

Plans revised at former Reading Royal Mail depot - affordable housing axed



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80 Caversham Road. Google Image.



Affordable housing has been axed from a huge development to replace Reading's former Royal Mail depot.

Developer Hermes Property Unit has revised its application at the 80 **Caversham** Road site to reduce the number of **homes** planned from 658 to 620 but none will now be available at affordable rates.

The developer is planning to build nine high rise buildings and 17 town houses, ranging in height from two to 24 storeys.

To enable the reduction in homes, the biggest of the nine high rise buildings will be reduced from 25 storeys to 24 but there will also be extra office space added.

The Bell Tower Community Association, commenting on the plans, said most of the updated proposals are not an improvement despite the positive decrease in height of the tallest tower.

It says it “sees little benefit” to the proposals, especially the “unnecessary” increase in office space given the current trend of increased remote working” and the loss of affordable housing, “which is to be deplored”.

The development would be next to Reading Station on Caversham Road and includes office space and a health centre.

The Royal Mail depot closed in 2009 and is currently being used as a temporary base for Network Rail.

Hermes say the scheme will help people to live and work in the heart of Reading, enhance the business community and provide new walking and cycling routes to Reading Station.

The application can be viewed [on the council’s planning portal here](#).

The nine blocks would contain 74 studio, 194 one-bedroom, 320 two-bed flats, 25 three-bed flats, and seven houses, along with 19,730 sqm office space.

There would be 94 car parking spaces and 636 cycle parking spaces.

A new public square outside Reading Station and a tree-lined avenue connecting Caversham Road to the square are also part of the proposals.

Previous plans included 97 affordable homes but these have all now been scrapped due to a viability assessment.

The latest plan has not gone down well, with a dozen residents slamming the revised proposals on Reading Borough Council's (RBC) planning portal.

Concerns have been raised about the loss of affordable housing.

Rosemary Muirhead said: "Why has social housing been removed? I object to this change. I think it should be increased."

Others have raised concern about the lack of parking and other infrastructure in the area.

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Tracey Williams said: "I am increasingly concerned by the large high rise flats with limited parking in the station area.

"The doctors' surgeries in Caversham are completing overloaded and traffic is horrendous due to the limitations of the river crossings.

"People living in the new flats with no parking still have cars which they scatter around Caversham wherever there are still no parking permits.

"Unless something is done to address basic infrastructure issues developments like this will just overload the resources in the area more and make me seriously consider whether it is time that I moved to a less congested town."