

On 22 Jul 2020, at 13:43, mckimpearce@btinternet.com wrote:

Dear Mr Markwell,

Thank you very much for your letter of the 9 July 2020. Given the mountain of revised information that has been submitted on this proposal by the applicant over the past year, your summary of the main changes is very helpful.

In the light of your letter Caversham and District Residents Association (CADRA) would like to comment further on the revised proposals.

- We welcome the reduction in the height of the tower building A by 9 metres and one storey. Our original comments of June 2019 which we have included below for reference, raised concerns about the height of this tower.

Unfortunately the other matters we raised remain substantively unaddressed by the applicant and in some respects the revised proposals are now worse than the original.

- Accommodation - Our concerns about the sheer quantity of residential accommodation proposed for this compact site which we raised below remain. Despite a modest reduction in overall numbers of residential units from 658 to 620, the total number of units when taken together with the adjoining Aviva site is grossly in excess of the allocation in the new Local Plan. The proposals represent over development of the site, for instance distances between blocks B and D, 14 storeys and 12 storeys high respectively, is a mean 22 metres. Whilst between blocks D and F, 12 storeys and 11 storeys high respectively, it is just 18 metres. This will not lead to satisfactory living conditions for the occupants. The lack of useable green space and amenity space already grossly inadequate and lamentable in the original proposals is now worsened by the encroachment of Block C in the revised proposal.

- Massing and height - In addition to the height of the tower, we also raised concerns about the heights of the buildings fronting Caversham Road. These do not relate to the scale of buildings on the west side of Caversham Road and the existing residential community beyond. The heights of buildings on this heavily trafficked frontage should be reduced to allow a more gradual stepping up. Finally a new point is that the reduction in residential floor space and the increase in office floor space now proposed will of necessity increase the built volume of an already unsatisfactory scheme due to the greater floor to floor heights of office space.

- We are not clear what the proposal to remove on site affordable housing means, but given Reading's housing need and the size and value of this site we would expect and support a sizeable social housing commitment by the applicant to the Council.

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

Kind regards,
on behalf of CADRA)

Begin forwarded message:

From: CADRA

Date: 4 June 2019 at 11:02:31 BST

To: jonathan.markwell@reading.gov.uk

Subject: 182252 - 80 Caversham Rd, RG1 1AA. Royal Mail depot site

Dear Mr Markwell,

CADRA would like to comment on the proposals for this important site as follows:

- Future development of this important site and its return to beneficial use is welcome.
- Layout - The north south orientation of the blocks and the possible future connection on the line of De Montfort Road are positive features of the layout, together with the positioning of the tallest building adjacent the station entrance.
- Accommodation - CADRA have concerns about the sheer quantity of residential accommodation proposed for this compact site. The heights of the blocks proposed and the widths between blocks means that for large parts of the day and year, the proposed amenity spaces between the blocks will be in shadow, notwithstanding the proposed orientation. This is especially important given that more than 650 residential flats including family accommodation are indicated. We understand that there are proposals by Hermes to contribute to school places. For successful urban living of this nature involving families and children, close and immediate access to crèche facilities, play areas and green amenity space is a necessity. The green space proposed seems inadequate for these purposes. Of particular concern are the residential blocks directly adjacent to the railway where openable windows would expose residents to noise, air pollution and a poor living environment.
- Massing and height - The tower proposed at the eastern end of the site is at 25/26 stories. Some of the tower will have commercial office use and therefore greater floor to floor dimensions and thus height. Whilst several visual perspectives are shown from several stationary viewing points, we would suggest that the OS datum height of the top of the tower should be set out and compared visually with the OS datum maximum heights of other tall permitted buildings and buildings under construction around the station. Other ways should also be found to show the tower in the context of the cluster of tall buildings around the station proposed in the tall buildings Policy so that the success of the cluster as a whole and the impact on Reading and Caversham of the height and bulk proposed and whether it is desirable, can be properly assessed. The 7/ 8 storey buildings proposed fronting Caversham Road do not relate to the scale of buildings on the west side of Caversham road and the predominantly 2 storey residential community beyond. We believe that the heights of proposed buildings on this heavily trafficked frontage should be reduced to allow a more gradual stepping up in scale and avoid an unpleasant trafficked canyon effect. The town houses proposed between blocks directly adjacent the railway seem an afterthought and reduce the green amenity space.
- Conclusion - CADRA believe on the basis of the above points that these proposals represent over development of the site.

I hope these comments will be useful to you in your assessment of the proposals.

Kind regards,

Caversham and District Residents Association