

## **PL/24/0958 – 2 NORMAN PLACE VASTERN ROAD**

CADRA welcomes the provision of much needed housing in Reading, and the proposal includes many positive elements, such as enhanced riverfront access, sustainability initiatives, and public realm improvements. Several concerns require further consideration to ensure the development aligns with local needs and environmental priorities.

### **Sustainability**

Further clarification is required on the decision to reject water-source heat pumps in favour of air-source ones, especially given the proximity of the river and the greater potential efficiency benefits of water-source.

### **Public Square and Riverside Access**

The inclusion of a public square with retail/café space and locally designed artwork is a positive feature, fostering a more welcoming environment. The preferred artwork—a totem pole integrating PV panels and LED lighting—has potential, though careful design will be needed to minimize light pollution. While improved pedestrian and cycle connectivity to the river is welcomed, further details are needed on integration with the consented SSE site scheme.

### **Landscaping and Environmental Considerations**

The proposal would result in the loss of extensive trees and landscaping by Vastern Road, which we are particularly concerned about, and the reasons for this need to be revisited.

The planting of 61 new trees and the inclusion of green/brown roofs with sedum are positive aspects. We understand that the existing ash trees along the riverbank are currently RBC's responsibility and will be retained. Ash dieback is already a concern, and this should be reflected in the proposals.

There is a need to further improve urban greening and pedestrian experience. Extensive new planting is essential with sufficient space around the buildings. We believe there is scope to increase the amount of soft landscaping, whilst appreciating the need for emergency vehicle access.

### **Building Height and Positioning**

The building is set very close to Vastern Road which limits planting space and detracts from the landmark building Clearwater Court. The proposed building height, particularly in relation to Clearwater Court and the impact on Vastern Road, appears excessive and requires further assessment. The visual impact on views between Reading and Caversham has not been sufficiently analysed.

The potential overshadowing of the river raises concerns about its impact on biodiversity and the visual character of the area.

### **Lighting and Light Pollution**

The proposed illuminated art installation must be carefully designed to avoid excessive light pollution, given the river's ecological importance. Concerns exist about intrusive lighting affecting local wildlife and residents. Increased activity, noise, and artificial light in the area must be managed to prevent negative impacts on residents and wildlife.

**Housing Mix and Local Needs**

The predominance of one- and two-bedroom apartments may address commercial demand but does not sufficiently cater to the local need for family-sized housing. Given the site's proximity to open spaces, it presents an opportunity to accommodate more family-oriented housing, which remains in short supply.

**Deliveries, access and storage**

Arrangements for deliveries and taxi pick-ups and drop off are a critical element in schemes such as this. These drivers are hard to control, and existing developments demonstrate the real difficulties in preventing problems and obstructions. There is insufficient detail in how this will be managed.

Adequate on-site storage facilities for residents are essential, particularly for those without car access.

**Conclusion**

While the proposal offers notable benefits, such as improved public space, enhanced river access, and sustainability initiatives, several concerns must be addressed. Key areas for improvement include landscaping, biodiversity protection, lighting impact, street scene integration, and a more balanced housing mix.