

COMMITTEE REPORT

BY THE DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT & NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES
READING BOROUGH COUNCIL
PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE: 11 November 2015

ITEM NO. 10

Ward: Abbey

App Nos.: 151725/REG3

Address: The Abbey Gateway, The Forbury, Reading

Proposal: Change of use to B1 Offices (ground floor east side, first and second floors) and D1 Non-residential institution / Community education use (ground floor west side). Dismantling of south east yard wall and its replacement with a dwarf wall and railings. Conservation work and internal alterations as detailed in the separate application for Scheduled Ancient Monument consent.

Applicant: Reading Borough Council

Date received: 1 October 2015

Application target decision date: 26 November 2015

26 week date: 31 March 2016

RECOMMENDATION

Delegate to the Head of Planning, Development and Regulatory Services to **GRANT** Full Planning Permission, subject to no new substantive objections being received by 13 November 2015 and subject to the following conditions:

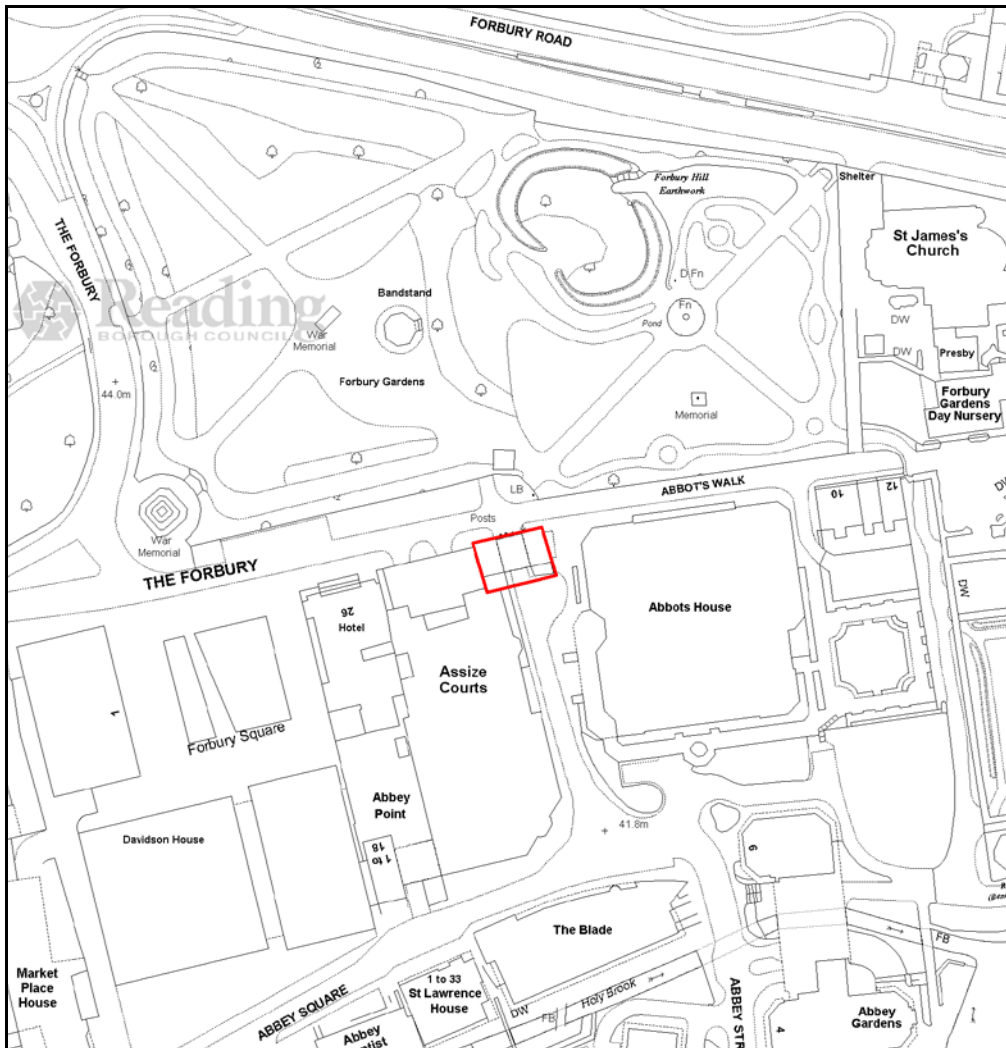
1. Time Limit for commencement - 3 year
2. Development to be carried out in accordance with approved drawings and specifications.
3. Submission of Construction Management Statement (Highways) prior to commencement.
4. Submission of Tree protection Plan and Schedule of proposed tree works prior to commencement
5. Details and samples of materials to be used in construction of boundary wall and railings to be submitted prior to commencement.

Informatives

1. Positive and Proactive Approach
2. Scheduled Ancient Monument Consent also relates to the proposals
3. Hours of Construction - Environmental Protection advice
4. Building Regulation approval would be required for works.
5. Highways Licence required for works affecting Highway.
6. CIL - new office floorspace

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The site is located at the eastern end of the town centre and comprises the gateway to Reading Abbey.
- 1.2 The Abbey Gateway is Grade I listed and forms part of the Scheduled Monument of the Reading Abbey: A Cluniac and Benedictine Monastery and Civil War Earthwork. The site is adjacent to the Assize Courts, a Grade II listed building and opposite Forbury Gardens which is a registered park and garden.
- 1.3 The building forms part of the Council's Abbey Quarter project, which is currently part of an ongoing application for funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund.



Site location plan - not to scale



Site Photograph - north elevation to The Forbury

2. PLANNING HISTORY

- 2.1 140193/REG3 - Erection of a temporary roof supported on scaffolding above existing roof - Approved.

3. PROPOSALS

- 3.1 Full Planning Permission is sought for the use of the existing building as Class B1 offices on the eastern part of the ground floor, and all areas at first and second floor level - a total floor area of 147 square metres. Permission is sought to use the western part of the ground floor as an educational space falling within Class D1 (20 square metres). External alterations are limited to the dismantling of the existing boundary wall to the south east corner of the building and its replacement with a low wall and railings. A 20th Century window and infill brickwork blocking an historic doorway is proposed to be removed and replaced with the original doors at the south western corner of the building.
- 3.2 Separate Scheduled Monument Consent is required for the physical works to the building. This consent supersedes any requirement for Listed Building Consent and is administered by Historic England (formerly known as English Heritage).
- 3.3 Information Submitted with the Application:

E02488 - 100 Location Plan
E02488-101 Site Plan Existing
E02800-527 Elevations South & East Existing
E02800-527.1 South Elevation to Abbey Street Existing
E02800-526 Elevations North & West Existing
E02800-210 General Arrangement Floor Plans Existing
E02800-528 Sections A-A & E-E Existing
E02800-530 Sections D-D & K-K Existing
E02488 - 102 Site Plan with Site Set Up Proposed
E02800-P-526 Elevations North & West Proposed
E02800-P-527.1 Elevations to Abbey Street Proposed
E02800-P-211 General Arrangement Ground First & Second Floors Proposed
Alterations
E02800-P-528 Sections A-A & E-E Proposed
E02800-P-530 Sections D-D & K-K Proposed

Bat Survey

Design and Access Statement

Heritage Statement

4. CONSULTATIONS

i) Historic England

4.1 Comments awaited - to be reported to Committee in an Update Report

ii) Berkshire Archaeology

4.2 Although the proposals largely involve alterations to the building, excavations for new services, for example for the toilets, may have the potential to impact below ground archaeological deposits. As the Gate is both a Grade I listed building and within the Scheduled Ancient Monument for the Abbey Berkshire Archaeology will defer responding until Historic England have been consulted and have made their requirements known.

4.3 Any additional comments received will be reported to Committee in an Update Report.

iii) RBC Natural Environment

4.4 There is one TPO tree directly adjacent to the Abbey Gate that could be affected by the works. Branches may need to be cut back to provide construction clearance to erect scaffolding. The trunk of the tree may also need to be protected to prevent damage from materials' storage. A Tree Protection Plan and Schedule of Proposed Tree Works are required to be approved. These can be secured by condition.

iv) RBC Ecologist

4.5 Comments awaited. To be reported in an Update Report.

v) RBC Environmental Protection Team

4.6 Confirm no objection to the proposal.

vi) RBC Transport Development Control

4.7 The site is located within the Reading Central Area and within Reading's primary shopping area. 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. There are no requirements for car parking in this zone as any demand for parking will be met by the town centre public car parks.

- 4.8 It is considered that in this location the proposed change of use to a flexible permission will have a negligible impact in terms of Transport and therefore there are no Transport objections to the proposed development, subject to a Construction Management Statement being secured to ensure that construction works do not affect users of the surrounding highway.

vii) Public Consultation

- 4.9 Neighbouring premises adjoining the gateway were consulted by letter.

- 4.10 A site notice was displayed adjacent to the gateway. The deadline for comments is 13 November. The recommendation is therefore worded to allow for this.

- 4.11 The proposals were advertised in the local newspaper.

- 4.12 No representations have been received to date. Any representations received will be reported to Committee.

5. LEGAL AND PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

- 5.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy framework (NPPF) - among them the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'.

- 5.2 Section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the local planning authority to have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of special interest which it possesses.

- 5.3 Accordingly this application has been assessed against the following policies:

National

National Planning Policy Framework
National Planning Practice Guidance

Reading Borough Local Development Framework:

Core Strategy (2008) (Altered 2015)

CS1	Sustainable Construction and Design
CS2	Waste Minimisation
CS5	Inclusive Access
CS7	Design and the Public Realm
CS10	Location of Employment Development
CS20	Implementation of the Reading Transport Strategy
CS31	Additional and Existing Community Facilities
CS33	Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment
CS34	Pollution and Water Resources
CS36	Biodiversity and Geology
CS38	Trees, Hedges and Woodlands

Reading Central Area Action Plan (2009)

RC5	Design in the Centre
RC6	Definition of the Centre
Policy RC14e	Public Realm - Forbury Gardens

Sites and Detailed Policies Document (2012) (Altered 2015)

SD1	Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
DM1	Adaption to Climate Change
DM4	Safeguarding Amenity
DM12	Access, Traffic and Highway-related Matters

Supplementary Planning Documents

Sustainable Construction and Design 2011
Revised Parking Standards and Design 2011

6. APPRAISAL

i) Proposed Use

- 6.1 The existing lawful planning use of the gateway is not clear. In recent years the building has been used informally by various community uses, including use by St. Lawrence Church. It may be that the building has assumed a particular use through the passage of time; however it would be necessary to apply for a certificate of lawfulness for an existing use to confirm this.
- 6.2 Despite the lack of clarity regarding the existing use, this does not prevent a new use being granted planning permission.
- 6.3 Policy RC6 of the Reading Central Area Action Plan 2009 states that town centre uses, which include smaller offices, will take place within the Central Core as defined on the Proposals Map. The application site falls within the Central Core and as such it is considered that the general principle of office use is acceptable in this location.

6.4 The 20 square metres of Class D1 community educational use proposed is compatible with the town centre location as a town centre use (Policy DM6) and is considered to be an appropriate new Community Use, in accordance with Policy CS31. Class D1 is very broad and includes a range of uses, which means often conditions are secured to limit the specific types of Class D1 use. However, in this instance it is considered that the particularly small size of the proposed D1 space would ensure that any transport, noise, or heritage impact would be very limited. As such, no condition is considered necessary in this instance.

ii) Effect on the Historic Character of the Listed Building, the Schedule Ancient Monument and the setting of Heritage Assets

6.5 The main potential impact is considered to be the extent to which the new use would necessitate changes to the layout of the building, or result in an uncharacteristically intensive use. The submitted drawings indicate that the office use could be carried out without the need to subdivide the existing spaces and in particular the large upper floor room would be retained as a single space.

6.6 The office use would be unlikely to be overly intensive. It would not involve customers visiting the premises or require other regular comings and goings (e.g. deliveries). The proposed use would be unlikely to affect the historic character in this regard.

6.7 The proposed changes to the exterior are minor in nature and would not result in harm to the setting of the listed building. The proposed alterations to the existing dilapidated boundary wall would improve the setting of the building by allowing views through to the main gateway structure. The detail of all physical alterations will be examined more closely by Historic England under the Scheduled Monument Consent regime, although a condition requiring details of the materials to be used for the new boundary wall and railings is recommended.

6.8 It is considered that the proposals would not be obtrusive in the wider context of the site and would not harm the setting of the adjacent listed courts building, or the setting of Forbury Gardens as a registered park and garden. The changes would not affect aims of Policy RC14 in protecting the public realm around Forbury Gardens as an important area of public open space.

6.9 On the basis of the above reasoning, it is considered that the proposals would comply with Policy CS33 (Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment) and Policy RC14(e) (Public Realm - Forbury Gardens), subject to Historic England and Berkshire Archaeology comments.

iii) Highway and Transport Matters

6.10 The proposals are unlikely to have significant impacts on the operation of the highway network, as confirmed by the Council's Transport

Development Control section. The absence of parking is acceptable due to the good public transport links and public car parks within the town centre. In any case the physical constraints of the site and the need to preserve the setting of heritage assets limit any opportunity for vehicle parking. As such the proposal is considered to be in accordance with Policy CS20 (Implementation of The Reading Transport Strategy) and Policy DM12 (Access, Traffic and Highway-related Matters), subject to an appropriate Construction Management Statement being secured by condition as referred to in section 4 above.

iv) Amenity of Adjoining Land Uses

- 6.11 The proposed development is within an area characterised by office and community uses within the town centre. The proposed floor area is not large and the physical constraints of the building limit the extent to which any activity would be discernible from outside the building. It is considered that the proposal would not result in harmful noise or disturbance or any other harmful effects on the amenity of surrounding land uses, including residential and hotel uses on The Forbury.
- 6.12 The recommended Construction Management Statement would limit the impact of construction works on the amenity of neighbours. The proposal is considered to be in accordance with Policies CS34 and DM4 on this basis.

v) Trees and Ecology

- 6.13 The proposal would not require the removal of the adjacent TPO tree, a Striped Maple (*Acer pensylvanicum*) however the construction works are likely to require some pruning to allow for scaffolding etc. and could result in damage to the tree and its root system if suitable protection is not provided. Based on the advice of the Council's Natural Environment Officer it is considered that any risks can be appropriately managed through a Tree protection Plan and Schedule of proposed tree works to be secured by condition.
- 6.14 The advice of the Council's Ecologist on the submitted bat survey is awaited and will be reported to Committee in an update report. The bat survey confirms that no bats were present within the building.
- 6.15 On this basis it is considered that the proposal accords with Policies CS36 and CS38, subject to the comments of the Ecologist and subject to a condition being imposed to secure the tree protection details described above.

vi) Sustainability

- 6.16 The conversion of the existing building would normally be subject to a requirement to meet the BREEAM Very Good standard as required by Policies CS1 and DM1. In this particular case it is considered that the need

to fit insulation and other sustainability measures to the Grade I listed building and Scheduled Ancient Monument to meet BREEAM requirements would be harmful to the historic fabric and special Architectural and Historic Interest of the building and would therefore be wholly inappropriate. The alterations required would also be unlikely to be granted Scheduled Monument Consent on this basis.

vii) Community Infrastructure Levy

6.17 The Class B1 element of the proposal would be CIL liable at the rate of £30 per square metre, subject to any relief or exemptions that may apply under the CIL Regulations.

viii) Equality

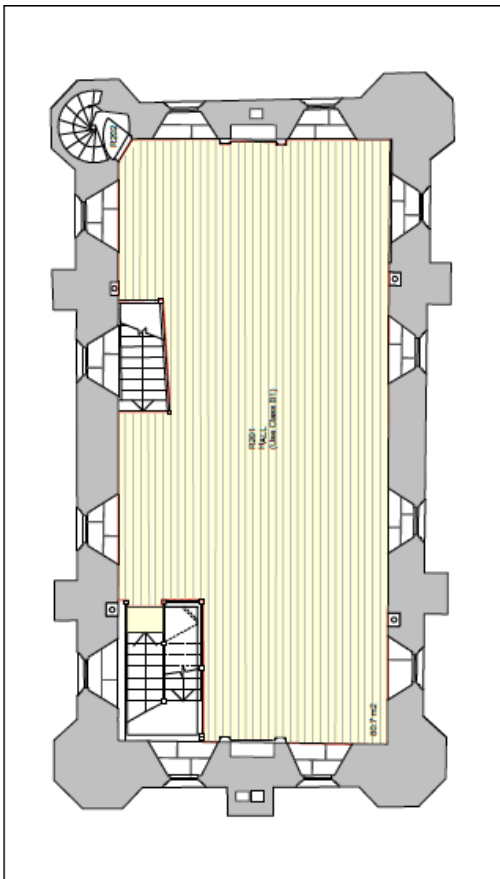
6.18 In determining this application the Council is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation. It is considered that there is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the current application) that the protected groups would have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular planning application. The building is not easily accessible due to the lack of a lift or modern staircase. However it is considered that the choice of a B1 use is appropriate as it would not require access by visiting members of the public. In addition severe limitations on any alterations to improve access exist due to the listed status and Scheduled Ancient Monument designation. In this instance importance of securing a viable future use of the heritage asset outweighs any harm in terms of accessibility for all potential users. Policies CS5 and CS33 apply.

7. CONCLUSION

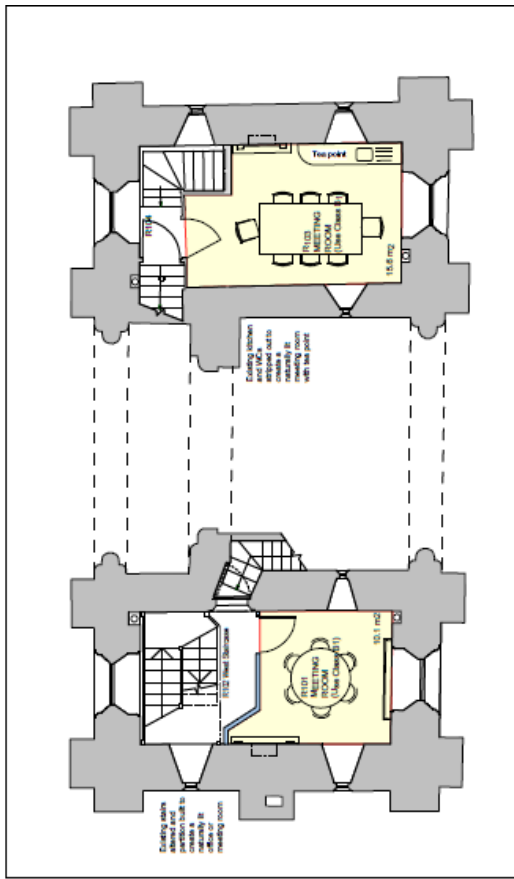
7.1 The proposals are considered to be acceptable as set out above.

7.2 The proposals are recommended for approval, subject to appropriate conditions. This is also subject to no substantive objections being received during the remainder of the statutory consultation period, as set out in the recommendation at the top of the report.

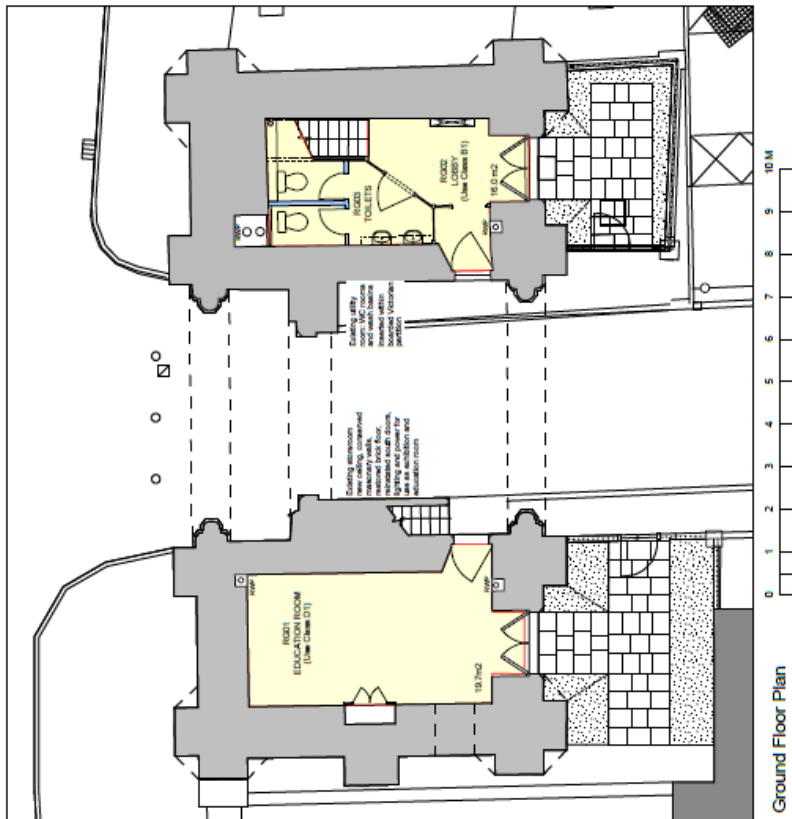
Case Officer: Steve Vigar



Second Floor Plan



First Floor Plan



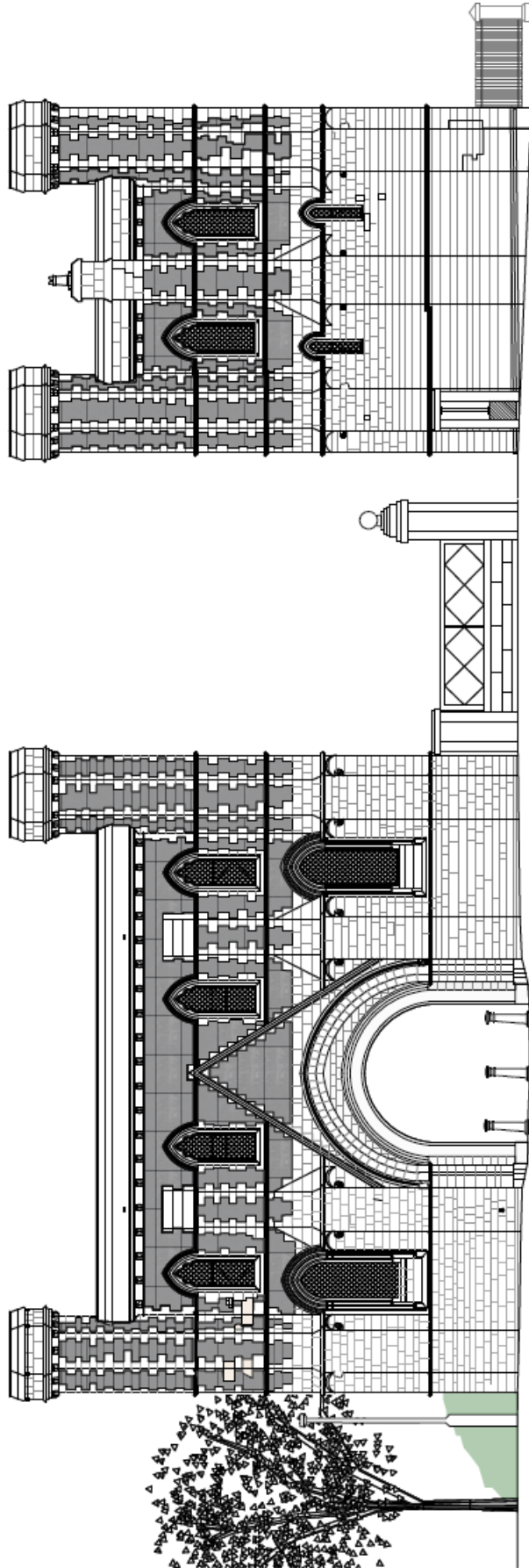
Ground Floor Plan

Hampshire County Council
 Planning Department
Planning Applications
Planning Applications
 The Abbey Gate

DATE	BY	STATUS	REMARKS
15/05/2024	LH	REFUSED	
17/05/2024	LH	REFUSED	

APPLY TO: 11020243
REFERENCE: ED2800-P-211
 DATE RECEIVED: 08/05/2024

- 1. The Applicant is advised that the Planning Department has received the above planning application.
- 2. It is requested that you provide a detailed description of the proposed development and any other information that may be relevant to the decision.
- 3. It is requested that you provide a detailed description of the proposed development and any other information that may be relevant to the decision.
- 4. It is requested that you provide a detailed description of the proposed development and any other information that may be relevant to the decision.



North Elevation

West Elevation

- Stonework repairs: Turret parapets coping, corbels and swelled
- Repointing of identified areas of stone and first facing
- New lead overflow spouts through roof parapet above inner buttresses.
- Window repairs: replacement of broken missing lights, refurbishment of casements.
- Removal of information board on west end elevation.

North and West Elevations - As Proposed

Reading Borough Council
 Planning

The Abbey Gate
 Abbey Gate
 Reading RG1 1AA
 Hampshire

PROJECT
 Reading Abbey Revealed
 The Abbey Gate

PROPOSED
 Abbey Gate North & West Elevations

REFERENCE
 E02800-P-526

DATE
 15/08/14

SCALE
 1:1000

DRAWN
 25/05/13

CHECK
 25/05/13

DATE
 25/05/13

TIME
 11:00

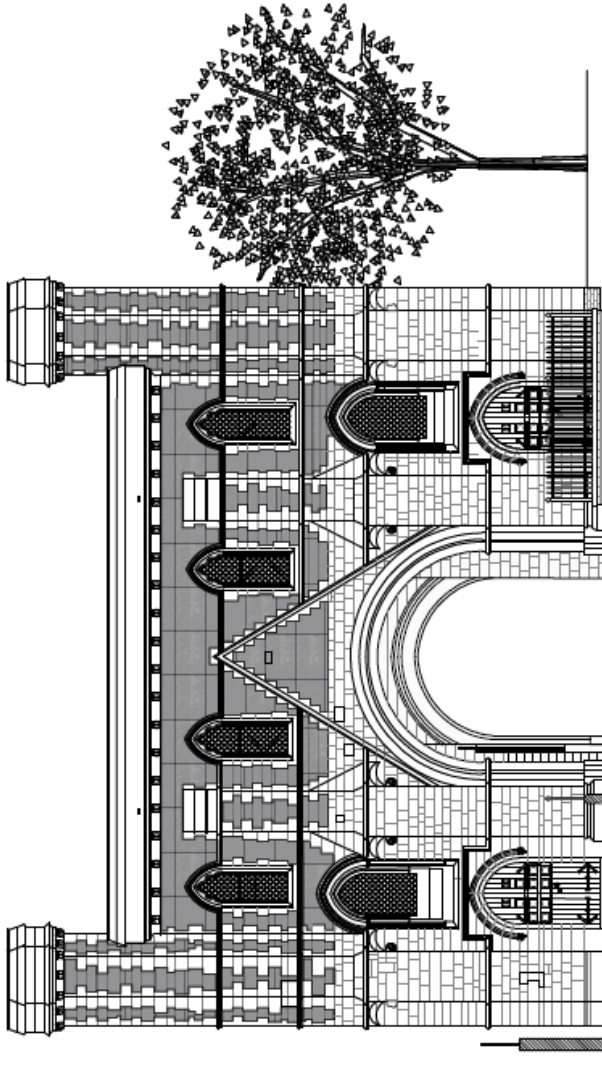
1. The Reading & District Reading Borough Council and Hampshire County Council are not responsible for the accuracy of the information provided in this document. Any error is the responsibility of the applicant.

2. Planning permission is required for any development.

3. This document is the property of Reading Borough Council. It is to be used only for the purposes stated and is not to be distributed to other parties without the written consent of Reading Borough Council.

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External Works
Victorian wall dismantled. New stone coping
and string to match in with existing redstone
circle will round gate to park.

South Elevation

South Elevation - As Proposed

Approved by The National Lottery Funding Planning Policy 1.2		Approved by Reading Borough Council		Approved by Hampshire County Council		Approved by KCC Planning	
Approved on: 15/03/2011		Approved on: 29/07/13		Approved on: 11/09/13		Approved on: 29/07/13	
Approved by: Planning Committee		Approved by: Planning Committee		Approved by: Planning Committee		Approved by: Planning Committee	
Approved for: The Abbey Gate, 100% of the stone wall dismantled and new stone coping and string to match in with existing redstone circle will round gate to park.		Approved for: The Abbey Gate, 100% of the stone wall dismantled and new stone coping and string to match in with existing redstone circle will round gate to park.		Approved for: The Abbey Gate, 100% of the stone wall dismantled and new stone coping and string to match in with existing redstone circle will round gate to park.		Approved for: The Abbey Gate, 100% of the stone wall dismantled and new stone coping and string to match in with existing redstone circle will round gate to park.	
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South Elevation to Abbey Street



Upper Floor Interior