be taken when constructing a new ramp and a new link between the two buildings so as not to harm or lose any part of the building with architectural significance. Internal works would include partitioning, whilst the listing appears to be silent on the internal fabric of the building, it is important to retain as much of the original building fabric and decoration as possible. A contractor specialised in Listed Building works should be engaged.

Overall, the proposed works are not considered likely to significantly alter the character of the listed building and its setting.

c) Environmental Protection - Noise generating development

The Reading Borough Policy EN17 states that for proposed new plant:

The noise source specific noise level (plant noise level) should be at least 10dBA below the existing background level as measured at the nearest noise sensitive receptor and the rating level should not exceed the background level (as measured in accordance with BS4142:2014).

Applications which include noise generating plant when there are nearby noise sensitive receptors should be accompanied by an acoustic assessment carried out in accordance with BS4142:2014 methodology. It is likely that the proposed development will include additional noisy mechanical plant such as air conditioning, kitchen extraction, generator, externally ventilated plant room.

The noise assessment needs to establish the predicted noise rating level taking account of any characteristic factors like tonality or impulsiveness of the noise. The rating level should be compared with the background noise level.

d) Access and Parking

The site is located within Zone 1 of the adopted Parking Standards and Design SPD which is an area at the very heart of Reading Borough, consisting primarily of retail and commercial office developments, with limited residential. This area is well served by rail and bus links and also contains the largest proportion of public car parking spaces.

The proposed development site is accessed via Highbridge Wharf from Kings Road which is part of the Red Route ‘no stopping’ corridor. Directly outside the property fronting Kings Road is a loading bay and pay and display bays. The Councils Residential Permit Scheme also operates in the surrounding area, thereby restricting unauthorised on street parking.

The site currently provides 16 parking spaces, submitted proposed Ground Floor plan Drawing Number 369386-9478-FMW-RCB-00-DR-A-1200-S2-D0100 illustrates 13 parking spaces located within the car park at the rear of the site, however Appendix A DDN02 states for the chosen option 3 development 14 parking spaces will be provided; however, the plan below only illustrates 13 parking spaces.



Parking bays will need to be 2.5m x 5m with forecourt depths of 6m. In addition to the standard bays disabled parking bays should also be provided.

Policy TR5 states that development should provide car parking and cycle parking that is appropriate to the accessibility of locations within the Borough to sustainable transport facilities, particularly public transport. Local parking standards are set out in the RBC, Revised Parking Standards and Design Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) which takes into account the accessibility of the site. There are no adopted parking standards for this type of use. Therefore, an application of this type is likely to be considered on its own merits considering business operations and local circumstances such as access to public transport, the availability of parking and on-street parking regulations.

Given the extensive restrictions in place and close proximity to public car parks and on street pay and display bays, a reduced provision can be accepted. However, confirmation is required in the parking spaces are currently used by any residential units and if it is to be used for staff only.

Replacement gates are to be provided, these will need to be illustrated on plans opening into the site to ensure they do not cause an obstruction.

Submitted narrative also states that ramps are to be installed to address access issues, the gradients of these will need to be provided and it is recommended that the Councils Accessibility/Mobility officer is contacted.

Cycle and bin provision/collection should be provided in accordance with the Councils current standards. Details of provision will need to be provided if a full application is submitted.

Given the sites location, a Construction Method Statement will be required for this development.

Considering the sustainability of the site, the proposed change of use is unlikely to have a significant impact on the trips and parking demand generated by the premise. On street parking in the vicinity of the site is either restricted or regulated and therefore any increase in parking demand would not be accommodated on street. In view of this, there are no transport objections to the proposed change of use

e) Archaeology

This proposal has been considered against Reading Borough Local Plan policy EN2, as the proposal site is within an Area of Archaeological potential. Considering the small nature of the proposed development, an assessment of the archaeological impacts of the development would not be required. In addition, due to the size and scale of the proposal, it is considered not enough of a detrimental impact on any archaeological remains to warrant such an assessment.

f) Sustainability and Climate Change

The report submitted as part of the pre-application enquiry indicates that the proposal would require to meet BREEAM 'Very good' standard". This is very good however, in addition to that, a more detailed description of how the proposal has been designed to incorporate measures to adapt to climate change will be required for any future applications.

Consultation

Only a limited number of consultees have been consulted at this stage. Should a full planning application be submitted, there will be need to engage with more consultees such as the Council's waste and recycling department, Accessibility/Mobility officer and the Heritage and Conservation officer.

Conclusion

The proposed development is considered acceptable however more details would be required to ensure that all aspects of the development are well considered. Details of the proposed bollards and their exact location should be provided. In addition, details of the replacement gate including the design should be provided. Proposed development works that would affect the exterior fabric of the building should be designed so as to be in keeping with the existing buildings on and around the site.

In terms of advertisement and new signage, a separate advertisement consent application will be required and details to be provided accordingly. Similarly, works to the Listed Building will require a Listed Building Consent application. It is important to ensure that the original architectural details and any decorations are preserved as much as possible. A contractor specialised in Listed Building works should be engaged.

The proposed development will likey include additional noisy mechanical plant such as air conditioning, kitchen extraction, generator, externally ventilated plant room e.tc therefore a noise assessment will be required to be carried out.

Regarding access and parking, should a full planning application be submitted, it should be clarified if the parking spaces would be for staff use only. In addition, gates will need to be illustrated on plans and gradients for the new ramps to be indicated. Furthermore, Cycle and bin provision/collection should be provided in accordance with the Councils current standards. Considering the site's location, a Construction Method Statement will be required for this development.

Further information regarding climate change adaptation principles therefore any future application should incorporate more details for easy of assessment.

Please note that the advice contained within this letter, or attached report, is that of an officer of the Borough Council and is provided without prejudice to the decision of the Borough Council in the event of a formal application for planning permission.

Yours sincerely

Beatrice Malama
Beatrice Malama
Planning Officer
SDV