

Reading West Station receives planning permission

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Plans have been approved for Reading West Station by the Borough Council with the one-year project potentially starting as early as March this year.

Last month updated plans were revealed following discussions between Reading Borough Council, Great Western Railway and its architects, and Network Rail.

These designs showed a brand new station building with a distinctive brick and glass exterior. The footpath immediately in front of the new station building has also been widened to make access easier for both passengers using the station, and for pedestrians walking past.

New ticket gates at both the Tilehurst Road and Oxford Road entrances will mean access to the station is limited to paying passengers only, which is not currently the case. New lighting, CCTV, toilets, a retail facility and better waiting areas, will all combine to significantly improve safety and security at Reading West, which continues to suffer from anti-social behaviour.

Outside the station, an improved bus interchange will make it easier for commuters to easily swap from

bus to train, with additional cycle parking also in place. The plans also include improvements to the Tilehurst Road entrance.

Speaking before the planning meeting, Tony Page, Reading Borough Council's Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport, said: "The latest designs for Reading West Station are a huge improvement on the previous draft designs.

"We now have a proposed station building, constructed from a range of coloured bricks and glass, much more in keeping with the surrounding Oxford Road and the nearby Conservation Area.

"By marginally moving a bus stop and kerb lines on both sides of the road, the footpath directly in front of the station has been widened, addressing concerns expressed about access into and in front of the station. The pavement will be three metres wide outside the cafe booth.

"Local residents and regular passengers will be all too familiar with the anti-social behaviour at the station over many years, caused in part by decades of under-investment, concealed entrances and limited waiting and ticket facilities. Improved safety and security forms key element of this proposal, with new tickets barriers, lighting and CCTV, as well as new facilities outside the station to make it easier to swap from bus or bike to train."

Reading West Station sits just off the busy Oxford Road and is on the Reading to Basingstoke and Reading to Newbury line. The project aims to attract even more commuters to the rail network, which is an important element of Reading Borough Council's new Local Transport Plan to 2036, and its ambitions to become a net zero carbon town by 2030.

While proposals include 'futureproofing' the new station building for the installation of lifts at Reading West, Network Rail has advised the Council that this would involve rebuilding the train platforms, which makes the costs prohibitive for them at this time.

Councillor Page added: "While there is no doubt that this scheme is a huge upgrade, it is important to say these improvements are just the first stage of delivering a wider masterplan for Reading West Station.

"It has been a long term ambition of Reading Borough Council for lifts to be installed at Reading West. However we are informed by Network Rail that the bulk of the cost for this work comes with rebuilding the train platforms to accommodate the new lifts, rather than the lifts themselves. Unfortunately, these works have not been prioritised for funding at this time.

"We are, of course, pleased to see the station building design 'futureproofed' for the installation of these lifts. We shall continue to lobby Government, our local MPs and Network Rail for the funding to deliver new platforms and lifts so as to make Reading West a totally accessible station fit for the 21st century."

Photo credit: Reading Borough Council