

TAR (Theatre & Arts Reading) VISION FOR READING GAOL



Current & future submitted planning applications and context within diagram page 12

A Kenavon drive approved demolition of two retail buildings to make way for new large scale residential scheme. Construction underway.

B Forbury Retail park, KFC drive through. Development permitted Sept 2017.

C Forbury Retail Park Unit 5 - Site earmarked for residential development.

D Forbury Retail Park Unit 5, External entrance additions. Development permitted Sept 2016.

E 1 Forbury Place, New Office building completed in 2016.

F 2 Forbury Place, Duplicate Office building built following success of 1 Forbury place. Completed Summer 2017.

G 3 Forbury place- internal and external alterations and landscaping to existing office building and site.

H Apex Plaza- External and internal alterations. Application permitted May 2017.

I Abbey square Forbury apartments- extension to the Forbury hotel by converting flats into hotel rooms/ services. Development approved 2017/18.

J 100 Kings road- change from office buildings to Hotel/ apartments. Change of use approved 2016/17.

K 120 Kings road- Residential apartment tower development. Construction underway and due to be completed by the end of 2018.

L 121 Kings road- External alterations. Approved Nov 2016.

M St Lawrence House, Abbey Square. Change of ground floor use. Permitted July 2017.

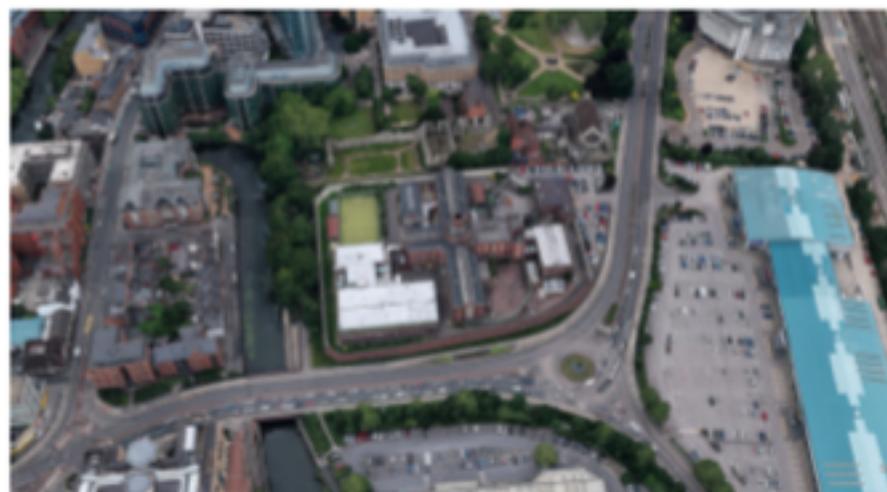
N 1-9 Jackson corner Kings road. Conversion of upper floors to 18 residential units. Construction of new six storey residential block of 15 units. Application submitted June 2018.

O 1-2 Market place. Internal and external alterations change of use from Bank and offices to bar and Hotel. Application submitted May 2018.

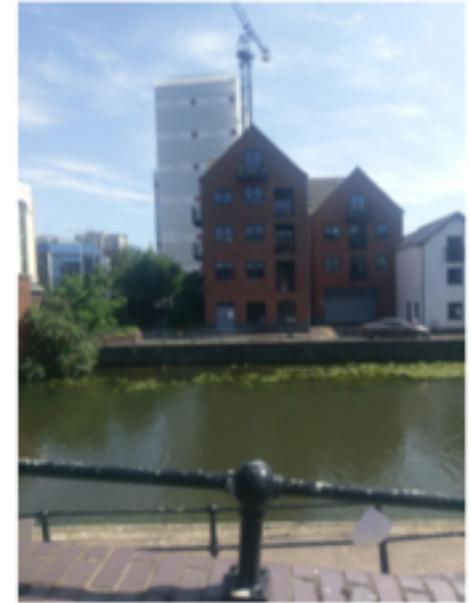
P 12-14 Forbury court. Internal and external improvements: new plant on roof and 5th floor infill extension. Permitted Sept 2018.

Q 10 Forbury road. Internal and external refurbishment: demolition of outbuilding and new plant equipment. Application permitted June 2018.

R Renovation of Abbey Ruins.



From top: aerial view looking East, aerial view looking West. Image credits: Google Maps



From right: aerial view planning application Kenavon drive.
Credit planning application FRP planning.
Photo of the blade office tower across Gaol site. Photo of 120 Kings Road under construction.

2.9 Prison layout

Approach

The main entrance to the prison site is to the North of the site accessed from the Forbury Road. There is a tarmacked forecourt for parking area in front and extending to the side and the main gatehouse.

Site Layout

The main prison building sits central within the prison walls.

The four wings of the prison aligns to the main compass points (N/S/E/W) as a cruciform shape creating 4 courtyards within the walls.

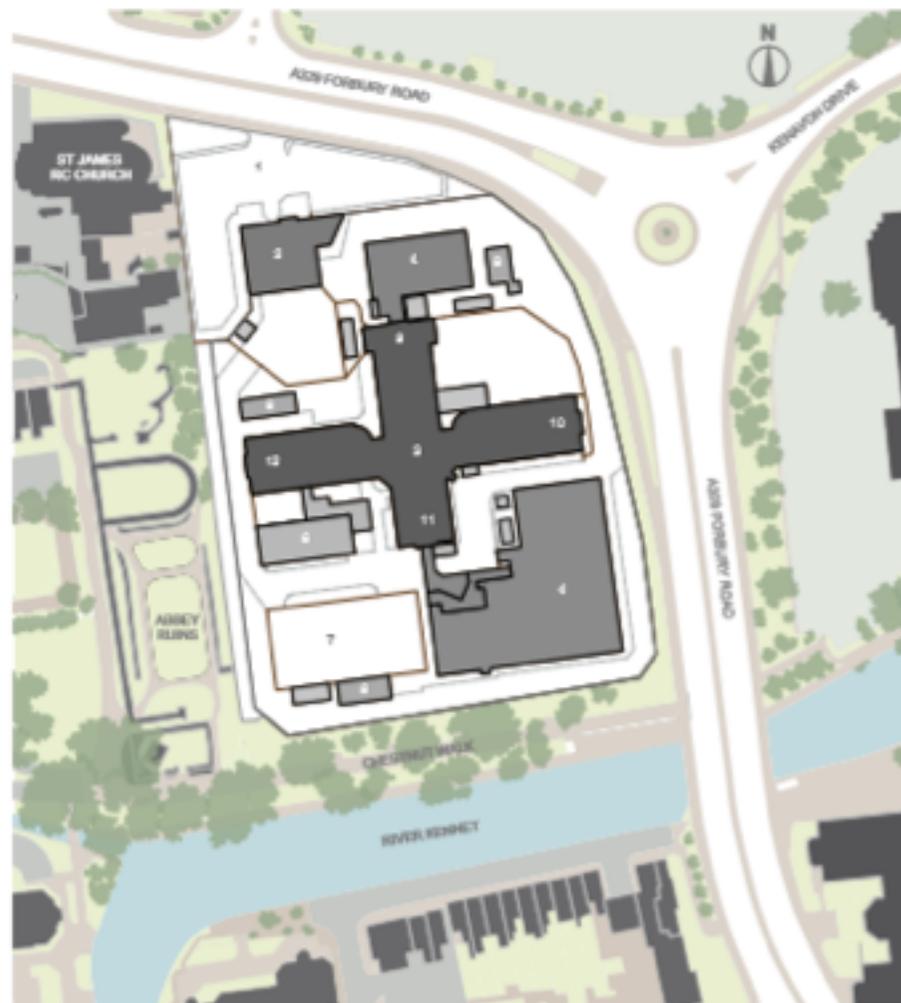
Main building

The main historic prison building comprises of 4 wings:

- D Wing (North)
- A Wing (East)
- B Wing (South)
- C Wing (West)

Key

1. Parking forecourt
2. Gate House
3. Main prison building
4. Administration building
5. Amenities building
6. Workshop and Gym
7. Games pitch
8. Temporary buildings
9. D wing
10. A wing
11. B wing
12. C wing



BACKGROUND

Prison listing

Historic England official listing extract:

The main prison building consists of a predominantly brick building the cruciform shaped plan in a Tudor Gothic style.

It was designed by William Boynton and George Gilbert Scott and completed in 1844.

Summary

County gaol, 1842-4 by George Gilbert Scott and William Boynton Moffatt, altered c.1970. Certain buildings and parts of the buildings are excluded from the Listing, as is made clear in the List entry.

Reasons for Designation

The main building at Reading Gaol, of 1842-4 by George Gilbert Scott and William Boynton Moffatt, is listed at Grade II for the following principal reasons:

Individual cells, which was designed to implement the 'separate system' of solitary confinement and regular surveillance, introduced in Britain under the 1839 Prisons Act and pioneered ten years earlier at the Eastern State Penitentiary in Philadelphia, USA. This type would become ubiquitous during the course of the C19, with some twenty radial-plan prisons built in England during the period 1839-77.

The building contract was initially given to John Jay of London, but his company went bankrupt three months after construction began in August 1842, and the work was completed by Messrs George and William Baker.

The new gaol, with cells for 250 men and women and a debtors' ward, was ready for occupation in July 1844, by which time the need for additional cells, a separate laundry block and the rebuilding of the old perimeter wall had driven the final cost up from an initial estimate of £24,000 to an eventual total of more than £40,000.

Reading continued as the County Gaol for the next 70 years. Its most famous inmate was Oscar Wilde, who served the latter part of his sentence there between November 1895 and May 1897; he described his experience in 'De Profundis', written during his imprisonment.

Reading Gaol was immortalised in Wilde's epic poem 'The Ballad of Reading Gaol', first published in 1898.

The poem was a critique of the Victorian prison system, and describes the execution of one of his fellow inmates. It was initially published under the name C.3.3, Wilde's prison number. Wilde had been imprisoned in 1895 for 'acts of gross indecency with other male persons' and served two years with hard labour.

Wilde was convicted under the Section 11 of the Criminal Law Amendment Act, known as the Labouchere Amendment (1885), which criminalised all sexual acts between men. It was part-repealed in 1967 by the Sexual Offences Act, which partially

The building is Grade 2 listed.

Architectural interest: an impressive, fortress-like design that represents an early work by one of England's foremost C19 architects;
Planning interest: a pioneering English example of a radial-plan prison built for the newly- introduced 'separate system' of constant surveillance and solitary confinement;

Historic interest: strongly associated with the imprisonment of Oscar Wilde, who spent eighteen months of his two-year sentence there and later immortalised the institution in 'The Ballad of Reading Gaol'.

History

Reading Gaol stands adjacent to the town centre, on a plot of riverside land once occupied by the cloister and burial ground of Reading Abbey. The original County Gaol was in Castle Street, but moved to a new building on the present site in 1786. By the 1840s this had become overcrowded and dilapidated, and in 1842 a design competition was held for a new prison, which was to house 200 criminals and 20 debtors, with space for 100 additional cells and a court house. The winning design by George Gilbert Scott and William Bonython Moffatt was based on the then recently- completed New Model Prison at Pentonville in London. Its plan comprised a central hub and a series of radiating wings

The prison is located within the Scheduled Area of the abbey precinct - this extends across the whole prison site, Church, Ruins and Forbury Gardens.

The future redevelopment of the prison site will have an impact on heritage assets within its setting.

The prison is surrounded by a number of heritage assets:

Scheduled Monument • Reading Abbey precinct.

Registered Park and Garden • Forbury Gardens.

Listed Grade I • Reading Abbey ruin.

Listed Grade II* • Archway between Forbury Gardens and the Abbey ruins.

Listed Grade II • Church of St. James • St James's Presbytery • St James's Roman Catholic School • Wall between Forbury Road and Abbot's Walk • Shelter in Forbury Gardens • Tracery fragments south of no.10 Abbot's Walk • Anglican Cross, Forbury Gardens, 1909 • Abbey Gate, The Forbury • Assizes Court • 10,11 and 12, Abbot's Walk • The Plummery Wall.

Theatre and Arts Reading CIC (TAR)

In May 2013 a group of interested parties from Reading's arts and business communities met to discuss the need for performance and exhibition space in the centre of Reading.

From this initial meeting an Executive was formed - The Theatre and Arts Reading CIC (TAR) - to find a suitable location for a new Theatre and Arts venue in Reading, establish the capacity, use and viability of a new venue and to secure funding to enable the project to develop.

The Executive has been seeking a unique site of both local and national significance, with easy access to public transport and car parking, a key destination for residents and visitors to Reading.

TAR have held regular meetings with Reading Borough Council and they are fully supportive of the work of TAR and purchase of Reading Gaol for cultural and community use.

When it was announced in 2013 that the prison was closing and would be put on the market, Reading Borough Council went out to consultation on the Reading Gaol Outline Planning Brief which was approved by RBC Policy Committee in 2014.

The Reading Culture and Heritage Strategy 2015-2030 has this as its vision: "By 2030, Reading will be recognised as a centre of creativity with a reputation for cultural and heritage excellence at a regional, national and international level with increased engagement across the town."

The TAR Forum of more than local organisations/individuals are kept informed of progress and meet annually to discuss and inform the TAR vision.

In 2019 TAR set up a trust The Reading Gaol Arts, Museum and Theatre Company to bid for Reading Gaol and if successful in purchasing the site to oversee the development and running of the site. Reading Borough Council will be represented on the Trust.

More information at www.theatrereading.co.uk

The Reading Gaol Arts, Museum and Theatre Company

Currently with Charities Commission and prepare by BDB Pitmans.

The Charity's objects are restricted specifically to the following:

4.1 to advance the education of the public in the historical, cultural, architectural and archaeological heritage of the site of Reading Gaol in particular by the preservation and enhancement of the buildings on the site;

4.2 to advance the arts, culture and heritage for the benefit of the public generally, in the fields of drama, creative dance, movement, music and other charitable cultural activities for the benefit of all ages, including (but not limited to) those who require help with mobility, communication, behaviour or self-help skills or with social development ;

4.3 to promote for the benefit of the public generally, and particularly those living and working in Reading and the surrounding area, the provision of facilities and activities for recreation or other leisure time occupation of individuals who have need of such facilities by reason of their youth, age, ability, infirmity or disablement, financial hardship or social and economic circumstances or for the public at large; 4.4 to promote community cohesion in Reading and the surrounding area by the provision of facilities to bring together those working in the creative and technical sectors with those involved in academic research and from other walks of life with the object of improving the local environment; and

4.5 to promote such other exclusively charitable objects and purposes as the Directors may in their discretion think fit.

Timeline - 2019

July - TAR Chairman Melvin Benn and Hilary Scott (Executive Secretary) met with Robert Buckland MP (Minister of State for Justice), Alok Sharma MP (Reading West) and officials from the MOJ

- TAR working on submission bid brochure and financial summary

August - Finalisation of the bid brochure

September - MOJ puts site on the market

TAR - Latest Vision for Reading Gaol

1. Theatre

a) Studio Theatre/ Arts Cinema - Use as a cinema Sunday/Monday/Tuesday

Capacity around 150/200

Main Stage footprint - 100.00

General/foyer circulation area - 200 people

Box Office retail space /shared with museum

Public toilets

Dressing rooms

Backroom office/FOH space

Rehearsal space also for educational/community uses including visual arts, dance, classes, workshops, yoga

Storage Area - props staging etc

b) Theatre/Arts Cinema - Use as a cinema Sunday/Monday/Tuesday

Capacity around 350/450

General/foyer circulation area - 350/450 people

Box Office retail space /shared with museum

Public toilets

Dressing rooms

Backroom office/FOH space

Rehearsal space also for educational/community uses including visual arts, dance, classes, workshops, yoga

Storage Area - props staging etc

2. Oscar Wilde experience/museum/shop

Consider the use of Oscar's Cell/wing

History of prison life from 18th century onwards

Possible Escape Room

Explore use of sensory area

Gift shop selling Oscar Wilde-related merchandise, educational merchandise, Reading Abbey merchandise, artworks and sculpture/
with box office

3. Contemporary Art Gallery/Space

Gallery to receive contemporary art work from local/national and international collections

4. Digital/innovation hub/startups

Central digital/innovation hub in Reading

5. Cafe/bar/restaurant

F&B offer both in the Cruciform and in grounds

6. Maker Space

Maker space as home for studio boutiques for artists, designers and craftspeople to produce and sell unique work could include jewellery, ceramics, photography, furniture and graphics.

This area could also include 'makerspace' as a collaborative work space, for making, learning, exploring and sharing that uses high tech to no tech tools. The spaces would be open to kids, adults, as well as entrepreneurs and have a variety of facilities.

7. Use of outdoor space - Prison Grounds

Seasonal markets

Performance

Visual Arts (sculpture trail)

F&B offer

Shows/exhibitions

Display any interesting archaeological finds from the excavations and to combine with innovative digital interpretation.

Weddings

8. Hotel/Residential/F&B

Hotel around 60 bedrooms

Longer term residential - apartments (Air B&B model)

9. Integration with Reading Abbey Heritage Quarter and Kennet & Avon Canal.

Links with Town Hall/Reading Museum/Forbury Gardens/Abbey Ruins/Kennet and Avon Canal/Oscar Wilde Walk

Community Worth

Educational value for schools, college and universities; LGBT centre of excellence; a facility responsive to pressing social and environmental issues such as population, sustainability and social justice; tourism benefits to whole town leading to economic gains; retail space for local artists; job creation; community space; community learning facilities; heritage education; digital hub; archaeological centre; enhancement of Abbey Quarter;

Images and gaol background information from Foster Wilson Architect Study 2019

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