

MEDIA INFORMATION

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www.stationhillreading.co.uk

Sir John Madejski's £400m Station Hill development gets the go-ahead from Reading Borough Council

Following recommendation by officers, Reading Borough Council's planning committee last night voted to grant consent to Sackville Developments (Reading) Ltd for Station Hill, a landmark, 1.72m-sq ft mixed-use scheme, adjacent to Reading Station. If last night's decision is ratified, work could begin in 2011 and the first phase completed by 2014.

Sackville's Chairman, Sir John Madejski OBE DL, commented: *"This is a huge step forward and the right thing at the right time for Reading. We have been working on our proposals for more than four years and our aim has always been to create a bold, flagship scheme which would meet the Council's vision for the area, impress visitors stepping off a train and offer a vibrant living, working and shopping environment for local people. Our vision is now set to become a reality.*

"We are grateful to Reading Borough Council, both for its support and for defending the scheme against unfounded criticism. With a scheme of this size and importance there are always going to be sceptics. Thankfully, the Council has taken a positive stance and recognises the huge value that Station Hill will bring to Reading, the Thames Valley and the south of England."

Sackville unveiled its latest proposals to the public in April when more than 300 people attended an exhibition held in a vacant shop in Station Hill, currently a rundown and obsolete quarter of Reading. The comments made at that time were overwhelmingly positive, according to Sackville director, **Jon Homan**: *"We have consulted local people throughout the application process and the message that always comes across is: the sooner the better. The Station Hill area is crying out for regeneration."*

The Station Hill scheme will integrate with Network Rail's and Reading Borough Council's plans to invest £825m in redeveloping Reading Station and provide a new public transport interchange. It is also in line with Reading Borough Council's Core Strategy, the recently adopted Central Area Action Plan, and Development Brief for the area.

Notes to editors:

The Scheme

Station Hill covers an area of 5 acres and comprises 1.72m sq ft of floor space to include offices, residential, retail (with cafes, restaurants and food outlets) an arts venue, a health and fitness facility, new public spaces and a central public piazza. A series of tall buildings will reinforce the importance of the scheme's central location and change the skyline of the town.

History

An outline planning application for a 1.4m-sq ft, mixed-use Station Hill scheme was submitted to Reading Borough Council in February 2007. In March 2008 the Planning Committee resolved unanimously to grant consent for the development. However, it was called-in by the Secretary of State, Hazel Blears, in May 2008.

Sackville withdrew its first planning application in August 2008 to work up a bigger, amended scheme incorporating the adjoining Friars Walk shopping centre. Most elements of the original proposal were retained but, with a larger site to work with, it was able to increase the floorspace but significantly reduce the overall density, allowing a more generous public realm. A new application was submitted in June this year.

Sackville

Sackville Developments (Reading) Ltd is a subsidiary of Sackville Properties, a property investment and development company whose Chairman is Sir John Madejski OBE DL, Chairman of Reading Football Club.

Architects are **Scott Brownrigg** and **Chapman Taylor**.

Planning consultants are **David Lock Associates**.

Sackville is advised by development managers, **Horstonbridge**.

Letting and development consultants are Strutt & Parker (offices, residential and retail) and joint retail agents, **Hicks Baker**.

Press Enquiries:

Rhoda Katz

Katz PR

T: 020 8341 5898

M: 07973 172771

rhoda@katzpr.co.uk

Q&As

1. What are the sizes of the proposed buildings?

Building Number	Number of Floors	GEFA SQ.M	GEFA SQ.FT	Floor Plate Range (SQ.FT)
B1 Offices	26	29,887	321,704	8k – 14k
B2 Resi	27	17,430	187,617	
B3 Offices	15 – 18	31,970	344,125	11k – 18.5k
B5 Offices	14	18,722	201,524	13k
B7 Resi	21	15,965	171,847	
B4 Resi	11	10,085	108,555	
B8 Resi	8	13,105	141,062	
B6 (Cultural)	3	2,000	21,528	
Bowling Alley	2	2,030	21,851	
Retail – Ground	1	8,157	87,802	
Retail – Lower	1	6,750	72,657	
Retail – Mezz.	1	4,000	43,056	
Total		160,101	1,723,327	
Car Park	324 Spaces			

2. Who will occupy the offices and shop units?

The offices and shops will be built on a speculative and phased basis. The offices will be designed to offer maximum flexibility to allow for the needs of both smaller and larger occupiers. The same applies to the shop units, restaurants and cafes.

The shop units will be designed to cater for a mix of operators who will support the other uses on the site and offer a high quality retailing experience which will not rival or duplicate what the town has to offer elsewhere.

3. Isn't there a surplus of flats in central Reading?

There is currently a modest over supply of flats in the town centre but we believe this will be taken up. There is pent-up demand for residential accommodation, which is currently being suppressed by the lack of mortgage credit. The 1st phase of this development will not be available until 2014.

4. Where will the existing car parking spaces go?

The existing car park will be removed as part of the redevelopment and be replaced with new parking provision within the site, probably 2 levels under the retail and public realm levels providing around 320 spaces. New parking provision will be shared between the occupiers.

5. Will the redevelopment affect the bus services on Station Hill?

The Station Hill development is being designed to be compatible with Reading Borough Council's and Network Rail's proposals for the Station and Station Hill. This will involve a reorganisation of the bus interchange resulting in greater flexibility. More details can be obtained from Reading Borough Council.

6. Is the redevelopment of the Station Hill site linked to the improvements to the railway station?

The Station Hill development can stand separate from the new Station entrance, but both Sackville and Reading Borough Council are keen that there is an interface between the projects. As the Station Hill development is proposed on two levels, this can provide level access to the Station at both the current level and the lower subway level.

7. Will there be 24-hour access through the new development?

There will be 24-hour access through the principle public routes through the site.

8. Will the public have access to the upper floors of the highest buildings?

Provision will be made for public access to a viewing gallery offering views of Reading, the River Thames, and the surrounding countryside.

9. How long will the development take?

Redevelopment will take a considerable length of time (possibly 6-8 years) due to the complexity of the site and the demolition and preparatory works that are required before new development can begin. We anticipate that the site will be developed in 3 or 4 phases.

10. Why has it been necessary to have a second application?

After submission of the previous planning application, Sackville purchased the Friars Walk Shopping Centre. This is included in this new scheme and it has allowed for lower density, more generous public realm and much improved connectivity to Friar Street and the town in general.

11. Will this application be “called in”?

Reading Borough Council are not intending to refer the application to the Government office because it is fully compliant with both Regional and Local Planning Guidance. The Town & Country Planning (Consultation) Direction 2009 further reduces the possibility of call-in because the proposed development is both within the town centre and in accordance with the development plan.

12. Are the developers making financial contributions (Planning Gain/S106) to the council?

There is a substantial package which includes contributions to the public transport system in the town, affordable housing and training. The developers are also making special provision with the inclusion of a Tenpin Bowling facility and are also taking account of the new station entrance.

13. Who is funding the project?

Funding is being provided by Sackville and its bankers. It is anticipated that a suitable additional funding partner will be brought in at the appropriate time. The likely total cost is projected at c £400m.

14. Will the current financial uncertainties delay the project?

Sackville is talking to investors who take a long-term view of the market. Furthermore, projects of this type tend to go live through economic cycles and this can be factored into the viability. There is a significant shortage of sustainable Grade A stock in Reading town centre and the obsolescence of existing supply will create inherent demand as the economy recovers over next two to three years. The scheme is also of regional significance, which will draw interest from the wider area including London.