

UCEM - The Big Debate: Reading Prison competition

Hannah Peck: Hi everybody and welcome to The Big Debate: Reading Prison. Today I have with me four UCEM tutors who are ready to bring their ideas to the table. If you haven't been following our social media channels then just to get you up-to-date: we've been running a competition for the past few weeks with local schools in Berkshire where pupils have been submitting their ideas of what they would do with the well-known Reading Prison site if they had a chance.

For a bit of background: The building shut down in 2013 as part of the government's jail modernisation programme. Ever since then it's been a site that no one can quite agree what to do with. Central to the site is a grade two listed historic prison building arranged over part basement, ground and three upper floors. It also has an administrative building, amenities building, gym / workshop and a number of more modern buildings.

We've shortlisted the best four entries from pupils so now it's over to our tutors. Each tutor has been given an idea and it is now their chance to sell it to you, the listeners. They will each have a strict 5 minutes to pitch the idea and then we'll open the floor for questions. At the end of this podcast we will be asking you to vote on your favourite entry.

So, without further ado let me give you an introduction to our first tutor. James Ritson is the programme leader for our undergraduate and postgraduate building surveying programmes. He's an architecturally trained building conservator specialising in sustainability and recording of the historic built environment.

James, the floor is yours. Can you please introduce the pupil and school that you are representing and their idea? You have 5 minutes.

James Ritson: Thank you very much. Ok, I'm representing Aaron from Waingels School in Reading. The idea that's being presented is that the Reading prison should be turned into a community boarding school. The idea is that the cells could be transformed into bedrooms, or the spaces could be created into learning centers in classrooms. The existing football pitch could be used for PE lessons, and other spaces be created from the building such as using the walls for teaching climbing, which I particularly liked the idea of learning how to climb to get out of a prison.

The existing buildings could be joined with new walkways so the students can see the other students learning and feel inspired by what they're doing. The pool could be added and built onto the grounds so the students can learn to swim. This is particularly important as many people in the area can't afford the expensive lessons.

The idea of the school as a boarding house is that it will have little or no fees to attend. By making the school free, every child gets the equal opportunities, no matter how much money they have or whatever their background. This would allow all these students to have a chance of a better education and feel more valued and have more fun doing the things that they want.

This would also mean that the children would not have as many problems and not feel left out from society. They'd be able to develop and succeed to their full potential. The boarding

aspect helps the students to get to know each other and bond, hopefully building lifelong friendships.

I love the idea of turning a building that was once built for punishment and rehabilitation into a place for learning and enhancement. The idea of a community building school to give all students, regardless of their background, a chance for an immersive learning and living environment to help them reach their full potential really touched me as someone who is involved in education.

There are so many parents now doing key roles working outside normal hours. Childcare and family can be a real challenge. The idea that anyone will be able to have a choice of different types of educational opportunities, such as boarding schools, is such a great potential for the site. To paraphrase Oscar Wilde, who was a former prisoner of the site, a community boarding school could be a place to 'be yourself, look at the stars and be a place to live and learn'. Thank you very much.

Hannah: Thank you very much, James. I'm now going to hand over to the other three tutors and see if they have any questions. Natasha, have you got any questions for James?

Natasha: Do you think that it's feasible to put a walkway in given that pre-planning says that it needs to fit in with the Abbey quarter? How could we make that happen?

James: Well, actually within an abbey you would have walkways. Cloisters were part of the religious experience. Now I'm getting onto my history background. To be able to transport yourself and to communicate is I think a really strong way of doing it. I just liked the idea that taking something that was seen as hostile and doing something so random is beautiful. I think it's a really nice way of looking at it. And I think the walkway idea to be able to experience what everyone else is doing, just shows that the idea of this project has been an equal opportunity. And that's what I like about the idea.

Hannah: Thank you. David, do you have any questions for James?

David: Yeah, that's just really interesting. The proposal is very strong in terms of the cultural, historic aspects of the building. And it is a very centrally located building relative to the town center of Reading so I think the proposal is very strong in that regard.

I'm looking at this purely wearing a developer's hat and I'm looking at the commercial aspects of the building beyond just the, the historic and cultural aspects to it. And it's fascinating to see how the Banksy mural has suddenly appeared. There's a commerciality to that is probably a headache for the owners of that building at the moment. There's a poor security guard who now has to stand outside everyday. The best way to protect the future of this building given its unique nature is to set it up in such a way that yes, it respects the history and the culture, but also generates money at least to, to choose the developer's expression, wash its own face.

James: Well I did have a look at the panel and I did realize I was slightly outgunned economics wise so I'll hit you head on with some stuff. If you put a thousand pounds worth of investment into education at the age of 10, it's worth a hundred thousand by the age of 20. And if we're asking people now to invest in social and economic and sustainability as part of their investments, then what better way of giving the people who may be the most disadvantaged on giving them the most advantage?

So, if we think that yes, it is economically costly to run it, the long-term benefit of input, including sport and education, to the economy would be graded. And I would actually argue

that we are already seeing now, through investment criteria, that people are asking to invest in environmental schemes as part of economic development models It's environmental and social sustainability that loans and investments are being judged against. I can't think of a better way of turning a place that was perceivably set to turn as a punishment place into a place of opportunity. And I think that from an investment from would be the way to argue. I think that's as much as a podcast needs unless we want to start getting detailed with spreadsheets.

Hannah: Jan, do you have anything to add before we move on? I'd love to let you all talk for ages, but in the interest of time we need to keep it short.

Jan: It is obviously the financial side that I immediately picked up on as well. Sorry about that. Building on David's point, did your proposal have any ideas about what to do with the rest of the site? You mentioned the existing building, but did you think about what you were going to do with the rest of the site or is that just going to be left as it is?

James: Well, I think the rest of the site is being split between the Abbey and the rest of the development. I think that in a time when we are seeing schools, having their land reduced and their land taken away I think there is a real opportunity to see what the benefits of doing the opposite of that are.

We haven't gone into that kind of granular detail and decided what each building would be and so forth but I think there is an opportunity to see what can be done. What I would like to see is what they do in Germany where the schools don't close and stop but are used in the evenings by other groups, they are used by the rest of the community over the weekend. Particularly if it's a boarding school, you can imagine these things being totally integrated within that. And the school becomes part of the community, not a separate entity that closes at three in the afternoon and then the gates are locked. I think that could be an interesting way to see how the site could be seen as part of the community rather than just the school.

Hannah: Thank you very much, James. I feel like we're off to a very strong start. Next up we have Natasha Collins. Natasha is the module leader for the UCEM property management modules and has specialized in property management since 2010. Natasha also runs her own surveying firm, NC real estate, which specializes in asset management and property investment strategies. So, Natasha, over to you for your pitch.

Natasha: Thank you. So, today I'm representing Elliot from the Downs School and he has a fantastic idea. When I started looking at the prison, this was kind of the way that I was going with it in the first place. So, the whole idea for this development proposal is to turn it into a place to help locals with addiction and homelessness. There are around 600 homeless people in Reading, according to Shelter. And this will have increased during COVID, but we don't quite know how many that is. During the pandemic, the council were paying for full-time accommodation 260 people which roughly was costing £50-£100 per night. So, the first thing we can take away from that is the fact that the council are currently running schemes to support homelessness and making sure that homeless people are housed. On top of that, Reading Council and St Mungos have just started work on their pod homes. They have 40 in the Cattle Market and they're spending roughly £2 million on that. Of course that's 40 people versus 600 really isn't enough. So, what we're looking to do in accordance with the pre-planning that we already had a look at to see what we needed to put on the site is that we are going to keep the building as it is. I know that when it went through pre-planning they asked that we should be replacing the existing property with something of better quality that will enhance the area. We actually feel that that would be far too expensive and that we

would like to keep the building as it is. Instead, we are just going to take the prison elements, and we are going to make sure that each of the cell blocks is turned into bedrooms. We're going to have cold turkey rooms for people who just literally want to be able to go somewhere where it's safe and calm and they're not exposed to drugs and alcohol. We're going to put it in a library which will be great for learning and academic resources for the local homeless population who can use that if they want to up-skill as well as it being open to the wider community on a membership basis. We're going to provide internet for facilities and add in relaxing rooms. And then importantly is the fact that the site is also going to be a rehabilitation site so we will have on-site kitchens, where we can give jobs to homeless people. Then, through the kitchens, they are going to supply baked goods and food for the local market stores that we're going to be having on a weekend. So, in line with the pre-planning advice that we got, we need to be putting a cultural or heritage element into the site. We're going to open up to markets at weekends. We're going to invite the local community down. We want to open up the site so have sports fields and markets - come on down and use the area. There's 3.49 acres of site and we want to make sure that the local community can use it. We feel that the building is of nice enough condition to just keep it as it is. In terms of making money from this site, we're going to work with the local council because they've currently got funding to put this in place. We're also going to work with local charities. And if they would like to add more of their pods onto our site, or maybe not even pods, maybe they could rent out some of the cell blocks that we're doing up. That's where we would get an income from. As a backup and something that we are researching at the moment, under Matt Hancock's health infrastructure plan back from the 30th of September, 2019 the Royal Berkshire NHS foundation trust has been given money to expand its hospitals. As part of that, we're looking at working with them and potentially selling off part of the site to them so that we can provide facilities for the NHS to expand. There's going to be ample amount of car parking here. It's really accessible, very close to the train station so that we feel if we can get all of these local community projects funding from the local council funding from the NHS, we would be able to afford this development.

Hannah: Great. Thank you, Natasha. Right. Jan, can we start with your first question?

Jan: Natasha I have some experience of this in my local area, actually. And I just wondered if you'd thought about the impact on the wider community and how you might deal with it. In my area there has been some hostility in the local community about having this close to their homes.

Natasha: We want to work with the local community and we want to show them how beneficial it is to have the local homeless population integrated and helped and supported rather than just being out on the streets. Instead we would like to introduce the community and say 'hey look, these are people too'. You know, they're really supporting the community by learning, by being a part of these events that we're putting on at weekends. We think if we speak to the community and the local residents and really involve them in what we're doing, that's going to really help our case.

Hannah: Thanks, Natasha. David, any questions?

David: Yeah. May just begin by saying naturally my mine is the best proposal, so I don't want to slate everybody. So let me just begin by saying that I'm warning you now.

I think it's a lovely proposal in terms of its community focus. There were a couple of things that struck me about it. It seems heavily reliant on local or government funding in one shape or another, whereas I'm interested in the building protecting its future. I think the only way we

can protect its future long-term is to ensure that it, using that expression again, washes its face, it has a commercial backbone to it. My biggest worry is that it's dependent on funding, government funding, and we all know how the political landscape is ever shifting. So currently there may be funding to set this thing up, but long-term, I would question whether the funding would continue to be there in one shape or another.

Local councillors would want it to be self-funding. The question is, would this be self-funding initiative long-term?

Natasha: There's a lot of demand for social housing at the moment and this falls under a social housing scheme, and there is a lot of finance out there from traditional mortgages or lenders for social housing schemes. So the way that we're going to do it is we would buy this site on development finance. We would do the development working in partnership with the local council, because we do understand that they have a focus on this and working with them will mean that we managed to get it through planning a lot easier. We want to make sure that we are fulfilling what they have asked us to do. And from there, we would put it on a longer-term commercial mortgage, which was supported by a social housing income. We would be getting rental income from our partners, whoever was paying to house the homeless people within the area. We would be looking to do it through a supported housing model of generating revenue, which is pretty popular at the moment, based upon the amount of revenue that's gone around to do that. They tend to take five-to-10-year leases as well and so we would look to be putting in place as long as lease as we could, probably fixing the rents, because we don't want to be generating huge amounts of income, but we also need to, as you say, wash our faces. So that would be the way in which we're going to do it.

Hannah: Thank you, Natasha. David, you said you had another question. Can you make it with in ten seconds?

David: I'll try. Just quickly on the location. What Natasha is suggesting to me, sounds like a hybrid financing package that would relate to what is a very secondary location type property. Immediately on the prisons doorstep is a brand-new development of housing. The local neighbourhood is changing radically. This is not going to sit well with them. I think you'll get a lot of local opposition.

Natasha: Oh, I agree. But what's better than putting people in a place where they can aspire to be.

Hannah: Nice, strong point. James, anything to add?

James: How do, how would your scheme be related to people who are on the border of homelessness because of financial difficulties, particularly with things like COVID, lack of work and, and so forth. You've mentioned fixed rents and in terms that I, quite frankly, have no idea what you were talking about. But rents are increasing rapidly and so forth. How does your proposal address though two very different elements of homelessness from the medical drug addiction and so forth to the ones who are financially facing eviction and homelessness. Where do you see those two? Because they end up with the same net results, not having a roof over your head, so to speak, but can come from very different circumstances and may need very different requirements.

Natasha: Exactly. We completely agree. That is why we want to leave the block structure as it is. And we're going to be looking at looking at partnering with different organizations who work with different types of homeless and different challenges. We can separate up through blocks as well. We want to have one designated space where all local providers can

come to us and take part of the space. It's really separated so they can take that they can integrate with each other if they would like. We're just going to be the facilitators where the developers, where the site owners, we're inviting all the local charities government to get involved with us. Let's have that discussion.

Hannah: Thank you, Natasha. Well, next up we have Dr. Jan Wilcox. Jan worked in asset management for 20 years before moving into education. She now teaches both property and general management for UCEM and the University of Suffolk. And as an examiner for the Institute of residential property management, she's also the co-author of property, asset management and her next book, real estate.

The basics is due to be published early next year. Hi, John. Um, would you please tell us your idea?

Jan: I would love to but it's not my idea. I have to give the credit to Rachel who's 12 years old and goes to school at The Wren. Now Rachel has identified the best use for Reading prison is being a multi space youth center that will, in her words, be better than any before.

She says currently we have hardly any youth centers in Reading. This is increasing the amount of children and youth hanging around parks. This has also made the level of violence, drug use and gangs rise. Many kids in Reading struggle at home for many different reasons, whether it's family arguments or abusive parents, this causes them to spend all of their out of school time on the streets. The youth center would be a place for these kids to come and hang out with other kids whilst there would be adults who would be there for them to talk to if they are struggling or worried.

She then goes on to identify the facilities that her use center will offer. These include a basketball court, a games room, keeping the football pitch but putting a platform in there so it could be used for live music, a chill out room with bean bags, sofas and chairs, a counseling area for children who are struggling with home life or mental health issues, some classrooms to support and help children who've been excluded from school or have disabilities, a sensory room, a quiet room, an arts and craft room, a music room, a drama room, a movie theatre, a kitchen where chefs would teach children to cook and bake, a café and finally, a massive graffiti wall on the inside of the Banksy painting. Now as a nod to the culture and the background of the prison, those rooms would be called things like the Wilde room, the Wooldridge room, the Dire room, the Joshua room (even though he only did two weeks).

Rachel also suggested that some income could be obtained from renting facilities out to toddler groups and perhaps elderly and other community groups, therefore offering facilities for all ages, albeit underpinned by the center. This is a really exciting vision for the former prison, but it also addresses some wider societal issues such as obesity, loneliness, and poor mental health, but ideas like this cost money.

There's apparently been a lot of interest in putting residential on the prison site to maximize value, which is unsurprising as house prices in Reading apparently have risen by nearly 16% over the past year. We accept that there's room for additional development on the site, but do not think it should be residential unless perhaps it's sheltered accommodation targeted at disabled youth who are unable to live alone. We think there's another way of capturing the value of residential development without ruining this impressive site. As working patterns have changed dramatically due to the pandemic, we think Reading Borough Council should revisit their accommodation strategy.

They should be able to manage with considerably less office space due to hybrid working. They could then perhaps consider relocating all, or part of their existing operation to Reading

prison, which is a mere 15-minute walk from their current offices in Bridge Street. This would then release all or part of their, not particularly attractive in my view, Bridge Street premises which could be converted to residential use under permitted development rights.

This would provide a significant sum of money that would help to fund the multi-space youth center. The other financial benefits of Rachel's idea, the youth center could form a hub at the center of the community sharing facilities with other age groups and encouraging the mixing of generations with this interaction leading to increased intergenerational understanding.

Examples might include the toddler group playing with the elderly, the elderly teaching basic skills, such as sewing and cooking, and the youths encouraging the elderly to take an active part in sport. This has been carried out in various other locations in the UK with great success. With the proximity of Reading Borough Council's new offices to the youth center, they should be able to work together to further develop the facilities and expand them to provide, for example, employment opportunities. The office development at the prison could showcase the best in sympathetic and sustainable construction with the addition of a zero-carbon building. The residential development to the Bridge Street offices could also be used as an exemplar of sustainable development that could be followed throughout the region. In summary, Rachel's multi space youth center will form the heart of the community hub for Reading that is built around it. Sharing the site with Reading Borough Council offices will make it possible to offer the community both leisure facilities, and also the ability to carry out tasks such as dealing with council tax, housing enquiries, and registering births and deaths. Rachel's idea is a fantastic idea for this site. I'm sure you will all agree, and it's really important that we listen to her and hopefully get to know her and her friends at the multi space youth center as it's her generation that will be the decision-makers of tomorrow and they will, of course, also be dealing with the paying of our pensions.

Hannah: Love it. Thank you Jan. In interest of time, can I ask everyone for just one succinct question? David, go.

David: I'm just blown away that a 12 year old would put together such a fascinating proposal. I think it's incredible. And I think what's really at the heart of it is the suggestion that the council lead the way in terms of offloading their existing space, which would generate money to help fund the redevelopment of the prison. I think that's a brilliant. I'm struggling now to find a criticism. It is a very good scheme. I think it's innovative, original and, given the unique nature of this building, it needs that sort of thinking. And Natasha was very from a finance point of view was very innovative.

Hannah: I was going to say that David's stumped for words, but he's not quite, he just can't think of a question. James?

James: My lack of knowledge on real estate investment makes Jan's new book sound very tempting for me. I like the idea of a site that was once used for such negative connotations being then used for something so positive. One question, how would this be set within the wider site, as in, within the historic environments and so forth, where you may stereotypically see a possible conflict of use between those two quite difficult sites, granted divided by what is a potentially lethal and busy road, but, how would you see those, those potential sites having?

Jan: I think this is really a bit beyond me, James, because I don't have the familiarity with Reading that the rest of you do. But I think the idea of getting the council involved early is that they have the expertise and the knowledge, and they would be involved from day one to provide advice on how best to move the prospective uses around the site.

So we'd be very much relying on their expertise with our firms. I will note that your students seems to have a better understanding of the permitted development rights than many of our first years. So a very good, very good entry on that front. So I think David might be eyeing your student for the real estate cost.

Natasha: How long do you see this development taking?

Jan: How long has the prison been vacant already?

Hannah: Since 2013.

Jan: It'll be quicker than eight years, I'm sure. What's another eight years between friends? It'd be less than that. No, I appreciate your points. It will take time. But the advantage of this proposal of Rachel's is because the funding will be coming, we can get it forward, funded against that and can get going and do it incrementally.

It doesn't have to be a big bang. Let's do the whole thing. Now it can grow organically as providing it's controlled. I think it's great. Yeah. Good. Yeah. Well,

Hannah: David, you are last up just to remind you that you have only five minutes for your bit.

David: I will keep it very short. My proposal is from Arhan from Reading School. It is something of a mix of what we've heard already. It is a very complex building. As an historic building it's not easy to come up with something that works. Arhan anchors this around a commercial model. I would suggest in that he looks at the history. He looks at the physical layout of the prison. The fact that there are different wings for a wing to be, uh, kind of a piece that looks at the history of, uh, the prison itself, uh, being wing.

Um, again also showcase the history of the president, uh, changing purpose over the year. If I'm an all-purpose jail, too young offenders, the seeming then where wild was held could be dedicated to prisoners who are incarcerated. There is section a section of cells would then be, uh, uh, be brought to the end.

If I understand Arhan's proposal correctly, it talks about essentially a hotel type scenario so that people could stay in that cell. So there has that sort of commercial aspect to it by having effectively a hotel, which is very central to Reading.

I know personally hotel rates in Reading are extremely high so there is a real commercial opportunity to create a hotel type operation out of the building. It's broken up all the different wings into different amenities. The D Wing would have amenities which are along the lines of what Jan has proposed previously, so one wing would have the historical aspect and cultural aspects covered. Another wing would be focused on the hotel and then the final would be to serve the community.

I think it's a very well-rounded proposal. And it's not dependent on just one use. I think ultimately the revenues generated from the hotel could correctly be put together to underpin the other aspects to the development and protect it. So given that the immediate location is beside the train station is becoming very attractive.

I think this is a more a simpler type model of development. It's simple, it's clean, it's appropriate for the location and it's not dependent on trying to get it through the local councils. I think one thing that did strike me about John's proposal that if there is a sort of a chink in the armor on that one is it is a big ambitious project for the council.

No criticism meant but I haven't seen that much evidence of this council being that proactive in terms of taking on something like this. So I think it could fall on that. Whereas this one, this proposal that Aaron has come up with, I think it was a self-contained simple proposal and it's approach for the building.

Hannah: Thank you, David. Natasha would you like to go first?

Natasha: Sounds like a really interesting development. It sounds like you're very much doing it for the money side of things, rather than the local cultural history side of things. If you are looking at attracting a hotel, would that mean that you are simply going to take it back to shell condition and then send them on to a hotel and let them fit out? Or are you going to work with the hotel? How do you see your development firm retaining its cultural and historic standing goals?

David: I think it would be essential that we retain history. I think actually, depending on the hotel model that we go down, whether it's in partnership or we just sell off that section, it's all up for debate. But if we assume for a moment that it's important to have a hotel operator, I think they would want to really play up the whole association history as an attraction in itself and not see it as a negative. Um, so I don't see that as being on the face for the pompom. Whether that would mean stripping it back, there would probably be some practicalities because it's an old building but you'd want to protect the fabric. I know James would be on my back if I started ripping up the house. I don't think that anyone wants that, you just wouldn't be allowed to do that. Ultimately I think a hotel operator will want to play up what this building is. It's all unique.

Hannah: Let's go to James then on that.

James: I don't personally know if I would like to pay money to spend the night inside a prison. I certainly had dubious moments in my past where I might've been able to do that for free. However, one of the things that you said about adding a community element to it, to one of the wings, how would you show from a commercial point of view that community element to being up here? Rather than it just being another facility to be sold off to you know, the next year membership or high expensive gym membership, establishment or something like that. How would you be aiming to preserve that genuinely as a community center? No, mainly it just boils down to the, if this has to be a standalone operation, there will be limitations in terms of how much profits can be allocated them to provide for a community for them services.

I think actually the whole community side to it, Rachel's proposal was far more detailed and gave a lot of ideas. What would be great to see in there? There's an element of, of partnering up at that stage on the community side to us, with local council, uh, and going into a joint funded operation there.

I think the strength of my proposal with the hotel is you have an operator in there. There's a whole section to that complex that is now commercially viable. There can be a shared arrangement with the local council in terms of providing for community services on the side.

There's a, um, over in Dublin in Smithfield. And I was, I don't know if anyone's been there. There's the old Jameson. And it's a classic case of that, where they can create a hotel there, a beautiful hotel inside the beautiful building, but then, uh, beside that, um, uh, community facilities that, uh, um, that were created in partnership with local authority.

So I think there is with this particular size, there will be a section to it that will have to be done in partnership with, um, with the local Arctic. But I don't James, I, sorry. I don't know. Specifics. Okay. Hey,

Hannah: Jan, you've got the last question of the podcast today.

Jan: Oh, the pressure. I used to live in Colchester and I used to go to adult education classes when I went back to learn French in this beautiful building. Then it was converted into a boutique hotel. The building looks wonderful but the problem is that I can only afford to go and eat there once a year because it's so expensive. It's immediately cut out a massive part of the community that loved the building but they can't afford to visit it. It concerns me that this could be the case with your hotel, that it's really only for those that can afford to pay. How would you deal with that?

David: It does come back to what people are willing to pay locally. There is a lot of competition amongst hotel operators in the pilot that nitrates are expensive and they are competitive. And so I don't really see it being this big boutique hotel type of operation. It will be more mainstream than that. Therefore, I think that the night rates will be a little bit more affordable than a boutique though. Reading doesn't have a market for it. If this was in Henley there would be a boutique hotel here now.

Hannah: Well, thank you all very much. I am now going to give you each 30 seconds for your closing statement. Why should the public vote for your idea? And we're going to go James first.

James: How fabulous would it be that no matter your background, the child has a choice of a type of education that could support a family that may have to work nights shifts and give them an opportunity, which was normally only for the very few in the country. I think it's a fantastic opportunity. What better way to celebrate the future, post pandemic than to provide those people with a fabulous chance of a future.

Natasha: I think that Elliot's proposal was the best proposal, because how incredible would it be to get a city down to zero homeless population? Everybody in the city has a home. We're welcoming to people who can come in. They give back to the local city, the community is joined together. That is what we're striving for. From our development, as well as helping other charities, the local NHS, the local council get involved in this building. We can support everybody who needs it, and that's why our development plan really should be the one that you vote for.

Jan: Rachel's multi space center is the obvious choice for this unique site. It not only provides several people with an alternative to hanging around and dodgy states, gang membership, and drug use that goes beyond that, forming a community hub to address some wider societal issues, not just the homelessness that Tasha has mentioned, but also wider issues - the obesity crisis, the loneliness epidemic, poor mental health amongst the young, the shortage of homes and the need for sustainable development.

Hannah: Thank you, Jan. David end us off with your closing statement,

David: Frankly we saved the best to last. What can I say? I have five points as to why mine is the best. Erin's proposal essentially protects the future fabric and use of the building complex. It's a very well-rounded proposal. It doesn't depend on one single year. It's very diverse in that sense. So it will appeal to several communities within Reading. It's self-

funding and I think self-funding in the truest sense and it's a simple funding model and it contributes to the local community. That's why I believe mine is great.

Hannah: I would love to have spent longer hearing about your opinions and ideas but the time has come to wrap up. Thank you so much to James, Natasha, Jan and David for appearing on this podcast. Now it's over to the listeners to vote on which idea you like best. You can do that by heading over to our competition webpage www.ucem.ac.uk/competition and voting in the poll. Voting closes at midday on the 17th of September and we will be announcing our winner shortly afterwards.

Thank you very much for listening everyone.