

**Date:** 7 December 2018 at 17:28:13 CET

**To:** "[stephen.vigar@reading.gov.uk](mailto:stephen.vigar@reading.gov.uk)" <[stephen.vigar@reading.gov.uk](mailto:stephen.vigar@reading.gov.uk)>

**Subject:** 180499 St. Martins Precinct, Church Street, Caversham, Reading

Dear Mr Vigar,

CADRA would like to comment on the revised proposals for this part of the St Martins scheme as follows:

#### 1. BUILDING LINE ON CHURCH STREET

The proposals show the building line on Church Street moved forward to the front line of the existing canopy across the width of 47 to 49 Church Street. This is a major change to the architectural character of the street and should be explained and justified in the Design and Access statement in both visual terms and in any impact on footway traffic, so that it's desirability can be assessed. Unfortunately, little justification for this change is provided. The 3D image shown in the submission is taken only from directly opposite the proposed extension, so that the impact on the street cannot be judged. Views and perspective sections from further up and down the street which would indicate the impact of this proposed building line change are not shown. The proposal for an arcade, in order to dispense with the 1960'/70s canopy is not without its merits but it should not be used simply as an excuse to hide increased massing and height from one particular angle. The proposal to use modern decorative brickwork detailing on the upper floors of this arcaded area may also have merit. It would be useful to have more and photographic detail of what is proposed. There is an awkward end to the arcaded brickwork adjacent Block D where there is a narrow north facing slot behind an element of free-standing arcade. A better use for this area would have been the adjustment of Block D to lessen the impact on the Holm oak, if the scheme were viewed as a holistic whole.

#### 2. MASSING AND HEIGHT

CADRA are concerned about the massing and 5 storey height of the proposals, both in terms of the impact on Church Street and the longer views from across the car park and beyond from the south. The five-storey massing of the southern cinema elevation with the fifth storey of residential over the top of the cinema will be particularly overbearing and unsatisfactory. Removing the fifth storey of residential accommodation would mean that the cinema massing closely matches the existing Waitrose massing to the rear. This is already substantial and would be more acceptable. Maximum storey heights in the surrounding area, both actual and permitted are three or four storeys (apart from Block A at the western end of the development). In CADRA's view any development in this area should be three storeys on Church st with a fourth storey set back if desired and a maximum four residential storey equivalent on the Cinema southern elevation.

#### 3. PLANT AND LIFT OVERUN

CADRA are concerned that as with the previous application for Block A, lift overruns are not shown in elevation and plant areas are very indicative. (You will recall that the Applicant had to make a further application on Block A to cover lift overruns and actual plant required, once this had been properly assessed, which resulted in an increase in height to the building.) Air handling and cooling plant requirements for the cinema may be significant and a proper, in principle, assessment of plant should be made and shown on the drawings at this stage. Sections through the plant area showing height and volume of plant should be included, so that the applicant demonstrates the height and volume of all elements of the proposed building.

#### 4. PUBLIC TOILETS

The revised plans do not seem to show the replacement public toilets. CADRA would welcome confirmation from the Applicant that they are included and where they are.

On the permitted proposals, they were in the Waitrose extension.

## 6. CAVERSHAM SQUARE

The increased concentration of activity brought by the relocation of the cinema and the cafe/ bar terrace at first floor, as well as the Waitrose entrance is a positive change for this new south facing Square. Servicing across this new Square to retail and commercial elements remains and is intensified, however. On the west side of the Square building elements to the proposed Cinema above Iceland are still shown. This Square needs to be properly redesigned in landscape and external space terms to achieve a coherent outside space and achieve its potential and to reflect the changed location of the cinema.

## 7. PIECEMEAL DEVELOPMENT AND PHASING

The phasing plan submitted with this application is the old phasing plan. It shows the permitted cinema above Iceland being built before the cinema proposed in this application. Some of the submitted plans still show the cinema above Iceland. If this application is permitted what are the proposals for the Iceland building? The phasing proposal was agreed by RBC to allow the applicant to build out the permitted scheme in a phased and logical way and to allow, for example, landscaping details covered by condition to be submitted in phases. It was not intended to allow piecemeal changes for a part of the scheme to be brought forward without considering the impact on the whole. Changes to proposed parking allocation are also a concern to both residents and traders in Caversham who rely on this car park. As part of the modifications to the car park, it would be desirable to take the opportunity to install electric vehicle charging points if these are not already included.

## 8. CONCLUSION

While CADRA welcomes the potential investment and the facilities it would bring to Caversham, the proposed massing and heights are unacceptable and detrimental to Caversham Centre. We have considerable doubt about many other unsatisfactory aspects of these proposals as set out in detail above and urge modifications on all these aspects. If these cannot be achieved, then the application in its present form should be refused.

I hope these comments are useful to you in your consideration of the application.

Kind regards,

On behalf of Caversham and District Residents Association