

To: Councillor Gavin (Chair)  
Councillors Davies, Cresswell, Ennis, Goss,  
Hornsby-Smith, Leng, Lovelock, Moore,  
Rowland, Tarar and Yeo

Direct ☎ : 0118 9372303

25 March 2025

Your contact is: **Simon Hill - Committee Services (simon.hill@reading.gov.uk)**

### NOTICE OF MEETING - PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE 2 APRIL 2025

A meeting of the Planning Applications Committee will be held on Wednesday, 2 April 2025 at 6.30 pm in the Council Chamber, Civic Offices, Bridge Street, Reading RG1 2LU. The Agenda for the meeting is set out below.

AGENDA	ACTION	WARDS AFFECTED	PAGE NO
1. MINUTES	-		9 - 12
2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST	-		
3. QUESTIONS	-		
4. POTENTIAL SITE VISITS FOR COMMITTEE ITEMS	Decision	BOROUGHWIDE	13 - 16
5. PLANNING APPEALS	Information	BOROUGHWIDE	17 - 18
6. LOCAL LISTING - CAVERSHAM ROAD FIRE STATION, INCLUDING A DETACHED HOUSE AND OUTBUILDINGS, AND EIGHT RESIDENTIAL PROPERTIES ON BARRY PLACE TO THE REAR	Decision	THAMES	19 - 30
7. LOCAL LISTING - 2 MILL GREEN	Decision	THAMES	31 - 40
8. LOCAL LISTING - HEMDEAN HOUSE SCHOOL AND LODGE	Decision	CAVERSHAM	41 - 58

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## **PLANNING APPLICATIONS TO BE CONSIDERED**

9. PL/24/0173/FUL - BROAD STREET MALL Decision ABBEY 59 - 126
- Proposal: Part-demolition of existing retail units, car park and service areas, demolition and rebuild of car park ramp, and construction of a residential-led, mixed-use development fronting Queens Walk and Dusseldorf Way, including all necessary enabling and alteration works required.
- Recommendation: Grant subject to legal agreement
10. PL/24/1501/FUL - 20-30 GREYFRIARS ROAD Decision ABBEY 127 - 186
- Proposal: Demolition of the existing building and the erection of a part-7, part-13 storey co-living building (Sui Generis) and associated communal amenity facilities, refuse storage, cycle parking and plant equipment.
- Recommendation: Grant subject to Legal Agreement
11. PL/25/0093/REG3 - 66 LYNDHURST ROAD Decision KENTWOOD 187 - 192
- Proposal: Single storey rear extension and renovation of existing dwelling (Part Retrospective).
- Recommendation: Grant subject to conditions
12. PL/25/0314/ADJ - SHINFIELD PARK Decision OUT OF BOROUGH 193 - 198
- Proposal: Full application for the proposed redevelopment of site for flexible employment use (Use Class E(g)(ii)-(iii)/B2/B8) together with servicing areas, parking, landscaping and other associated works, including demolition (adjacent authority consultation – Wokingham Borough Council)
- Recommendation: No objection

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## GUIDE TO PLANNING APPLICATIONS

1. There are many different types of applications processed by the Planning Service and the following codes are used to abbreviate the more common types of permission sought:

FUL - Full detailed planning permission for development or change of use  
OUT - Principal of developing a site or changing a use  
REM - Detailed matters “reserved matters” - for permission following approval of an outline planning application.  
HOU - Applications for works to domestic houses  
ADV - Advertisement consent  
APC - Approval of details required by planning conditions  
VAR - Significant change to a planning permission previously granted  
NMA - Insignificant change to a planning permission previously granted  
ADJ - Consultation from neighbouring authority on application in their area  
LBC - Works to or around a Listed Building  
CLE - A certificate to confirm what the existing use of a property is  
CLP - A certificate to confirm that a proposed use or development does not require planning permission to be applied for.  
REG3 - Indicates that the application has been submitted by the Local Authority.

2. Officer reports often refer to a matter or situation as being “a material consideration”. The following list tries to explain what these might include:

Material planning considerations can include (but are not limited to):

- Overlooking/loss of privacy
- Loss of daylight/sunlight or overshadowing
- Scale and dominance
- Layout and density of buildings
- Appearance and design of development and materials proposed
- Disabled persons' access
- Highway safety
- Traffic and parking issues
- Drainage and flood risk
- Noise, dust, fumes etc
- Impact on character or appearance of area
- Effect on listed buildings and conservation areas
- Effect on trees and wildlife/nature conservation
- Impact on the community and other services
- Economic impact and sustainability
- Government policy
- Proposals in the Local Plan
- Previous planning decisions (including appeal decisions)
- Archaeology

There are also concerns that regulations or case law has established cannot be taken into account. These include:

- Who the applicant is/the applicant's background
- Loss of views
- Loss of property value
- Loss of trade or increased competition
- Strength or volume of local opposition
- Construction noise/disturbance during development
- Fears of damage to property
- Maintenance of property
- Boundary disputes, covenants or other property rights
- Rights of way and ownerships disputes over rights of way
- Personal circumstances

## Glossary of usual terms

**Affordable housing** - Housing provided below market price to meet identified needs.

**Air Quality Management Area (AQMA)** - Area where air quality levels need to be managed.

**Apartment-hotel** - A use providing basic facilities for self-sufficient living with the amenities of a hotel. Generally classed as C1 (hotels) for planning purposes.

**Article 4 Direction** - A direction which can be made by the Council to remove normal permitted development rights.

**BREEAM** - A widely used means of reviewing and improving the environmental performance of generally commercial developments (industrial, retail etc).

**Brownfield Land** - previously developed land.

**Brown roof** - A roof surfaced with a broken substrate, e.g. broken bricks.

**Building line** - The general line along a street beyond which no buildings project.

**Bulky goods** - Large products requiring shopping trips to be made by car: e.g. DIY or furniture.

**CIL** - Community Infrastructure Levy. Local authorities in England and Wales levy a charge on new development to be spent on infrastructure to support the development of the area.

**Classified Highway Network** - The network of main roads, consisting of A, B and C roads.

**Conservation Area** - areas of special architectural or historic interest designated by the local authority. As designated heritage assets the preservation and enhancement of the area carries great weight in planning permission decisions.

**Control of Major Accident Hazards (COMAH) Competent Authority** - The Control of Major Accident Hazards Regulations 1999 (COMAH) and their amendments 2005, are the enforcing regulations within the United Kingdom. They are applicable to any establishment storing or otherwise handling large quantities of industrial chemicals of a hazardous nature. Types of establishments include chemical warehousing, chemical production facilities and some distributors.

**Dormer Window** - Located in the roof of a building, it projects or extends out through the roof, often providing space internally.

**Dwelling** - A single housing unit - a house, flat, maisonette etc.

**Evening Economy** A term for the business activities, particularly those used by the public, which take place in the evening such as pubs, clubs, restaurants and arts/cultural uses.

**Flood Risk Assessment** - A requirement at planning application stage to demonstrate how flood risk will be managed.

**Flood Zones** - The Environment Agency designates flood zones to reflect the differing risks of flooding. Flood Zone 1 is low probability, Flood Zone 2 is medium probability, Flood Zone 3a is high probability and Flood Zone 3b is functional floodplain.

**Granny annexe** - A self-contained area within a dwelling house/ the curtilage of a dwelling house but without all the facilities to be self contained and is therefore dependent on the main house for some functions. It will usually be occupied by a relative.

**Green roof** - A roof with vegetation on top of an impermeable membrane.

**Gross floor area** - Total floor area of the house, including all floors and garage, measured externally.

**Hazardous Substances Consent** - Consent required for the presence on, over, or under land of any hazardous substance in excess of controlled quantity.

**Historic Parks and Gardens** - Parks and gardens of special historic interest, designated by English Heritage.

**Housing Association** - An independent not-for-profit body that provides low-cost "affordable housing" to meet specific housing needs.

**Infrastructure** - The basic services and facilities needed for the smooth running of a community.

**Lifetime Home** - A home which is sufficiently adaptable to allow people to remain in the home despite changing circumstances such as age or disability.

**Listed building** - Buildings of special architectural or historic interest. Consent is required before works that might affect their character or appearance can be undertaken. They are divided into Grades I, II and II\*, with I being of exceptional interest.

**Local Plan** - The main planning document for a District or Borough.

**Luminance** - A measure of the luminous intensity of light, usually measured in candelas per square metre.

**Major Landscape Feature** - these are identified and protected in the Local Plan for being of local significance for their visual and amenity value

**Public realm** - the space between and within buildings that is publicly accessible, including streets, squares, forecourts, parks and open spaces whether publicly or privately owned.

**Scheduled Ancient Monument** - Specified nationally important archaeological sites.

**Section 106 agreement** - A legally binding agreement or obligation entered into by the local authority and a land developer over an issue related to a planning application, under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

**Sequential approach** A method of considering and ranking the suitability of sites for development, so that one type of site is considered before another. Different sequential approaches are applied to different uses.

**Sui Generis** - A use not specifically defined in the use classes order (2004) - planning permission is always needed to change from a sui generis use.

**Sustainable development** - Development to improve quality of life and protect the environment in balance with the local economy, for now and future generations.

**Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS)** - This term is taken to cover the whole range of sustainable approaches to surface water drainage management.

**Tree Preservation Order (TPO)** - An order made by a local planning authority in respect of trees and woodlands. The principal effect of a TPO is to prohibit the cutting down, uprooting, topping, lopping, wilful damage or wilful destruction of trees without the LPA's consent.

## Guide to changes to the Use Classes Order in England.

Changes of use within the same class are not development.

Use	Use Class up to 31 August 2020	Use Class from 1 September 2020
Shop - not more than 280sqm mostly selling essential goods, including food and at least 1km from another similar shop	A1	F.2
Shop	A1	E
Financial & professional services (not medical)	A2	E
Café or restaurant	A3	E
Pub, wine bar or drinking establishment	A4	Sui generis
Takeaway	A5	Sui generis
Office other than a use within Class A2	B1a	E
Research & development of products or processes	B1b	E
For any industrial process (which can be carried out in any residential area without causing detriment to the amenity of the area)	B1c	E
Industrial	B2	B2
Storage or distribution	B8	B8
Hotels, boarding & guest houses	C1	C1
Residential institutions	C2	C2
Secure residential institutions	C2a	C2a
Dwelling houses	C3	C3
Small house in multiple occupation 3-6 residents	C4	C4
Clinics, health centres, creches, day nurseries, day centre	D1	E
Schools, non-residential education & training centres, museums, public libraries, public halls, exhibition halls, places of worship, law courts	D1	F.1
Cinemas, theatres, concert halls, bingo halls and dance halls	D2	Sui generis
Gymnasiums, indoor recreations not involving motorised vehicles or firearms	D2	E
Hall or meeting place for the principal use of the local community	D2	F.2
Indoor or outdoor swimming baths, skating rinks, and outdoor sports or recreations not involving motorised vehicles or firearms	D2	F.2

**Present:** Councillor Gavin (Chair);

Councillors Davies (Vice-Chair), Cresswell, Ennis, Goss, Hornsby-Smith, Leng, Lovelock, Moore, Rowland, Tarar and Yeo

### RESOLVED ITEMS

#### 80. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 5 March 2025 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

#### 81. POTENTIAL SITE VISITS FOR COMMITTEE ITEMS

The Committee considered a report setting out a schedule of applications to be considered at future meetings of the Committee to enable Councillors to decide which sites, if any, they wished to visit prior to determining the relevant applications. The report also listed previously agreed site visits which were yet to take place.

#### Resolved -

That the following application be the subject of an unaccompanied site visit:

##### **PL/24/1501 – 20-30 Greyfriars Road**

Demolition of the existing building and the erection of a part-7, part-13 storey co-living building (Sui Generis) and associated communal amenity facilities, refuse storage, cycle parking and plant equipment.

#### 82. PLANNING APPEALS

The Committee received a report on notifications received from the Planning Inspectorate on planning appeals registered with them or decisions made and providing summary reports on appeal decisions of interest to the Committee.

Appendix 1 to the report set out details of three new appeals lodged since the last Committee. There were no appeals decided listed in Appendix 2 and no reports on appeal decisions in Appendix 3.

**Resolved –** That the new appeals, as set out in Appendix 1, be noted.

#### 83. **PL/24/1593 (FUL) - ST MARY'S HOUSE, 66-68 ST MARY'S BUTTS**

Change of use of first to third floors from office (Class E) to 31 serviced apartments (Class C1), erection of a fourth storey comprising 6 serviced apartments (Class C1) and various associated alterations.

## PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES - 5 MARCH 2025

The Committee considered a report on the above application. An update report was tabled at the meeting containing revised visualisations of the development, based on the latest proposals. Details of a representation regarding cycle storage and waste storage were reported at the meeting, that had come to light since the original report had been written, but it was reported that this had not raised any matters not already considered in the report.

Comments were received and considered.

### Resolved –

- (1) That the Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection Services be authorised to grant planning permission for application PL/24/1593, subject to the completion of a Section 106 legal agreement by 4 April 2025 (unless a later date be agreed by the Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection Services) to secure the Heads of Terms set out in the original report;
- (2) That the Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection Services be authorised to make such minor changes to the conditions, Heads of Terms and details of the legal agreement as may reasonably be required to issue the permission;
- (3) That, in the event of the requirements set out not being met, the Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection Services be authorised to refuse permission;
- (4) That planning permission be subject to the conditions and informatives as recommended in the original report, with an additional pre-occupation condition requiring a waste management strategy, including details of how the onsite management would provide facilities and encourage responsible waste practices by guests.

### 84. PL/24/1684 (FUL/REG3) - JOHN RABSON RECREATION GROUND NORTHUMBERLAND AVENUE

The formation of a new concrete skatepark facility, associated soft landscaping and ramped pedestrian access from the existing car park serving South Reading Leisure Centre (amended description).

The Committee considered a report on the above application.

Comments were received and considered.

### Resolved –

That, pursuant to Regulation 3 of the Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1992, planning permission for application PL/24/1684 (REG3/FUL) be authorised, subject to the conditions and informatives recommended in the report.

**85. PL/25/0160 (FUL/REG3) - 134 NORTHUMBERLAND AVENUE**

Authorisation to confirm use class to C2 (Residential institution) including Internal refurbishment and external landscape works.

The Committee considered a report on the above application.

Comments were received and considered.

**Resolved –**

That, pursuant to Regulation 3 of the Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1992, the carrying out of the development PL/25/0160 (FUL/REG3) be authorised, subject to the conditions and informatives recommended in the report.

**86. PL/25/0159 (FUL/REG3) - ALEXANDRA ROAD COMMUNITY DAY NURSERY, 35 ALEXANDRA ROAD**

Authorisation to confirm use class to C2 (Residential institution) including Internal refurbishment and external landscape works

The Committee considered a report on the above application.

Comments were received and considered.

**Resolved –**

That, pursuant to Regulation 3 of the Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1992, the carrying out of the development PL/25/0159 (FUL/REG3) be authorised, subject to the conditions and informatives recommended in the report and an additional condition to restrict the height of the decking in the rear garden to its current height.

(The meeting started at 6.30 pm and closed at 7.42 pm)

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## Planning Applications Committee 02 April 2025



**Reading**  
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<b>Title</b>	<b>POTENTIAL SITE VISITS FOR COMMITTEE ITEMS</b>
<b>Purpose of the report</b>	To make a decision
<b>Report status</b>	Public report
<b>Report author</b>	Julie Williams, Development Manager (Planning & Building Control)
<b>Lead Councillor</b>	Councillor Micky Leng, Lead Councillor for Planning and Assets
<b>Corporate priority</b>	Not applicable, but still requires a decision
<b>Recommendations</b>	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. note this report and any officer recommendations for site visits.</li> <li>2. confirm if there are other sites Councillors wish to visit before reaching a decision on an application.</li> <li>3. confirm if the site(s) agreed to be visited will be arranged and accompanied by officers or can be unaccompanied but with a briefing note provided by the case officer.</li> </ol>

### 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. To identify those sites where, due to the sensitive or important nature of the proposals, Councillors are advised that a Site Visit would be appropriate before the matter is presented at Committee and to confirm how the visit will be arranged. A list of potential sites is appended with a note added to say if recommended for a site visit or not.

### 2. The Proposal

- 2.1. A site visit helps if a proposed development and context is difficult to visualise from the plans and supporting material or to better understand concerns or questions raised by a proposal.
- 2.2. Appendix 1 of this report provides a list of, mainly major, applications recently received that may be presented to Committee for a decision in due course and which Officers consider Members would benefit from visiting to inform decision making. Appendix 2 then lists those sites that have previously been agreed should be visited before considering the officer report.
- 2.3. More often it is when considering a report on a planning application that it becomes apparent that Councillors would benefit from visiting a site to assist in reaching the correct decision. In these instances, Officers or Councillors may request a deferral to allow a visit to be carried out.
- 2.4. Accompanied site visits are appropriate when access to private land is necessary to appreciate matters raised. These visits will be arranged and attended by officers on the designated date and time. Applicants and objectors may observe the process and answer questions when asked but lobbying is discouraged. A site visit is an information gathering opportunity to inform decision making.
- 2.5. Unaccompanied site visits are appropriate when the site can be easily seen from public areas and allow Councillors to visit when convenient to them. In these instances, the

case officer will provide a briefing note on the application and the main issues to assist when visiting the site.

- 2.6. It is also possible for officers to suggest, or Councillors to request, a visit to a completed development to assess its quality.

### **3. Contribution to Strategic Aims**

- 4.1 The processing of planning applications contributes to creating a healthy environment with thriving communities and helping the economy within the Borough, identified as the themes of the Council's Corporate Plan.

### **4. Environmental and Climate Implications**

- 4.1. The Council declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 26 February 2019 (Minute 48 refers).
- 4.2. The Planning Service uses policies to encourage developers to build and use properties responsibly by making efficient use of land and using sustainable materials and building methods.

### **5. Community Engagement**

- 5.1. Statutory neighbour consultation takes place on planning applications.

### **6. Equality Implications**

- 6.1. Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to—
- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
  - advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
  - foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 6.2. It is considered that an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is not relevant to the decision on whether sites need to be visited by Planning Application Committee. The decision will not have a differential impact on people with the protected characteristics of; age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex (gender) or sexual orientation.

### **7. Legal Implications**

- 7.1. None arising from this report.

### **8. Financial Implications**

- 8.1. The cost of site visits is met through the normal planning service budget and Councillor costs.

### **9. Timetable for Implementation**

- 9.1. Site visits are normally scheduled for the Thursday prior to committee. Planning Administration team sends out notification emails when a site visit is arranged.

### **10. Background Papers**

- 10.1. There are none.

## **Appendices**

### **Appendix 1**

No sites

### **Appendix 2**

Previously Agreed Site Visits with date of PAC when requested:

- 231041 - Portman Road – unaccompanied agreed by PAC 06.09.23.
- 230822/OUT Forbury Retail Park (west) – accompanied agreed by PAC 24.07.24.
- 
- 240846/FUL Napier Court, Napier Road – accompanied agreed by PAC 24.07.24.

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## Planning Applications Committee

02 April 2025



**Reading**  
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<b>Title</b>	<b>PLANNING APPEALS</b>
<b>Purpose of the report</b>	To note the report for information
<b>Report status</b>	Public report
<b>Report author</b>	Julie Williams, Development Manager (Planning & Building Control)
<b>Lead Councillor</b>	Councillor Micky Leng, Lead Councillor for Planning and Assets
<b>Corporate priority</b>	Inclusive Economy
<b>Recommendations</b>	The Committee is asked: 1. To note the report.

### 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. To advise Committee on notifications received from the Planning Inspectorate on planning appeals registered with them or decision made and to provide summary reports on appeal decisions of interest the Planning Applications Committee.

### 2. Information provided

- 2.1. Please see Appendix 1 of this report for new appeals lodged since the last committee.
- 2.2. Please see Appendix 2 of this report for appeals decided since the last committee.

### 3. Contribution to Strategic Aims

- 3.1. Defending planning appeals made against planning decisions contributes to creating a sustainable environment with active communities and helping the economy within the Borough as identified as the themes of the Council's Corporate Plan.

### 4. Environmental and Climate Implications

- 4.1. The Council declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 26 February 2019 (Minute 48 refers).
- 4.2. The Planning Service uses policies to encourage developers to build and use properties responsibly by making efficient use of land and using sustainable materials and building methods

### 5. Community Engagement

- 5.1. Planning decisions are made in accordance with adopted local development plan policies, which have been adopted by the Council following public consultation. Statutory consultation also takes place on planning applications and appeals, and this can have bearing on the decision reached by the Secretary of State and his Inspectors. Copies of appeal decisions are held on the public Planning Register.

### 6. Equality Implications

- 6.1. Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to—
  - eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;

- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

6.2. It is considered that an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is not relevant to the decision on whether sites need to be visited by Planning Application Committee. The decision will not have a differential impact on people with the protected characteristics of; age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex (gender) or sexual orientation.

## **7. Legal Implications**

7.1. Public Inquiries are normally the only types of appeal that involve the use of legal representation. Only applicants have the right to appeal against refusal or non-determination and there is no right for a third party to appeal a planning decision.

## **8. Financial Implications**

8.1. Public Inquiries and Informal Hearings are more expensive in terms of officer and appellant time than the Written Representations method. Either party can be liable to awards of costs. Guidance is provided in Circular 03/2009 "Cost Awards in Appeals and other Planning Proceedings".

## **9. Timetable for Implementation**

9.1. Not applicable.

## **10. Background Papers**

10.1. There are none.

### **APPENDIX 1**

#### **Appeals Lodged:**

WARD: BATTLE  
 APPEAL NO: APP/E0345/D/25/336127  
 CASE NO: PL/24/1470  
 ADDRESS: 94 Tilehurst Road  
 PROPOSAL: Proposed raised parking area to provide 2 x off road parking spaces and new front boundary  
 CASE OFFICER: Ethne Humphreys  
 METHOD: Householder Written Representation

### **APPENDIX 2**

#### **Appeals Decided:**

WARD: REDLANDS  
 APPEAL NO: APP/E0345/D/24/3352853  
 CASE NO: PL/24/0727  
 ADDRESS: 74 Donnington Road Reading RG1 5ND  
 PROPOSAL: Rear extension measuring 6.0m in depth, with a maximum height of 3.0m, and 2.7m in height to eaves level. Notification of the construction of an extension under class A Part 1 of Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (GPD) (England) Order 2015.  
 CASE OFFICER: Huimin Chen  
 METHOD: Householder Written Representation  
 DECISION: Appeal Dismissed  
 DATE DETERMINED: 18/03/2025

**Officer Note: The Inspector confirmed that Officers had applied the relevant criteria correctly by agreeing that the proposed rear extension was not permitted development.**

## Planning Applications Committee



**Reading**  
Borough Council

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02 April 2025

<b>Title</b>	LOCAL LISTING REPORT - Caversham Road Fire Station, including a detached house and outbuildings, and eight residential properties on Barry Place to the rear
<b>Purpose of the report</b>	To make a decision
<b>Report status</b>	Public report
<b>Report author</b>	Burcu Can Cetin, Conservation Officer
<b>Lead Councillor</b>	Councillor Micky Leng, Lead Councillor for Planning and Assets
<b>Corporate priority</b>	Healthy Environment
<b>Ward</b>	Thames
<b>Address</b>	Caversham Road Fire Station, including a detached house and outbuildings, and eight residential properties on Barry Place to the rear - Caversham Road Fire Station, Caversham Road, RG1 8AA & 2-9 Barry Place, RG1 8EU
<b>Recommendations</b>	To agree that Caversham Road Fire Station, including a detached house and outbuildings, and eight residential properties on Barry Place to the rear be added to the List of Locally Important Buildings and Structures

### 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. To report on a proposal to add Caversham Road Fire Station complex and eight residential properties on Barry Place to the List of Locally-Important Buildings and Structures. The report identifies the building as being of local historical and architectural importance and makes an assessment based on the Council's published Local List criteria for inclusion to the list.

### 2. Policy context

- 2.1. Reading Borough Council maintains a List of Locally-Important Buildings and Structures ('the Local List'). Its purpose is to recognise the buildings and structures which do not meet the criteria for national listing, but are nonetheless significant to the heritage of the local area. It was agreed by Planning Applications Committee on 2nd December 2020 that decisions on additions to the Local List should be made at PAC.
- 2.2. The criteria for considering additions to the Local List are set out in Appendix 2 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (adopted 2019).

### 3. The proposal

- 3.1. A nomination was received on 22/09/2022 to add Caversham Road Fire station and eight residential properties on Barry Place to the Local List. Consultations have been carried out in accordance with the agreed process, and this report sets out the recommended action.
- 3.2. The nominated asset constitutes Reading's first purpose-built fire station and adjacent housing complex from the inter-war period. The two-storey detached building of Caversham Road Fire Station displays architectural characteristics typical of early to mid-20th-century municipal buildings in England. Its design reflects a simplified classical

style focusing on symmetry and functionality. Constructed of red bricks with Flemish bond under a hipped roof of clay tiles, its carved stone cornice and decorative stone surround framing three large appliance bays, multi-pane double hung timber sash windows and two central flagpoles mounted on the principal façade form the main architectural features of the fire station building. The building is in good condition and still in use as an active fire station.



*Image of Caversham Road Fire Station*

To the rear of the main building lie maintenance and apparatus spaces, which include three buildings for vehicle and equipment maintenance and storage, and original residential units, four pairs of semi-detached dwellings, and one detached dwelling influenced by the Garden City movement on a suburban cul-de-sac scale. The houses are set back on a regular building line behind landscaped front gardens enclosed by low brick walls and hedges. The houses combine Georgian symmetry with Arts and Crafts inspired attention to detail and practical design for middle-class housing developments that were popular in the UK during the interwar period: stretcher bond red facing bricks, horizontal brick banding between floors, timber multi-pane casement windows of varied design, hipped roof with brown tiles, central chimney rising from ridgeline, side entrance door with a simple porch, all reflecting practicality, modesty, traditional aesthetic and durability. Some properties have lost their original fenestration, but the cul-de-sac retains a cohesive, strong character (Appendix 2).

- 3.3. The nomination form received identifies the significance of the building as follows:
- 3.4. *"Principle for Selection for the Local List - (c) 1914 - 1939: any building, structure or group of buildings that is/are substantially complete and unaltered and of a high level of significance:*

*Caversham Road Fire Station was opened on 8 November 1939 by the Mayor Councillor W E C McIlroy. It was Reading's first purpose built fire station and replaced a 'temporary' fire station on St Mary's Butts that had been in use since 1894 (ref 1). The opening took place during the Second World War which had been declared on 3 September 1939. This was the culmination of a project that had commenced in 1935. The borough surveyor A. S. Parsons and chief architectural assistant Mr C H A Willett were responsible for the design. Pevsner describes it the style as 'stripped Neo-Georgian' (ref 2). The £23,300 scheme included housing for permanent staff to the rear. There were eight semi-detached houses, now separated behind a wall, and one detached for the chief officer which is still within the fire station compound. Cllr McIlroy commented "The houses, to his mind, created a little garden village and were admirable in every way." The main building included accommodation for single men. In the fire station compound there was a tower (now replaced by a modern version), various workshops and outbuildings and an ARP post some of which may still exist but we have not been able to inspect them. Above the vehicle entrance it still says 'County Borough of Reading' which was the town's municipal status from 1888 to 1974. There is a plaque commemorating the opening in 1939. Of the two original flagpoles only one is now in use but the fixings for the other are still in place (image 9). The windows on the front and northern elevations are wooden sash although they may have been replaced from the original (image 8).*



### **Historic Interest:**

(a) Historic Association (i) The building or structure has a well authenticated historical association with a notable person(s) or event:

The fire station and housing is notable as being opened by Reading's long serving war time Mayor Cllr McIlroy soon after the declaration of the Second World War. There is a plaque on the front of the building that commemorates the opening (image 4). This states: "COUNTY BOROUGH OF READING THIS BUILDING WAS ERECTED BY THE CORPORATION OF READING AND WAS OPENED BY THE RIGHT WORSHIPFUL THE MAYOR COUNCILLOR W.E.C. McILROY J.P. ON THE 8TH NOVEMBER 1939" Councillor McIlroy was the proprietor of McIlroy's department stores. Recently a plaque has been erected at the front of the station commemorating David Barnes who died on 15 September 1977 at a fire on Elgar Road (image 5).

(b) Social Importance: The building or structure has played an influential role in the development of an area or the life of one of Reading's communities:

The fire station has been associated with the fire service since 1939 and is still a working fire station very close to the centre of Reading. Reading Fire Brigade was established in 1862 and it became a separate department in the Corporation in 1893. Berkshire and Reading Fire Brigade was formed in 1948 and was renamed in 1974 to Royal Berkshire Fire Brigade and then Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service in 1985. The fire service was removed from local authority control in 1998 and was placed under the direction of an independent Royal Berkshire Fire Authority which is made up of representatives from the county's six unitary authorities (refs 3 & 4). The site was marked on the 1912 OS map as a timber yard and the same configuration of buildings appears in the 1934 map (see Appendix 1 maps).

### **Architectural Interest:**

(a) Sense of place (i) The building or structure is representative of a style that is characteristic of Reading:

At the time of opening attention was drawn to the similarity of materials with the Corn Exchange building. 'The main building which is on a foundation of reinforced concrete, is built of local bricks and faced with hand made sand faced bricks similar to those on the Corn Exchange' (ref 1). The original teak doors were made by local firm Samuel Elliot of Caversham and stonemasons were Messrs A H Jones. The press reports unfortunately do not mention the brickmaker.

(b) Innovation and Virtuosity (i) The building or structure has a noteworthy quality of workmanship and materials:

The fire station is a very pleasing brick building as are the residential properties to the rear arranged in a close. The station brickwork is mainly Flemish Bond but there are some tiled patterns dotted around the façade and detailing on either side of the windows (marked on image 10). It is one of the oldest and largest fire stations in Berkshire and has the longest fireman's pole in the county (ref 5). The dwellings to the rear are mainly Stretcher Bond brickwork with similar tiling details as the station and a string course beneath the first floor windows (image 6).

(b) Innovation and Virtuosity (ii) The building or structure is the work of a notable local/national architect/engineer/builder:

This was the culmination of a project that had commenced in 1935; the responsibility of the borough surveyor A. S. Parsons and the then chief architectural assistant Mr C H A Willett. C H A Willett (1899 -1962) became chief assistant architect in 1930 having joined the borough in 1925. He was appointed head of the new Borough Architect's department after the war. It is estimated that from 1944 until his retirement from ill health

*in 1961 he was responsible for 5,227 dwellings, including 4522 houses, 29 shops and 2,700 garages. According to Sidney Gold, apart from the fire station and cottages his best known work is the high rise flats on Bath Road, Southcote. (refs 1 & 6 & 7).*

*(b) Innovation and Virtuosity (iii) The building or structure shows innovation in materials, technique, architectural style or engineering:*

*The design was selected after a number of modern stations were visited by the Borough Surveyor and Chief Architectural Assistant. Similar in style is the Harrow Fire Station and Cottages on Pinner Road (within the Pinner Road Conservation Area) (image 11). These date from 1935-38 and were designed by C W Richardson of Swannel & Sly (ref 8). The CA appraisal notes that the fire station is locally listed and describes it as Art Deco/Modernist in style (ref 9). It also has cottages for staff. The architecture of the Caversham Road fire station differs from Harrow in that the roof is partially hidden behind a parapet and the wings step back from the main façade with flat roofs. (Images 1,2,3, 6 & 7).*

*(c) Group Value (i) The buildings/structures form a group which as a whole has a unified architectural or historic value to the local area:*

*Caversham Road fire station was Reading's first purpose built fire station and as described above a good deal of research and thought went in to the design. Together with the housing at the rear, which was built at the same time, the site is a unified small estate devoted to Reading's needs at the outbreak of the Second World War. Eight of the dwellings have now been separated from the station but one remains within the compound. The station is set back from Caversham Road and pre-dates the (now vacated) GPO sorting office and retail estate opposite as well as the retail units north as far as Drews on the corner of Northfield Road. It is a charming and understated low rise building approaching or leaving the town centre under the railway bridge.*

*(c) Group Value (ii) The buildings/structures are an example of deliberate town planning from before 1947:*

*The co—location of employee housing with the fire station (workplace) is an example of deliberate pre-war town planning."*

#### **4. Consultations**

4.1. The following were consulted on the proposed addition to the Local List:

- Reading Borough Council of Head of Legal Services, Royal Berkshire Fire Authority, Cornerstone Telecommunications Infrastructure Limited, Albert Godfrey, Daisy Ernesta Nicholls, Abidemi Olubukunmi Onatunde, Dennis John Weatherley and Tracy Rachel Weatherley (landowners);
- Thames ward councillors;
- Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee;
- Reading Civic Society; and
- Bell Tower Community Association.

4.2. A response has been received from Councillor Adele Barnet-Ward supporting the nomination. and also from the Bell Tower Community Association.

4.3. The Bell Tower Community Association also commented:

*"This is to confirm that the Bell Tower Community Association is pleased to support local listing of the fire station in Caversham Road and the associated houses in Barry Place. Members of the Association helped with the original research for the local listing application and made contributions to it."*

4.4. No response has been received from the landowners.

- 4.5. No response has been received from the Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee. They made the initial nomination together with the Bell Tower Community Association.
- 4.6. No response has been received from the Reading Civic Society.

## **5. Assessment**

The proposal to add a building or structure to the Local List should be considered against the criteria in Appendix 2 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (adopted 2019).

### **5.1. Exclusions**

- 5.1.1. The Local Plan specifies that a building should not be considered for the Local List where it is already part of a conservation area, scheduled monument or subject to an Article 4 direction relating to historic or architectural interest. Caversham Road Fire Station, including a detached house and outbuildings, and eight residential properties on Barry Place to the rear are not within any of these existing designations and can therefore be considered against the other criteria.

### **5.2. General principles**

- 5.2.1. Caversham Road Fire Station, including a detached house and outbuildings, and eight residential properties on Barry Place to the rear dates from the 1930s and, therefore needs to be considered against the following general principle:

*c. 1914 - 1939: Any building, structure or group of buildings where the elements that contribute to a high level of significance in the local context remain substantially complete.*

- 5.2.2. As stated by the plaque on the main façade of Caversham Road Fire Station, the building was erected by the Corporation of Reading and opened on November 8, 1939.

### **5.3. Significance**

- 5.3.1. To be added to the Local List, a building or structure must fulfil at least one of the defined significance criteria, which fall into two categories – historic interest and architectural interest. These are assessed below.

#### *Historic Interest*

##### *a. Historical Association*

*i. The building or structure has a well authenticated historical association with a notable person(s) or event.*

*ii. The building or structure has a prolonged and direct association with figures or events of local interest.*

- 5.3.2. Marking Reading's first purpose-built fire station, the Caversham Road Fire Station building is a local remnant of Reading's fire service dating the inter-war period and has continued use for more than 85 years. Created by the Corporation of Reading as a part of a civic project, which included the ancillary buildings of the fire station and adjacent housing for the staff to the rear, the complex was opened by notable mayor councillor W.E.C. McIlroy. Two plaques are placed at the fire station, one dedicated to the opening and one honouring a firefighter killed in a fire, acknowledging the importance of Caversham Fire Station in the fire service history of Reading.
- 5.3.3. The Reading Fire Brigade was founded in 1862 and became an independent department within the Corporation in 1893. In 1948, it merged to form the Berkshire and Reading Fire Brigade, renamed Royal Berkshire Fire Brigade in 1974. The service was further renamed Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service in 1985. In 1998, the fire service was removed from local authority control and placed under the governance of

an independent Royal Berkshire Fire Authority, comprised of representatives from the county's six unitary authorities.

- 5.3.4. It is known that no new fire stations were constructed between the end of World War I and 1925. However, as the threat of renewed conflict grew in the 1930s, the government took steps to prepare for the potential risks of aerial warfare. In 1938, the Fire Brigades Act made fire services compulsory for all local authorities and established a national commission to oversee operations nationwide. The station stands as a testament to the growth of the fire service during the inter-war period. Its layout, scale, numerous buildings, and appliance bays designed to house the fire brigade and shelter fire engines represent the expansion of Reading's fire service in this period.

*b. Social Importance*

*The building or structure has played an influential role in the development of an area or the life of one of Reading's communities. Such buildings/structures may include places of worship, schools, community buildings, places of employment, public houses and memorials which formed a focal point or played a key social role.*

- 5.3.5. The submitted nomination form explains the social importance of the asset with regard to the fire brigade history in Reading and the site previously occupied by timber yard buildings. It is considered that Caversham Road Fire Station, including a detached house and outbuildings and eight residential properties on Barry Place, do not fulfil this criterion as there is not any direct social, economic or spatial impact of the fire station complex driven by its location or construction. There was an existing late Victorian and Edwardian terraces/residential development within the surrounding of the station site when the site was redeveloped; there is no clear historic/functional/key relationship between the station and the timber yard buildings, and given the Caversham Road Fire Station was a civil building built for a specific purpose to serve Reading, there has not been any particular social or economic value attributed to the nominated asset. As stated above, the historical importance of the asset lies within its association with the inter-war period fire service and Reading's long-serving wartime Mayor Councillor McIlroy.

*c. Industrial Importance*

*The building or structure clearly relates to traditional or historic industrial processes or important businesses or the products of such industrial processes or businesses in the history of Reading or are intact industrial structures, for example bridges.*

- 5.3.6. Caversham Road Fire Station, including a detached house and outbuildings and eight residential properties on Barry Place, is not considered to fulfil this criterion.

*Architectural Interest*

*a. Sense of place*

*i. The building or structure is representative of a style that is characteristic of Reading.*

- 5.3.7. Caversham Road Fire Station, including a detached house and outbuildings and eight residential properties on Barry Place, is not considered to fulfil this criterion. Neither the fire station building nor the buildings on Barry Place constitute unique architectural features of Reading which generally use multi-coloured and patterned bricks. The similarities with Corn Exchange do not justify 'the Reading style' as the nominated fire station building has many similarities with the Grade II listed Fire Station, Bethel Street (listing no. 1393193) in Norwich and Harrow Fire Station (noted from the nomination form) as well. The architectural style of the building is common for its era, the 1930s, but adopted to Reading during its construction with local materials and workmanship, which relates to its significance to 'Innovation and virtuosity' not 'sense of place.' This is the same for Barry Place houses, as explained below.

*b. Innovation and virtuosity*

- i. The building or structure has a noteworthy quality of workmanship and materials.*
- ii. The building or structure is the work of a notable local/national architect/engineer/builder.*
- iii. The building or structure shows innovation in materials, technique, architectural style or engineering.*

5.3.8. Whilst there is no distinctive/unique architectural design feature notable for the Caversham Road Fire Station building and associated semi-detached houses, the nominated asset exemplifies the localisation of the interwar period fire station and national level dwelling design (and town planning approach) as appears in 'Manual on the Preparation of State-Aided Housing Schemes' (1919) by Local Government Board (Figure 3, Appendix 2) and semi-detached design for Welwyn Garden City (Figure 4, Appendix 2).

5.3.9. The nomination form confirms that the fire station and housing design belongs to A. S. Parsons, the Borough Surveyor and C. H. A. Willett (1899 -1962), Chief Architectural Assistant (and an artist), after they visited modern stations. Therefore, it is considered that Caversham Road Fire Station, including a detached house and outbuildings and eight residential properties on Barry Place, does not fulfil criteria (i) and (iii) for the architectural interest, although it has the longest fireman's pole. The *"some tiles patterns dotted around the façade and detailing on either side of the windows"* are common/typical details and can be seen even in residential properties in London.

5.3.10. However, the originality of the interpretation of national design approaches by a well-known local architect, along with teak doors made by Samuel Eliot and stonework by Messers A H Jones, two local firms, contribute to the architectural value. As such, the nominated asset accords with criterion (ii) for (b) innovation and virtuosity of the Reading's listing criteria for local buildings and structures.

*c. Group value*

*i. The buildings/structures form a group which as a whole has a unified architectural or historic value to the local area.*

*ii. The buildings/structures are an example of deliberate town planning from before 1947.*

Similar to the importance of local interest on a building scale, the layout of the fire station complex, particularly the housing on Barry Place, was influenced by national town planning approaches for new towns, which are strongly attributed to the Garden City Movement.

5.3.11. In parallel with Historic England's description, *"The introduction of motorised fire engines about 1905 had a major impact. The older stations were often too small, and too awkwardly located in central urban sites, for the new vehicles, resulting in the closure of many, which were often adapted for other uses. New purpose-built fire stations were typically sited on large roads and divided into distinct areas: one for appliances and one for staff."* (Law and Government Buildings – Listing Selection Criteria, 2017), the location of station complex development and houses for the staff was selected and shaped according to this principle. Because the site was redeveloped in the 1930s with the handsome fire station building fronting the main road, it is highly distinguishing and different from the surrounding historic environment.

5.3.12. It is known that although it often remained as an idealised geometric scheme for urban design, from 1904 to 1930, hexagonal and octagonal planning captured the interest of planners, engineers and architects who viewed it as a promising solution to the planning challenges and a potential alternative to the standard grid plan. After the early garden city movement of Ebenezer Howard, garden cities and garden suburbs as alternatives for residential neighbourhoods as well as small housing groups were initiated by Raymond Unwin and Barry Parker, where great emphasis was placed upon the

physiological and biological needs of individuals with houses laid out in cul de sacs. Rather than having 'Barry' within the name of the cul de sac, the semi-detached pairs, which were defined as a standard unit of dwelling by Unwin, enclose an octagonal open space/ 'inward-looking' space around greens.

- 5.3.13. As mentioned before, The Local Government Board's 1919 Manual on the Preparation of State-Aided Housing Schemes was especially influenced by Raymond and Unwin's findings, favouring in unequivocal terms the sorts of detached and semi-detached cottage-style homes.
- 5.3.14. Therefore, although there is a wall between the semidetached houses on Barry Place and the fire station buildings, the Caversham fire station complex still has a unified development pattern, legible with minor alterations. It still preserves its garden city character, a deliberate town planning from before 1947. Not only the buildings but also their arrangements are again the adoption of national approaches into Reading.
- 5.3.15. It is considered that the aesthetic value of the buildings had a degree of interest, but the historical associations and group value are fundamental to the importance of the nominated asset.

#### **5.4. Conclusion of assessment**

- 5.4.1 Caversham Road Fire Station, including a detached house and outbuildings and eight residential properties on Barry Place qualifies for addition to the Local List because it:
  - Is not within a conservation area, scheduled monument or area subject to an Article 4 direction relating to historic or architectural interest [amend if necessary if a building within a CA but not identified as of townscape merit, or a building covered by Article 4 is being considered];
  - Dates from between 1914 and 1939 and the elements that contribute to a high level of significance in the local context remain substantially complete;
  - Contributes to the heritage of the Borough in terms of its historical association;
  - Contributes to the heritage of the Borough in terms of its innovation and virtuosity;
  - Contributes to the heritage of the Borough in terms of its group value.
- 5.4.2 A description of the significance of the building for inclusion in the Local List is included in Appendix 4.

### **6. Contribution to strategic aims**

- 6.1. The Council's Corporate Plan has established three themes for the years 2022/25. These themes are:
  - Healthy Environment
  - Thriving Communities
  - Inclusive Economy
- 6.2. These themes are underpinned by "Our Foundations" explaining the ways we work at the Council:
  - People first
  - Digital transformation
  - Building self-reliance
  - Getting the best value
  - Collaborating with others
- 6.3. Full details of the Council's Corporate Plan and the projects which will deliver these priorities are published on the [Council's website](#). These priorities and the Corporate

Plan demonstrate how the Council meets its legal obligation to be efficient, effective and economical.

- 6.4. Local listing of buildings and structures helps to achieve the Healthy Environment theme of the Corporate Plan, by helping to retain those buildings that contribute towards making Reading a more attractive place to live and connect Reading's residents to the town's past.

## **7. Environmental and climate implications**

- 7.1. The Council declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 26 February 2019 (Minute 48 refers).
- 7.2. Local listing of buildings and structures, where it leads to the retention of those buildings or structures, can help to address the climate emergency by negating the need for demolition and new development, which are processes that use significant amounts of energy and result in emissions. However, in the long-term, it can be more difficult to achieve high levels of energy performance in older buildings than in new builds. There are therefore potentially either positive or negative effects, and schemes will need to be assessed at the application stage in terms of their compliance with the Council's policies.

## **8. Community engagement**

- 8.1. Details of the consultation carried out are set out in section 4 of this report. The scope of consultation to be carried out on proposals for addition to the Local List was part of the local listing process agreed by Planning Applications Committee on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2020 (Minute 56 refers).

## **9. Equality impact assessment**

- 9.1. It is not expected that there will be any significant adverse impacts on specific groups due to race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, age or religious belief as a result of the recommendations of this report.

## **10. Other relevant considerations**

- 10.1. None of this report.

## **11. Legal implications**

- 11.1. Addition to the Local List is not a statutory process, and there are no legal implications of the recommendations of this report.

## **12. Financial implications**

- 12.1. Consideration of this nomination and any resulting amendments to the Local List will be accommodated within existing budgets.

## **13. Timetable for implementation**

- 13.1. Not applicable.

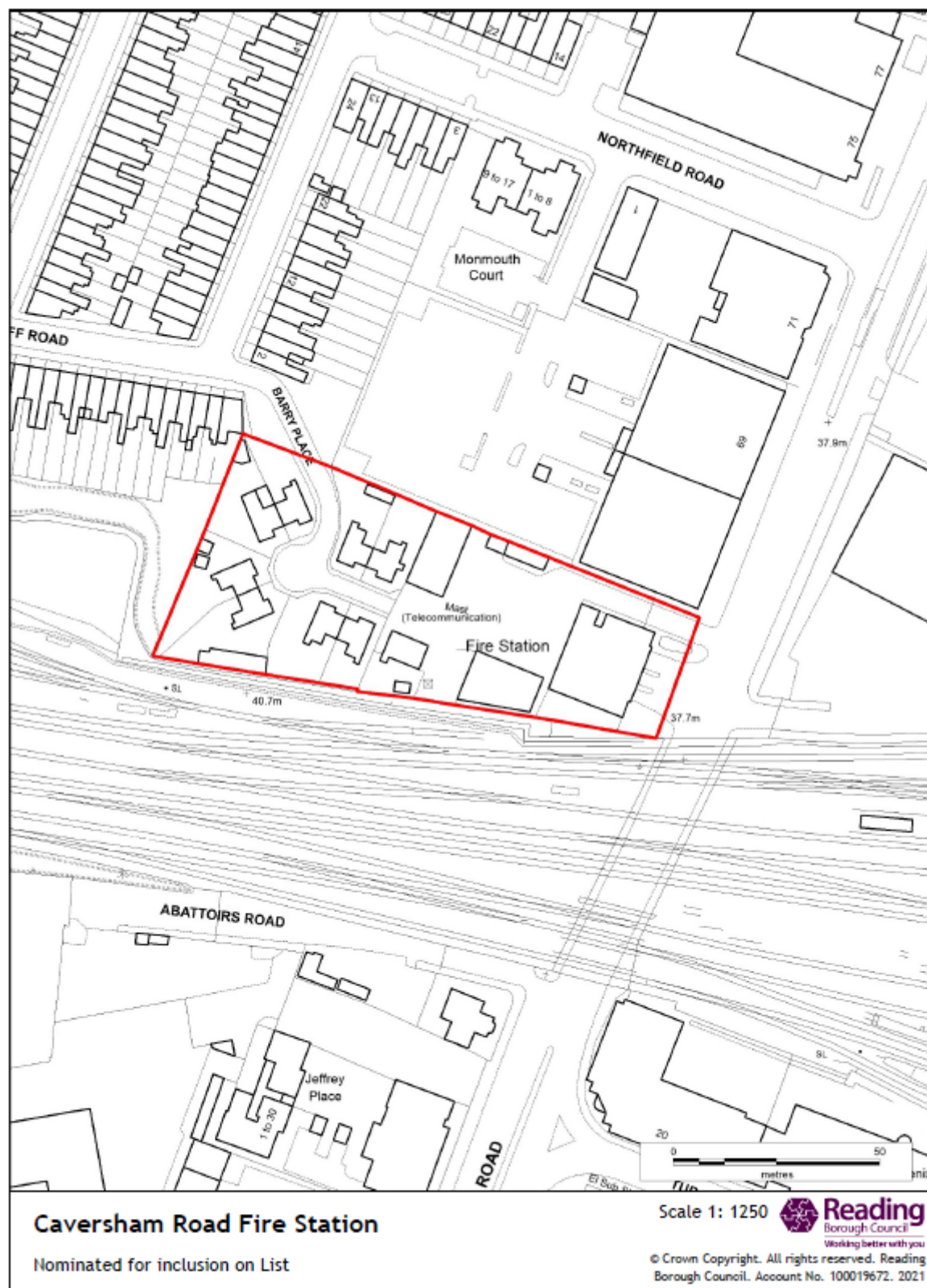
## **14. Background papers**

- 14.1. There are none.

## **Appendices**

1. **Location map**
2. **Relevant photos and illustrations**
3. **Proposed local list text**

## Appendix 1: Location plan





## Appendix 2: Relevant photos and illustrations



*Figures 1 and 2. View of Barry Place and a Semi with original fenestration on Barry Place*

## Appendix 3: Proposed local list text

Caversham Road Fire Station, including a detached house, outbuildings, and eight residential properties on Barry Place to the rear, holds significant heritage value as Reading's first purpose-built fire station, established in the interwar period. Its architectural design, featuring simplified classical elements such as red brick Flemish bond construction, carved stone cornice, decorative stone-framed appliance bays, and gauged arched timber sash windows, embodies the functional elegance of early 20th-century municipal buildings. Including a cul-de-sac housing scheme inspired by the Garden City movement adds to its significance, reflecting national housing principles adapted for local needs. Together, these elements showcase a comprehensive civic project designed to serve both operational and residential purposes, underlining its importance in Reading's urban history.

Historically, the fire station complex highlights the evolution of local fire services in response to increasing demands during the 1930s, a period marked by national efforts to improve public safety infrastructure amid the looming threat of conflict. Opened in 1939 by Mayor W.E.C. McIlroy, the fire station became a centrepiece of civic development, with its ancillary buildings and adjacent staff housing reflecting an integrated approach to fire service logistics. The plaques commemorating the station's inauguration and the bravery of a firefighter underline its enduring legacy in Reading.

The architectural and town planning elements of the Caversham Fire Station complex resonate with local and national trends of the era, combining Georgian symmetry and Arts and Crafts-inspired details with modern functionality. Its design by A.S. Parsons and C.H.A. Willett, informed by contemporary fire station models, exemplifies the thoughtful adaptation of national styles for Reading's specific needs. The integration of materials from renowned local firms further enhances its cultural significance. Though minor alterations have occurred, the cohesive character of the Caversham Road Fire Station and housing on Barry Place remains intact, preserving the site's aesthetic and historical integrity as a unified example of interwar civic and residential planning.

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## Planning Applications Committee

02 April 2025



**Reading**  
Borough Council  
Working better with you

<b>Title</b>	LOCAL LISTING REPORT - 2 Mill Green
<b>Purpose of the report</b>	To make a decision
<b>Report status</b>	Public report
<b>Report author</b>	Burcu Can Cetin, Conservation Officer
<b>Lead Councillor</b>	Councillor Micky Leng, Lead Councillor for Planning and Assets
<b>Corporate priority</b>	Healthy Environment
<b>Ward</b>	Thames
<b>Address</b>	2 Mill Green, Caversham, Reading, RG4 8EX
<b>Recommendations</b>	To agree that 2 Mill Green be added to the List of Locally Important Buildings and Structures

### 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. To report on a proposal to add 2 Mill Green to the List of Locally Important Buildings and Structures. The report identifies the building as being of local architectural importance and makes an assessment based on the Council's published Local List criteria for inclusion to the list.

### 2. Policy context

- 2.1. Reading Borough Council maintains a List of Locally Important Buildings and Structures ('the Local List'). Its purpose is to recognise the buildings and structures which do not meet the criteria for national listing but are nonetheless significant to the heritage of the local area. It was agreed by Planning Applications Committee on 2nd December 2020 that decisions on additions to the Local List should be made at PAC.
- 2.2. The criteria for considering additions to the Local List are set out in Appendix 2 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (adopted 2019).

### 3. The proposal

- 3.1. A nomination was received on 07/11/2024 to add 2 Mill Green to the Local List. Consultations have been carried out in accordance with the agreed process, and this report sets out the recommended action.
- 3.2. The nominated building is a two-storey semi-detached house from the 1930s. Constructed of facing red brick under a hipped clay tile roof, it has a curved bay on the ground floor, timber-framed windows with strong horizontal divisions and a detached garage in its rear garden, occupying a spacious corner plot surrounded by low-level brick boundary walls located in Lower Caversham.
- 3.3. The nomination form received for the building identifies the significance of the building as follows:

- 3.4. *"Principle for Selection for the Local List - (c) 1914 - 1939: any building, structure or group of buildings that is/are substantially complete and unaltered and of a high level of significance*

*According to available online mapping, the building dates between 1932 and 1936. It is a structure of historic and architectural interest. (...)*

*The site occupies a corner plot on a once-busy road leading to riverside industrial works now redeveloped.*

*Style is characteristic of much pre-War suburban development but is unaltered and therefore extremely rare.*

*Frontage has original small-frame windows and wooden door making up a total unaltered aspect.*

*It may be among the first to have windows with such a hint of Art Deco style, reflecting economic conditions at the time.*

*The site was a field, possibly associated with Monkley Court manor house, typical of suburban expansion of Reading.*

*The house commands the corner of an unmade road on the riverbank that is now busier than for decades since Amersham Road and surrounding areas down river were developed. It is unaltered since being built in the early 1930s while there was still industry on nearby Heron Island - so would have been passed by many thousands - and it survived wartime upheaval. The frontage and its garden surrounds are typical of pre-War architecture and comprise a time capsule that forms a landmark for growing numbers of passersby and a reminder of how people were expected to live and, as it has only recently been vacated, have lived to the present day."*



*Image of the nominated asset*

## **4. Consultations**

- 4.1. The following were consulted on the proposed addition to the Local List:

- Freda Edith Andrews (landowner);
- Thames ward councillors;
- Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee;
- Reading Civic Society; and
- Caversham and District Resident's Association (CADRA) and Caversham GLOBE (local community group(s)).

- 4.2. Responses were received from the Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee, Reading Civic Society and Caversham and District Resident's Association.

#### 4.3. Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee

*"We support the nomination. As the applicant has stated the exterior of the property appears unaltered since first built in the 1930s. As such it is a rare survival on an important corner plot close to the site of Caversham Mill.*

*We concur with the approximate dating provided by the applicant and include maps below in case they are helpful. It would appear that the area now bounded by Champion Road, Mill Road, Piggott's Road and Mill Green was partially developed to the north by the end of the nineteenth century. The southern portion was not developed until the 1930s and appears to have been completed by September 1939.*

*All the other properties in the vicinity (32-36 Mill Road, 4-12 Mill Green and 1-19 Piggott's Road) have been altered to a greater or lesser extent but none of the original windows survive.*

*They are all of a similar design of semi-detached or terraced houses.*

*The builder was possibly Frank Alfred Scrivener who in 1937 was fined for leaving building materials in Piggott's Road and Mill Road.*

*As an excellent example of the style of building of the period in Reading, with many features intact and unaltered, the property is worthy of addition to the local list.*



Extract from OS map 1877-1878 (pub 1882)  
National Library of Scotland



Extract from OS map 1932 (pub 1934)  
National Library of Scotland



Extract from OS map 1938 (pub c1945)



#### 4.4. **Reading Civic Society**

*“Good to see this nomination come forward. The nominator highlighted the sale of the property to me and sought advice re a listing process. Thus we guided him to the Local Listing Process. It is good to see a nomination from a local enthusiast. He is not a member of RCS / CADRA or the CAAC.*

*He has inevitably, given the age of the property, found it difficult to find much information about it.*

*The front (indeed most of the inside) is barely changed since it was built. This compares dramatically to the inappropriate accretions to the front of the building next door, they may as well have built a new house.*

*It is so encouraging to see a proposal which concerns a 1930s building. It is a very unusual survival in an important location within Caversham.*

*We support the nomination.”*

#### 4.5. **Caversham and District Resident’s Association**

*“CADRA was very pleased to see this nomination come forward and we too were in contact with the nominator.*

*We very much support the comments set out by Reading Civic Society. This is a highly unusual survival of its time, on a prominent corner and in an important area of Caversham near to the Mill Island which dates back to the Domesday Book.*

*There is clearly some urgency as the property was sold at auction and we very much hope this application can be processed swiftly.”*

### 5. **Assessment**

The proposal to add a building or structure to the Local List should be considered against the criteria in Appendix 2 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (adopted 2019).

#### 5.1. **Exclusions**

- 5.1.1 The Local Plan specifies that a building should not be considered for the Local List where it is already part of a conservation area, scheduled monument or subject to an Article 4 direction relating to historic or architectural interest. 2 Mill Green is not within any of these existing designations and can therefore be considered against the other criteria.

#### 5.2. **General principles**

- 5.2.1 2 Mill Green dates from the 1930s and therefore needs to be considered against the following general principle:

*c. 1914 - 1939: Any building, structure or group of buildings where the elements that contribute to a high level of significance in the local context remain substantially complete.*

- 5.2.2 As confirmed from the Ordnance Survey maps, the nominated asset is from the 1930s, which is also read through its surviving and untouched original mass, design and elements of the 1930s house. Although the immediate area includes properties of same period, none of them retain such a significant original and intact elements on architectural scale as well as the layout of the curtilage.

#### 5.3. **Significance**

- 5.3.1 To be added to the Local List, a building or structure must fulfil at least one of the defined significance criteria, which fall into two categories – historic interest and architectural interest. These are assessed below.

### Historic Interest

#### *a. Historical Association*

- i. The building or structure has a well authenticated historical association with a notable person(s) or event.*
- ii. The building or structure has a prolonged and direct association with figures or events of local interest.*

5.3.2 The nominated asset at 2 Mill Green is not considered to fulfil this criterion.

#### *b. Social Importance*

*The building or structure has played an influential role in the development of an area or the life of one of Reading's communities. Such buildings/structures may include places of worship, schools, community buildings, places of employment, public houses and memorials which formed a focal point or played a key social role.*

5.3.3 The nominated asset at 2 Mill Green is not considered to fulfil this criterion as there is no evidence to justify the building's contribution to the social life.

#### *c. Industrial Importance*

*The building or structure clearly relates to traditional or historic industrial processes or important businesses or the products of such industrial processes or businesses in the history of Reading or are intact industrial structures, for example bridges.*

5.3.4 The nominated asset at 2 Mill Green is not considered to fulfil this criterion.

### Architectural Interest

#### *a. Sense of place*

- i. The building or structure is representative of a style that is characteristic of Reading.*

5.3.5 The building is a fine example of the 1930s semi-detached house. However, it does not provide the 'sense' of Reading as there is no distinctive brick bonding, colour or texture within the architecture of the nominee that could be attributed to 'Reading or Caversham style'. Therefore, it is considered that 2 Mill Green fails to meet this criterion.

#### *b. Innovation and virtuosity*

- i. The building or structure has a noteworthy quality of workmanship and materials.*
- ii. The building or structure is the work of a notable local/national architect/engineer/builder.*
- iii. The building or structure shows innovation in materials, technique, architectural style or engineering.*

5.3.6 The architecture of the nominated asset is aesthetically pleasing and locally representative of a 'moderne' house with influences of Edwardian suburbia. Whilst it is not the work of a local architect or engineer (Frank Alfred Scrivener was active in Gloucestershire and is the possible builder of the building) and the property shows no high quality workmanship or local work it is the only original representative of the 1930s in its retained details: These include a distinctive Art Deco style curving bay with sun trap windows, timber casements with strong horizontal divisions, doors with the upper third glazed and lower section panelled as a standard form, tall hipped roof, plain chimney, rectangular-plan house with reception and service rooms on the ground floor, and continuous porch over bay supported on corner timber post which is the only Edwardian detail.

5.3.7 The perimeter of the plot is marked out with relatively low brick garden walls, while the impact of the car industry is evident in the garage and workshop located in the rear/side

garden of the property. The design of the garage is not only a simple box with a lift-up metal door but also decorated with the same care and attention as the main house that images the technology of the period: metal casement and garage door, concrete lintels and flat roof. As such, the basic design of 2 Mill Green, enhanced by the art Deco features, interesting details and fine setting, leads to a major visual contribution through popular taste with twentieth-century British architectural culture.

- 5.3.8 In other words, the inter-war period housing, which is mainly dominated by semi-detached speculative built houses, featured elements introduced by leading architects working in the international style – ‘moderne’, which are evident at 2 Mill Green that its distinctive and rare elements carry significant weight.

*c. Group value*

*i. The buildings/structures form a group which as a whole has a unified architectural or historic value to the local area.*

*ii. The buildings/structures exemplify deliberate town planning from before 1947.*

- 5.3.9 It is known that there was little consideration for the overall planning of the suburban areas in the interwar period. One type of development, ‘ribbon development’ situated along the main road, appears to be the builder’s location choice for the development of Mill Green. Rather than being a deliberate town planning approach, the subject building and plot resulted from the period’s standard practice: small pockets of land sold off piecemeal to different builders who mixed modernity and tradition. It can be argued that the building characterises a ribbon or piecemeal development. However, these developments were informal interventions, not controlled by a plan that still exists today. In addition, because the building is the one remaining, it does not form a group value or clear visual relationship with other buildings with significant alterations.

**5.4. Conclusion of assessment**

- 5.4.1 2 Mill Green qualifies for addition to the Local List because it:

- Is not within a conservation area, scheduled monument or area subject to an Article 4 direction relating to historic or architectural interest;
- Dates from between 1914 and 1939 and the elements that contribute to a high level of significance in the local context remain substantially complete;
- Contributes to the heritage of the Borough in terms of its innovation and virtuosity;

- 5.4.2 A description of the significance of the building for inclusion in the Local List is included in Appendix 3.

**6. Contribution to strategic aims**

- 6.1. The Council’s Corporate Plan has established three themes for the years 2022/25. These themes are:

- Healthy Environment
- Thriving Communities
- Inclusive Economy

- 6.2. These themes are underpinned by “Our Foundations” explaining the ways we work at the Council:

- People first
- Digital transformation
- Building self-reliance
- Getting the best value
- Collaborating with others

- 6.3. Full details of the Council’s Corporate Plan and the projects which will deliver these priorities are published on the [Council’s website](#). These priorities and the Corporate



Plan demonstrate how the Council meets its legal obligation to be efficient, effective and economical.

- 6.4. Local listing of buildings and structures helps to achieve the Healthy Environment theme of the Corporate Plan, by helping to retain those buildings that contribute towards making Reading a more attractive place to live and connect Reading's residents to the town's past.

## **7. Environmental and climate implications**

- 7.1. The Council declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 26 February 2019 (Minute 48 refers).
- 7.2. Local listing of buildings and structures, where it leads to the retention of those buildings or structures, can help to address the climate emergency by negating the need for demolition and new development, which are processes that use significant amounts of energy and result in emissions. However, in the long-term, it can be more difficult to achieve high levels of energy performance in older buildings than in new builds. There are therefore potentially either positive or negative effects, and schemes will need to be assessed at the application stage in terms of their compliance with the Council's policies.

## **8. Community engagement**

- 8.1. Details of the consultation carried out are set out in section 4 of this report. The scope of consultation to be carried out on proposals for addition to the Local List was part of the local listing process agreed by Planning Applications Committee on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2020 (Minute 56 refers).

## **9. Equality impact assessment**

- 9.1. It is not expected that there will be any significant adverse impacts on specific groups due to race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, age or religious belief as a result of the recommendations of this report.

## **10. Other relevant considerations**

- 10.1. None of this report.

## **11. Legal implications**

- 11.1. Addition to the Local List is not a statutory process, and there are no legal implications of the recommendations of this report.

## **12. Financial implications**

- 12.1. Consideration of this nomination and any resulting amendments to the Local List will be accommodated within existing budgets.

## **13. Timetable for implementation**

- 13.1. Not applicable.

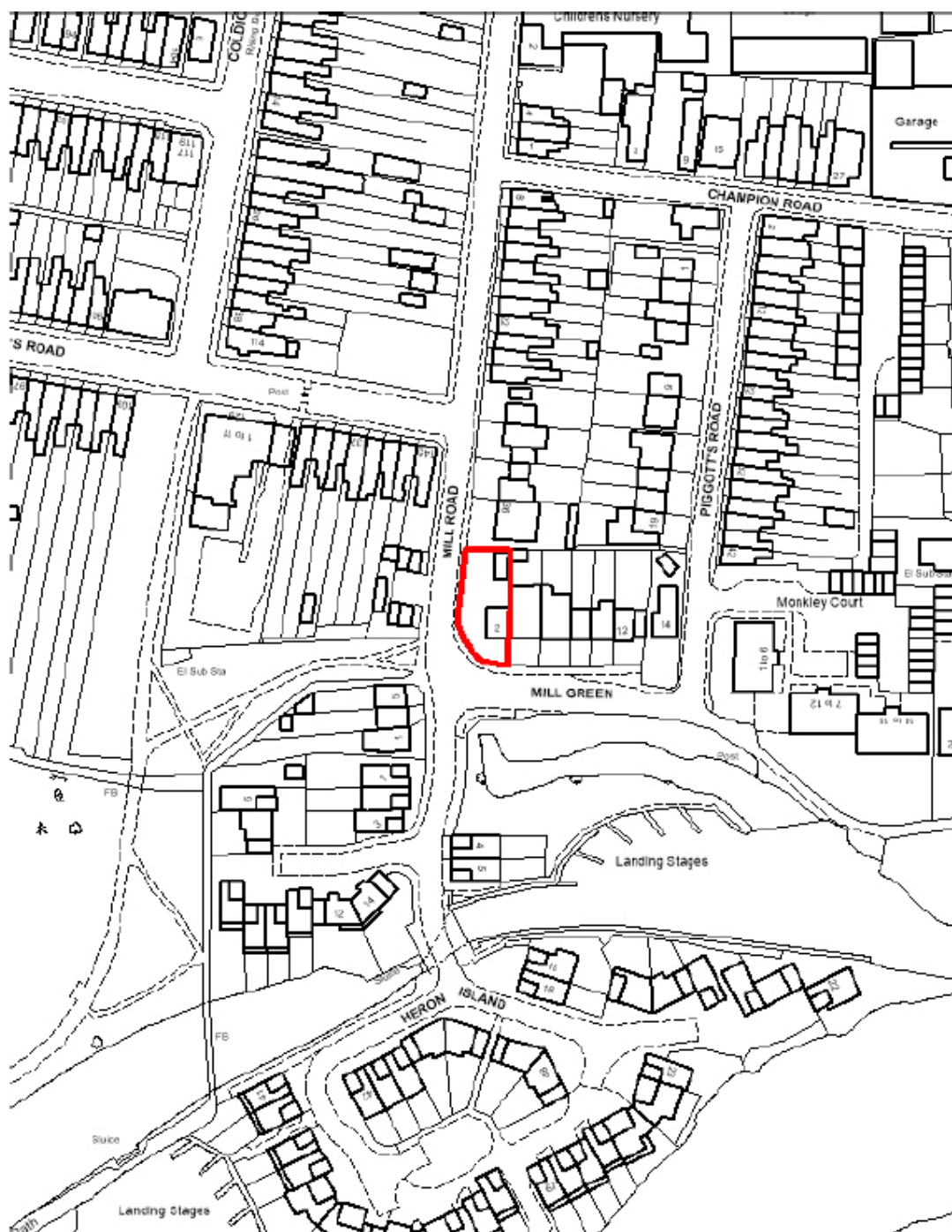
## **14. Background papers**

- 14.1. There are none.

## **Appendices**

- 1. **Location map**
- 2. **Relevant photos and illustrations**
- 3. **Proposed local list text**

## Appendix 1: Location plan



**2 Mill Green, Caversham**

Nominated for inclusion on the Local List

## Appendix 2: Relevant photos and illustrations



*Figures 1 and 2. Image of the front, side and rear elevations of the property*



*Figure 3. Image of the garage*

## Appendix 3: Proposed local list text

This is an exceptional and rare example of unaltered 1930s suburban architecture in the 'moderne' style. Two-storey, semi-detached house constructed from facing red brick under a hipped clay tile roof. The house remains unaltered externally and preserves all of its original features. The semi-detached design positions the main entrance at the far ends of the front elevation, with a distinctive Art Deco-inspired curving bay featuring sun trap windows. The first-floor window design and timber casement windows are defined by strong horizontal divisions, enhancing the style, while the entrance door follows a standard form up to the 1930s, with the upper third glazed and the lower section panelled. Its tall, hipped roof, a plain chimney, and the only Edwardian detail of a continuous porch that extends over the bay, supported by a corner timber post, characterise other original elements of the 1930s house.

The spacious green garden, marked by a low brick wall, creates an attractive setting for the main building and constitutes the detached garage as an impact of the automotive industry. The garage design is also thoughtfully designed, matching the care and attention given to the main house. It features period-appropriate details: metal casement windows, a metal lift-up garage door, concrete lintels, and a flat roof. As such, the design of 2 Mill Green, enhanced by Art Deco elements, distinctive details, and a fine setting, represents the recognised architectural taste of twentieth-century British culture.

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## Planning Applications Committee

02 April 2024



**Reading**  
Borough Council  
Working better with you

<b>Title</b>	<b>LOCAL LISTING REPORT - Hemdean House School and Lodge</b>
<b>Purpose of the report</b>	To make a decision
<b>Report status</b>	Public report
<b>Report author</b>	Burcu Can Cetin, Conservation Officer
<b>Lead Councillor</b>	Councillor Micky Leng, Lead Councillor for Planning and Assets
<b>Corporate priority</b>	Healthy Environment
<b>Ward</b>	Caversham
<b>Address</b>	Hemdean House School and Lodge, Hemdean Road, Caversham, Reading RG4 7SD
<b>Recommendations</b>	To agree that Hemdean House School and Lodge be added to the List of Locally Important Buildings and Structures

### 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. To report on a proposal to add Hemdean House School to the List of Locally-Important Buildings and Structures. The report identifies the building as being of local historical and architectural importance and makes an assessment based on the Council's published Local List criteria for inclusion to the list.

### 2. Policy context

- 2.1. Reading Borough Council maintains a List of Locally-Important Buildings and Structures ('the Local List'). Its purpose is to recognise the buildings and structures which do not meet the criteria for national listing, but are nonetheless significant to the heritage of the local area. It was agreed by Planning Applications Committee on 2nd December 2020 that decisions on additions to the Local List should be made at PAC.
- 2.2. The criteria for considering additions to the Local List are set out in Appendix 2 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (adopted 2019).

### 3. The proposal

- 3.1. A nomination was received on 17/07/2024 to add Hemdean House School and Lodge to the Local List. Consultations have been carried out in accordance with the agreed process, and this report sets out the recommended action.
- 3.2. Hemdean House School is a purpose-built school for girls constructed in 1862 together with a lodge located in the field of Hem Dean in Caversham Village, which was later commemorated in the street name. After serving as a school for 165 years, Hemdean House School was closed in 2024. On a prominent position, the three-and-a-half-storey large, detached school building is constructed of red brick and a design that includes classical details, while the 'old English style' lodge is situated at the entrance to the school grounds to the west of Hemdean Road.
- 3.3. The nomination form received for the building identifies the significance of the building as follows:

- 3.4. **Principle for Selection for the Local List - (b) 1840 - 1913: any building, structure or group of buildings that is/are substantially complete and unaltered and of definite significance:**

*In 1859 a new girls' school was formed in Verona Lodge, Church Street, Caversham on a site now occupied by the extension to the telephone exchange. After purchase of agricultural land on the bank of the Hemdean Botton dry chalk valley, the purpose-built school for girls opened in 1862, renamed Hemdean House School with both boarding and day places. It remained in continuous use for education until 2024 and the original school buildings with fine architectural details are largely unaltered. As shown in the period images, the Lodge was part of the original construction and was occupied by the caretaker of the school.*

**Historic Interest –**

**(a). Historical Association**

**i. The building or structure has a well authenticated historical association with a notable person(s) or event.**

*The founding of a girls' school that went beyond primary education is of national significance, and Francis Knighton and his daughters took the lead in this. Knighton is a figure of considerable local interest (see below).*

*The fact that the architect was almost certainly Horace Jones of London is also of national importance, as Jones was the architect of Tower Bridge and the rebuilt Caversham Park after a fire of 1850 for industrialist William Crawshay. Crawshay and Knighton worshipped at St Peter's Church in Caversham and are both buried in the churchyard there. It seems highly plausible that Horace Jones would have been recommended to Knighton by Crawshay.*

**ii. The building or structure has a prolonged and direct association with figures or events of local interest.**

*Mr Francis Knighton (1803-1883) opened a school for boys in Reading ca 1826 in Gun Street, moving ca 1835 to Gun Street and then by 1841 to 23 Church Street where Charles Havell had previously run a boys academy. Ca 1849, Mr Knighton purchased Caversham House on Church Street with 2 acres of land. Previous occupants were Sir Rufane Donkin, founder of Port Elizabeth in South Africa and Sir Nathaniel Clissold. Caversham House Academy had properties on either side of Church Street with a connecting tunnel where pedestrian crossing is now. The school playground is now the site of Caversham Library and the classrooms, the New Testament Church of God and the Working Men's Club. The school continued until 1921. The garden at the front of Caversham House was sold to Reading Corporation to widen Church Street in preparation for the new Caversham Bridge. The building was demolished in 1965 but one of the Holm Oaks from the gardens remains in St Martins Precinct. A memorial window in St Peter's Church commemorates the Knighton family.*

*Mr Knighton had 4 daughters and started the girls's school to be run by his two youngest daughters. Matilda Knighton retired as Principal in 1926. Rosa Knighton married Ferdinand Charles Dermott, and was co-principal until the 1890s. Alice Olivey, a pupil at school from 1902, was principal of the school from 1926 until 1972, when the Knighton family finally relinquished their interest.*

*Hemdean House School has alumni of national significance:*

*Elsie Smith MBE (1881-1968) Missionary and nurse. She spent 33 years working with Maori people on the Whanganui River. Cited in the Dictionary of New Zealand Biography; awarded an MBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours in 1955*

*Lizbeth Webb – Born Elizabeth Sandra Horton (1926-2013) First heard on the BBC aged 16, the 'Champagne Soprano' became a star of stage and radio. Bless The Bride was composed for her, she starred in Guys and Dolls, and featured on the Goon Show.*



*Babita Sharma (1977-) Former BBC News presenter, documentary maker and author. Having grown up in corner shops in Reading and Caversham, her book *The Corner Shop: Shopkeepers, the Sharmas, and the Making of Modern Britain* was published in 2019.*

*(b) Social Importance: The building or structure has played an influential role in the development of an area or the life of one of Reading's communities:*

*The small school, which has remained largely unaltered, served Caversham and Reading from an era pre-dating the 1870 and 1880 Education Acts. Archived information relating to the school documents the Knighton's vision for girls' education from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century within the school building.*

*The British Newspaper Archive provides evidence of the importance of both the building and what was provided: 'Terms which are moderate' provided for 'superior English education in all its branches. Modern languages, music, drawing, dancing...' The house and its hilly location, were stressed: 'The Premises stand on an eminence, are detached and very healthy...'*

*Academic work was entered for public exams by the College of Preceptors, with teaching provided by 'qualified staff and visiting Professors'.*

*There are strong local memories of the family which founded the school and its particular ethos. As testimony by contemporary teachers and pupils reveals, local people who attended the school as children frequently sent their own children to the school, through multiple generations. The size of the classrooms, as built for Francis Knighton, were an important factor in the school ethos. Hemdean House provided 'a school environment which was very happy for staff and pupils alike. (Anna Greaves, Senior School teacher, report in Caversham Bridge Community Newspaper June 2024)*

*Hemdean House maintained strong links with St Peter's Church (where Francis Knighton is buried), and a small side gate opens onto Hemdean Rise, making an easy walk to the church via the Mount and across Church Road. The school developed links with local businesses and charities, supporting Caversham traders by opening the annual Christmas Late Night Shopping in St Martin's Precinct with festive music and carols.*

**Architectural Interest –**

*(a). Sense of place - i. The building or structure is representative of a style that is characteristic of Reading..*

*The style of Hemdean School illustrates the prevalence of superior polychromatic brickwork with stone mouldings in and around central Caversham, where terraces of Victorian houses and 'villas' spread out from the centre. In Hemdean Hill and Hemdean Rise, for example, where such housing survives in a great state of completeness, these polychromatic brick terraces form the southern border of the school's site.*

*Additionally, the school and its lodge have been carefully sited in their hilly location, and this chimes with the careful siting of the polychromatic brick terraces in Caversham, which move up and down the hills and are contoured around the curve of principal roads such as Gosbrook Road.*

*(b). Innovation and Virtuosity - i. The building or structure has a noteworthy quality of workmanship and materials.*

*The architectural details of Hemdean House are very fine, with horizontal courses of cream brick against a red brick ground that visually tie into the stone detailing of the windows and doors. Above the windows, which survive mostly intact with their original configurations and even glass, are prominent keystones, illustrated in the appended photographs. A variant of Flemish bond brickwork has been used throughout the exterior of the original building.*

*There is a combination of individual windows with arched tops, a triple bay on the front façade, and a fashionable polygonal bay window to the south side overlooking the site of the formerly large conservatory, whose plinth remains in the ground. The sites of the original toilets, and in one instance an original water closet attached to the north side of the building, attest to the remarkable completeness of the school building. The block which originally housed music rooms survives, despite an unattractive 20th-century addition.*

*There are two significant fireplaces which remain inside the building along with several boarded-up fireplaces of simple design. The interior panelling and shuttering remain around the principal windows, and there is a very fine staircase of several levels as well as original floor tiles and panelled oak door with what is likely to be the original brass knob at the front. Finally, there are artefacts from the school's history and archival materials which survive, as well as paintings and prints documenting the school at various moments in its history.*

*(b). Innovation and Virtuosity - ii. The building or structure is the work of a notable local/national architect/engineer/builder.*

*The Reading Mercury reported on 18 August 1860 that the school was designed by H Jones. London. Horace Jones was active in Caversham at that time. He designed the School and the Parish School, which became the Caversham Centre for Adult Education, now Caversham Health Club. All the evidence points towards Horace Jones being the architect of Hemdean House.*

*Sir Horace Jones PPRIBA (20 May 1819 – 21 May 1887) was an English architect particularly noted for his work as architect and surveyor to the City of London from 1864 until his death. He served as president of the Royal Institute of British Architects from 1882 until 1884, and was knighted in 1886. His most recognised work, Tower Bridge, was completed posthumously.*

*(b). Innovation and Virtuosity - iii. The building or structure shows innovation in materials, technique, architectural style or engineering.*

*The school's architecture is certainly progressive for a date of the later 1850s, as it displays the polychromy that was coming into fashion during this decade in part due to the architectural writer John Ruskin and the Oxford Style – for example, the Natural History Museum in Oxford by Benjamin Woodward and Thomas Deane (1855-59). Instead of the gothic style so popular in Oxford, however, Hemdean House displays classical features that were to reappear during the emergent Arts and Crafts Movement, which it anticipates in some ways.*

*It appears as though the brief of the school's architect was to build in a progressive style that was absolutely up-to-date for 1850s Britain, while working to a budget and keeping features simple. The major decorative features are subtle ones, such as the prominent keystones above the windows.*

*(c). Group Value - i. The buildings/structures form a group which as a whole has a unified architectural or historic value to the local area.*

*The significance of the girls' school for 165 years, from 1859 to 2024, and its integral link to Caversham House Academy in the heart of Caversham Village has significant historic value to Caversham.*

*The link of the polychromatic brickwork of Hemdean House to the slightly later terraced housing surrounding it has previously been noted.*

*Final Comments:* *Hemdean House School, which is visible from Hemdean Road and from Balmore Walk, is a striking building of architectural importance. The site with the Lodge at the bottom of the hill still evokes the school built for girls in 1862. The emphasis on the importance of girls' education was ahead of its time, and 165 years is a remarkable period for a school to provide continuous education. It leaves an important legacy. The legacy of the Knighton family who occupied Caversham House, Church*



*Street for almost 100 years remains important. Their lengthy contribution to education at both Caversham House Academy and Hemdean House School deserves full recognition.*

#### **4. Consultations**

4.1. The following were consulted on the proposed addition to the Local List:

- Multimedix Holdings Limited(landowner);
- Caversham ward councillors;
- Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee;
- Reading Civic Society; and
- Caversham and District Residents' Association (CADRA) and Caversham GLOBE (local community groups).

4.2. Responses were received from:

4.3. **Stephen Hodgson on behalf of Multimedix Holdings Limited**

*"Thank you for your letter dated 11th February 2025 regarding the proposal to add Hemdean House School to the List of Locally Important Buildings and Structures of Local Heritage Significance. We acknowledge receipt of the letter. Please find our responses to specific questions as requested, in blue, in the document attached.*

*The main School House and the Nursery building (Lodge) have been part of the history of Caversham for 160 years. I truly appreciate the effort that must have gone into the historical research of Hemdean House School and buildings. My family and I have had a personal connection the school for nearly 50 years, yet much of the information was new to us, in particular the possibility that the architect may be Sir Horace Jones. Can I suggest that a transcript is forwarded to the Berkshire Archives, to further enrich the historical records it holds regarding Hemdean House.*

*We will endeavour to preserve the buildings discussed throughout the document: that being, the House and Lodge as stated in the document. Please can site map be updated with annotations of the buildings of interest only: there are several wooden buildings and prefabricated structures on-site that have little to no heritage significance are not mentioned in the proposal. I have provided an amended site plan for ease.*

*I hope this proposal forms the start of further applications regarding significant buildings of historical interest in the area such as **St Anne's Well** or other schools such as the **Queen Anne's site in Caversham** or the **Abbey in Reading***

*In the meantime, as custodians of the site, I would appreciate more information on what the what is expected from the site should the application be successful. I would also like to know if I am expected to attend the meeting where the application is discussed. My email address is provided above for ease and speed of communication."*

*(Comments of the landlord on the nomination form are attached as Appendix 2)*

4.4. **Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee**

*"Reading CAAC support the local listing nomination for Hemdean House School and are pleased to see the whole site including the original school building and lodge are part of the nomination."*

4.5. **Reading Civic Society**

*"In summer 2023 I was taken around the site and the historic building by some of the children at the school. It was certainly interesting.*

*Based on the case put forward – we judge is worthy of being adopted as a Locally listed Building.”*

## 5. Assessment

The proposal to add a building or structure to the Local List should be considered against the criteria in Appendix 2 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (adopted 2019).

### 5.1. Exclusions

- 5.1.1. The Local Plan specifies that a building should not be considered for the Local List where it is already part of a conservation area, scheduled monument or subject to an Article 4 direction relating to historic or architectural interest. Hemdean House School and Lodge is not within any of these existing designations and can therefore be considered against the other criteria.

### 5.2. General principles

- 5.2.1. Hemdean House School and Lodge dates from 1862 and therefore needs to be considered against the following general principle:

*b. 1840 - 1913: Any building, structure or group of buildings that is/are of clearly-defined significance in the local context and where elements that contribute to its/ their heritage significance remain substantially complete.*

- 5.2.2. The research on the history of Hemdean House School opening in 1862, the school and lodge's presence on the Ordnance Survey Map dating back to 1877, and the architectural characteristics of the building indicate that it was built between the 1850s and 1870s. There have been no serious alterations that undermine the main school buildings and the lodge's character.



Figure 1. The OS Map dating 1877

### 5.3. Significance

- 5.3.1. To be added to the Local List, a building or structure must fulfil at least one of the defined significance criteria, which fall into two categories – historic interest and architectural interest. These are assessed below.

#### **Historic Interest**

##### *a. Historical Association*

*i. The building or structure has a well authenticated historical association with a notable person(s) or event.*

*ii. The building or structure has a prolonged and direct association with figures or events of local interest.*

- 5.3.2. The foundation of Hemdean House School could be directly associated with women's education history and related acts in Britain. In the 19th century, there was growing awareness of the importance of educating women beyond the basic level. The Education Act of 1870 established the foundation for elementary education for children, leading to academically oriented education for girls rather than only domestic skills. As

such, Hemdean House School, being one of the first girls' schools in Reading, represents the transition of national education aims for girls.

- 5.3.3. The founder of the school is Mr Francis Knighton, who opened schools for boys in many locations within the Reading Town Centre and in Caversham, was the schoolmaster of Caversham House Academy for years. It was not only Mr Knighton himself but also his family who managed these schools. Hemdean House School was run by his daughters Matilda and Rosa. Being an organist at one time at Caversham Church and playing and worshipping at St Peter's Church, Mr Knighton was a well-known person. Today, a memorial window in St. Peter's Church honours the Knighton family.
- 5.3.4. The submitted nomination file discusses Horace Jones of London, the designer of Tower Bridge of national importance, as the possible architect of Hemdean House School. However, none of the studies on Horace Jones's buildings clearly indicate or mention the nominated asset. This aspect is discussed under the assessment of the architectural interest of Hemdean House School and Lodge.
- 5.3.5. However, as listed on the file for the subject asset, Hemdean House School has alumni of national significance:
- Elsie Smith MBE (1881 - 1968) Missionary and nurse. She spent 33 years working with Maori people on the Whanganui River. Cited in the Dictionary of New Zealand Biography; awarded an MBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours in 1955
  - Lizbeth Webb - Born Elizabeth Sandra Horton (1926 - 2013) First heard on the BBC aged 16, the 'Champagne Soprano' became a star of stage and radio. Bless The Bride was composed for her, she starred in Guys and Dolls, and featured on the Goon Show.
  - Babita Sharma (1977- ) Former BBC News presenter, documentary maker and author. Having grown up in corner shops in Reading and Caversham, her book The Corner Shop: Shopkeepers, the Sharmas, and the Making of Modern Britain was published in 2019.

#### *b. Social Importance*

*The building or structure has played an influential role in the development of an area or the life of one of Reading's communities. Such buildings/structures may include places of worship, schools, community buildings, places of employment, public houses and memorials which formed a focal point or played a key social role.*

- 5.3.6. Hemdean House School is an independent school, and there is no evidence of its clear influential role in Caversham or Reading's development. The school is hardly mentioned in the historical development of the village or social life, not having a particular significance compared to any other school.
- 5.3.7. It is known that after 1850, Caversham, Lower Caversham, and Emmer Green continued to attract wealthy newcomers, including businessmen, professionals, and retired military officers, who settled on the parish's south-facing slopes. They occupied large homes and more modest villas, resulting in a considerable increase of affluent private residents from 40 in 1876 to 94 in 1895 and 199 by 1907. The development pattern in the vicinity of Hemdean School House constitutes typical Victorian terraces, very different from the highly rural character of Hemdean House School grounds, which hosted boarding and day school within a pleasant open green site.
- 5.3.8. Although the nomination file includes the school's links to the school's education quality, local memory of the Knighton family, local businesses and charities, festive music and carols and some spatial/physical connections to St Peter's Church, it is considered the asset was not a focal point or had a key social role that features an important local interest, it has a limited social value.

### *c. Industrial Importance*

*The building or structure clearly relates to traditional or historic industrial processes or important businesses or the products of such industrial processes or businesses in the history of Reading or are intact industrial structures, for example bridges.*

5.3.9. Hemdean House School and Lodge is not considered to fulfil this criterion.

### **Architectural Interest**

#### *a. Sense of place*

*i. The building or structure is representative of a style that is characteristic of Reading.*

5.3.10. Hemdean House School and Lodge do not have the noticeably patterned brickwork that is common in Reading. However, the brickwork of the buildings comprises both Flemish and English bonding of red brick, contrasting cream-coloured single-brick stripes, the distinctive feature of the mid-1850s to late 1870s, adding unique characteristics to the local architecture. As such, the nominated asset is especially noteworthy for adding value to the Caversham and Reading styles.



*Figures 2 and 3. Details of brick bonding: Flemish bond on the principal façade (left), the mixture of Flemish and English Bond on the southern façade (right) (photographs are from an appendix of the nomination file)*

#### *b. Innovation and virtuosity*

*i. The building or structure has a noteworthy quality of workmanship and materials.*

*ii. The building or structure is the work of a notable local/national architect/engineer/builder.*

*iii. The building or structure shows innovation in materials, technique, architectural style or engineering.*

5.3.11. The following text is from Reading Mercury dated 18 August 1860:

***“Caversham New Schools.—On Tuesday last the foundation stone of a new school room was laid at Caversham. The Caversham school has for some time been under a somewhat heavy rental, and it was resolved by the committee of management that building should be raised, and a subscription opened for that purpose. Liberal subscriptions were received, plans for schools and a master's residence were procured from Mr. H. Jones, architect, London, and approved of, but the funds at the disposal of the committee did not justify them in***

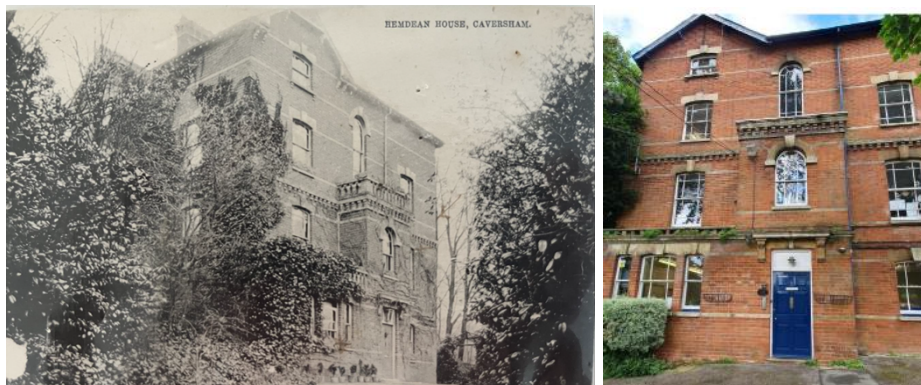
**carrying out the whole of the design. They have therefore determined to build only one school room and the master's house, the contract for which will involve an expenditure of about £600, a large portion of which has been already subscribed.**

*At four o'clock the children of the school, headed by the Caversham Academy Band, under the direction of **Mr. Knighton**, marched to the spot where the new building is about to be erected, bearing number of banners with mottoes, Success to the new schools," " Search the scriptures," " Train up a child in the way should go," &c.*

*The Rev. J. Bennett was the officiating minister. On arriving at the ground, the choir sang psalm, and prayer was then offered up, and after the customary service was gone through, Mrs. John Stephens proceeded to perform the ceremony of laying the foundation stone. In the name of Mrs. Stephens, Mr. Worthington said he begged to express the great pleasure she had had in laying the foundation stone of that new school, and she trusted that the poor children of this and future generations would be brought up in that school and receive a good sound Christian education, and learn their duty towards God and man. The children were then re-formed into a procession and were again led by the band and marched to the orchard belonging to Mrs Monck, where, under a tent, tea and cake were provided for them. Besides other gentlemen present we noticed Captain Coffin, Captain Harrison, and those mentioned above. During the afternoon the band played several airs, and the children left highly delighted with their treat. **The contract for the erection of the schools has been taken by Mr. B. Dunn, jun., builder, Southampton-Street.**"*

- 5.3.12. The nomination file states Horace Jones, a nationally important architect, might have designed Hemdean House School and Lodge, and the above paragraph from the local newspaper refers to plans being procured from his practice. However, there is no other evidence confirming this, therefore the Council cannot confirm that Horace Jones was the Architect and worked on the nominated asset. However, it is clear that that Hemdean House School and Lodge design is influenced by the widespread national styles of the period of 1850s to 1870s: mid-Victorian classic together with Italianate and Victorian gothic details, displaying local workmanship and techniques.
- 5.3.13. The main architectural feature of the main schoolhouse is its unusual domestic appearance, which blends formal education use with the flexibility of the Victorian classical style. To the front elevation, the asymmetrical design of three bays is composed of an end gable of a shallow pitched roof supported on brackets with dentil detail and carved bargeboards, a central bay defined by double-storey projection with front door under the bracketed hood and round-headed windows on upper floors, and a left bay displaying main bay organisation centred and vertically aligned segmented arched marginal glazed timber sash windows under large stone segmental arches with prominent keystones, and pronounced stone corniches and cream horizontal bandings.
- 5.3.14. The southern side elevation of the building has a similar gable with a bay window on the ground floor but a two-storey, two-bay element to the left, as appears in the photographs below. It is noted that both the front and side elevations, due to the prominent position and height of the building, have been the most visible faces of Hemdean House School, although historic photographs reveal the loss of some decorative elements such as original bargeboards, stone cornice eaves, and parapets. It is noted that there are also some surviving elements of the interior: staircase, floor tiles, shutters and fireplaces.





*Figures 4 and 5. Historic photograph of the school building (date not known) (left) and existing front elevation of the building (right) (from appendices of the nomination file)*

5.3.15. The Lodge of Hemdean House School displays the impressive architecture of the main school building on a modest scale of more 'old English style' housing. The materials used include facing red brick in Flemish Bond under two gabled stone tiled roofs with original decorative bargeboards, ridge tiles and ornamental chimneys intact. The main elements of interest are the central projecting gable of the main entrance with fine architectural detailing featuring an arrow slit ventilator with decorative cream brickwork and a dentil horizontal band. The order and design of the bays are the same as the main building, while the right gable of its street-facing side elevation has a distinctive gothic window design.



*Figures 6 and 7. Historic photograph of Hemdean House School and Lodge (date not known) (left) and the front elevation of the lodge (right) (from the social media account of the school)*

#### *c. Group value*

- i. The buildings/structures form a group which as a whole has a unified architectural or historic value to the local area.*
- ii. The buildings/structures are an example of deliberate town planning from before 1947.*

5.3.16. Whilst the design of the buildings does not relate particularly closely to that of any of its immediate neighbouring terraces, the main school building, lodge and some other partially remained buildings such as music room have group value within the boundaries of the school ground.

## **5.4. Conclusion of assessment**

5.4.1 Hemdean House School and Lodge qualifies for addition to the Local List because it:

- Is not within a conservation area, scheduled monument or area subject to an Article 4 direction relating to historic or architectural interest

- Dates from between 1840 and 1913 and is of clearly-defined significance in the local context and elements that contribute to its heritage significance remain substantially complete;
  - Contributes to the heritage of the Borough in terms of its historical association;
  - Contributes to the heritage of the Borough in terms of its sense of place;
  - Contributes to the heritage of the Borough in terms of its innovation and virtuosity;
  - Contributes to the heritage of the Borough in terms of its group value.
- 5.4.2 A description of the significance of the building for inclusion in the Local List is included in Appendix 3.

## **6. Contribution to strategic aims**

- 6.1. The Council's new Corporate Plan has established three themes for the years 2022/25. These themes are:
- Healthy Environment
  - Thriving Communities
  - Inclusive Economy
- 6.2. These themes are underpinned by "Our Foundations" explaining the ways we work at the Council:
- People first
  - Digital transformation
  - Building self-reliance
  - Getting the best value
  - Collaborating with others
- 6.3. Full details of the Council's Corporate Plan and the projects which will deliver these priorities are published on the [Council's website](#). These priorities and the Corporate Plan demonstrate how the Council meets its legal obligation to be efficient, effective and economical.
- 6.4. Local listing of buildings and structures helps to achieve the Healthy Environment theme of the Corporate Plan, by helping to retain those buildings that contribute towards making Reading a more attractive place to live and connect Reading's residents to the town's past.

## **7. Environmental and climate implications**

- 7.1. The Council declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 26 February 2019 (Minute 48 refers).
- 7.2. Local listing of buildings and structures, where it leads to the retention of those buildings or structures, can help to address the climate emergency by negating the need for demolition and new development, which are processes that use significant amounts of energy and result in emissions. However, in the long-term, it can be more difficult to achieve high levels of energy performance in older buildings than in new builds. There are therefore potentially either positive or negative effects, and schemes will need to be assessed at the application stage in terms of their compliance with the Council's policies.

## **8. Community engagement**

- 8.1. Details of the consultation carried out are set out in section 4 of this report. The scope of consultation to be carried out on proposals for addition to the Local List was part of the local listing process agreed by Planning Applications Committee on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2020 (Minute 56 refers).

## 9. Equality impact assessment

- 9.1. It is not expected that there will be any significant adverse impacts on specific groups due to race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, age or religious belief as a result of the recommendations of this report.

## 10. Other relevant considerations

- 10.1 None of this report.

## 11. Legal implications

- 11.1. Addition to the Local List is not a statutory process, and there are no legal implications of the recommendations of this report.

## 12. Financial implications

- 12.1. Consideration of this nomination and any resulting amendments to the Local List will be accommodated within existing budgets.

## 13. Timetable for implementation

- 13.1. Not applicable.

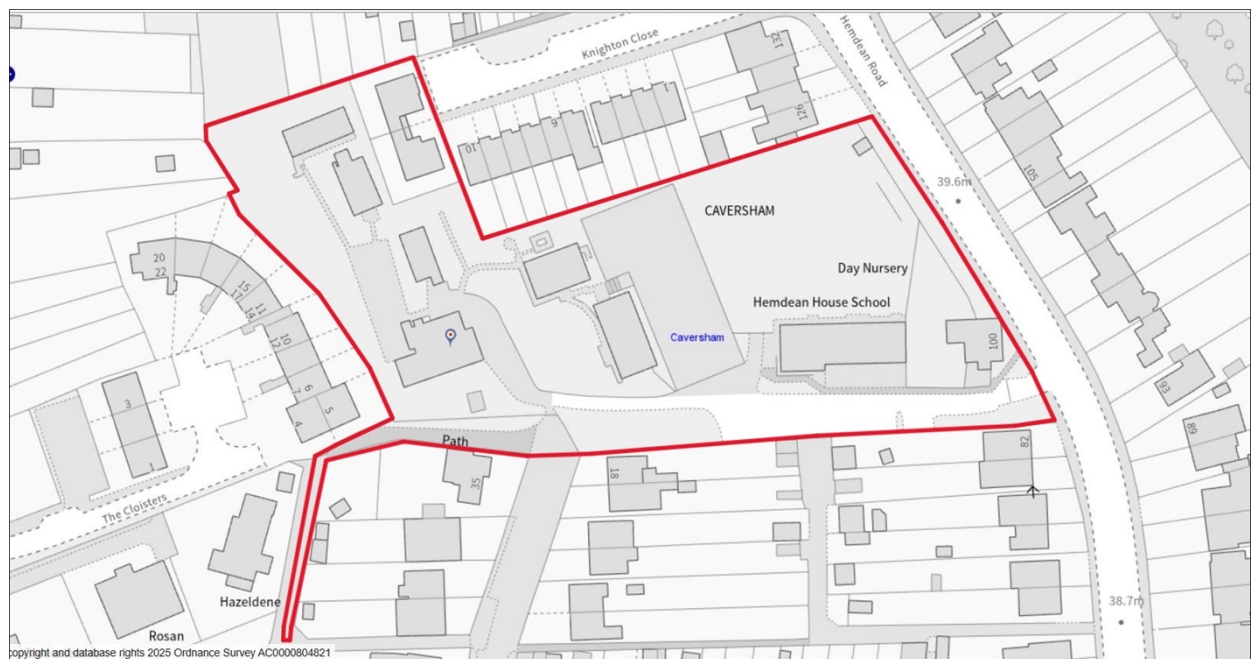
## 14. Background papers

- 14.1. There are none.

## Appendices

1. Location map
2. Nomination form (with landlord's comments on it)
3. Proposed local list text

## Appendix 1: Location plan





## Appendix 2: Nomination Form with landlord's response on it

Your reference number is FS-Case-630939026.

(Additional information provided by the Landlord)

Thank you for submitting Nominate a building or structure for adding to the Local List. You can download a PDF copy of your nomination at the bottom of this page.

**Address of building/structure:** Hemdean House School and Lodge, Hemdean Road, Caversham, Reading

**Postcode of building/structure:** RG4 7SD

**Owner of building** (if known): Hemdean House School Ltd, [Multi-Medix Holdings Ltd owns the building](#)

**Age of building:** (b) 1840 - 1913: any building, structure or group of buildings that is/are substantially complete and unaltered and of definite significance.

Please provide comments or further explanation of above: In 1859 a new girls' school was formed in Verona Lodge, Church Street, Caversham on a site now occupied by the extension to the telephone exchange. After purchase of agricultural land on the bank of the Hemdean Bottom dry chalk valley, the new purpose-built school for girls opened in 1862, renamed Hemdean House School with both boarding and day places. It remained in continuous use for education until 2024 and the original school buildings with fine architectural details are largely unaltered. As shown in period images, the Lodge was part of the original construction and was occupied by the caretaker of the school.

[The above statement we believe to be true.](#)

**The building or structure has a well authenticated historical association with a notable person(s) or event:**  
Yes

Please provide further comments or explanation: The founding of a girls' school that went beyond primary education is of national significance, and Francis Knighton and his daughters took the lead in this. Knighton is a figure of considerable local interest (see below).

[Frances Buss opened the first girls school in North London \(collegiate\) in 1850 and was the first to coin the term "Headmistress". We believe the first ever ladies school in reading was the Abbey, but it may also be Amersham Hall in 1861, our school was probably the third girls school, we think after the education act of 1870. Nevertheless significant achievement.](#)

The fact that the architect was almost certainly Horace Jones of London is also of national importance, as Jones was the architect of Tower Bridge and the rebuilt Caversham Park after a fire of 1850 for the industrialist William Crawshay. Crawshay and Knighton worshipped at St Peter's Church in Caversham and are both buried in the churchyard there. It seems highly plausible that Horace Jones would have been recommended to Knighton by Crawshay.

Horace Jones has been the subject of a new biography: Horace Jones, Architect of Tower Bridge by David Lascelles (Cornwall: Profile Books, 2024)

<https://www.towerbridge.org.uk/discover/people/sir-horace-jones>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Horace\\_Jones\\_\(architect\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Horace_Jones_(architect))

[To the best of our knowledge there is no evidence that Horace Jones ever visited Hemdean House or indeed designed it.](#)

**The building or structure has a prolonged and direct association with figures or events of local interest:**  
Yes

**Please provide further comments or explanation:** Mr Francis Knighton (1803 - 1883) opened a school for boys in Reading ca 1826 in Gun Street, moving ca 1835 to Gun Street and then by 1841 to 23 Church Street where Charles Havell had previously run a boys academy. Ca 1849, Mr Knighton purchased Caversham House on Church Street with 2 acres of land. Previous occupants were Sir Rufane Donkin, founder of Port Elizabeth in South Africa and Sir Nathaniel Clissold. Caversham House Academy had properties on either side of Church Street with a connecting tunnel where the pedestrian crossing is now. The school playground is now the site of Caversham Library and the classrooms, the New Testament Church of God and the Working Men's Club. The school continued until 1921. The garden at the front of Caversham House was sold to Reading Corporation to widen Church Street in preparation for the new Caversham Bridge. The building was demolished in 1965 but one of the Holm Oaks from the gardens remains in St Martins Precinct. A memorial window in St Peter's Church commemorates the Knighton family.

[We believe this to be correct](#)

Mr Knighton had 4 daughters and started the girls' school to be run by his two youngest daughters. Matilda Knighton retired as Principal in 1926. Rosa Knighton married Ferdinand Charles Dermott, and was co-principal until the 1890s. Alice Olivey, a pupil at the school from 1902, was principal of the school from 1926 until 1972, when the Knighton family finally relinquished their interest.

### **We believe this to be correct**

Hemdean House School has alumni of national significance:

Elsie Smith MBE (1881 - 1968) Missionary and nurse. She spent 33 years working with Maori people on the Whanganui River. Cited in the Dictionary of New Zealand Biography; awarded an MBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours in 1955

Lizbeth Webb - Born Elizabeth Sandra Horton (1926 - 2013) First heard on the BBC aged 16, the 'Champagne Soprano' became a star of stage and radio. 'Bless The Bride' was composed for her, she starred in 'Guys and Dolls', and featured on the Goon Show.

Babita Sharma (1977- ) Former BBC News presenter, documentary maker and author. Having grown up in corner shops in Reading and Caversham, her book 'The Corner Shop: Shopkeepers, the Sharmas, and the Making of Modern Britain' was published in 2019.

### **We believe this to be correct**

**The building or structure has played an influential role in the development of an area or the life of one of Reading's communities:** Yes

Please provide further comments or explanation: The small school, which has remained largely unaltered, served Caversham and Reading from an era pre-dating the 1870 and 1880 Education Acts. Archived information relating to the school documents the Knighton's vision for girls' education from the mid-19th century within the school building. The British Newspaper Archive provides evidence of the importance of both the building and what was provided: 'Terms which are moderate' provided for 'superior English education in all its branches. Modern languages, music, drawing, dancing... The house and its hilly location, were stressed: 'The Premises stand on an eminence, are detached and very healthy...'

Academic work was entered for public exams by the College of Preceptors, with teaching provided by 'qualified staff and visiting Professors'.

There are strong local memories of the family which founded the school and its particular ethos. As testimony by contemporary teachers and pupils reveals, local people who attended the school as children frequently sent their own children to the school, through multiple generations. The size of the classrooms, as built for Francis Knighton, were an important factor in the school ethos. Hemdean House provided 'a school environment which was very happy for staff and pupils alike. (Anna Greaves, Senior School teacher, report in Caversham Bridge Community Newspaper June 2024) |

**Though, it has been in existence for circ 160 years, it has not played an influential role in the development of the area or the life of one of Reading's communities simply by the nature of the fact it has always been a very small, private school and the current site proposed of historical interest is situated away from Caversham's centre.**

Hemdean House maintained strong links with St Peter's Church (where Francis Knighton is buried), and a small side gate opens on to Hemdean Rise, making an easy walk to the church via the Mount and across Church Road. The school developed links with local businesses and charities, supporting Caversham traders by opening the annual Christmas Late Night Shopping in St Martin's Precinct with festive music and carols.

**Early links with St Peter's church were strong and Hemdean has always maintained links to the local community. But again, due to the nature of its size, its influence would have been limited. At the most, the School would have had 150 children, significantly smaller than Caversham Primary School or Thameside the schools that would have educated more children in the area.**

**The building or structure clearly relates to traditional or historic industrial processes or important businesses or the products of such industrial processes or businesses in the history of Reading or are intact industrial structures, for example bridges:** No

Please provide further comments or explanation:

**The building or structure is representative of a style that is characteristic of Reading:** Yes

Please provide further comments or explanation: The style of Hemdean School illustrates the prevalence of superior polychromatic brickwork with stone mouldings in and around central Caversham, where terraces of Victorian houses and 'villas' spread out from the centre. In Hemdean Hill and Hemdean Rise, for example, where such housing survives in a great state of completeness, these polychromatic brick terraces form the southern border of the school's site.

Additionally, the school and its lodge have been carefully sited in their hilly location, and this chimes with the careful siting of the polychromatic brick terraces in Caversham, which move up and down the hills and are contoured around the curve of principal roads such as Gosbrook Road.

**We can confirm that the school is made with the same brickwork as the rest of Victorian Caversham.**

**The building or structure has a noteworthy quality of workmanship and materials:** Yes.

**Please provide further comments or explanation:** The architectural details of Hemdean House are very fine, with horizontal courses of cream brick against a red brick ground that visually tie into the stone detailing of the windows and doors. Above the windows, which survive mostly intact with their original configurations and even glass, are prominent keystones which are illustrated in the appended photographs. A variant of Flemish bond brickwork has been used throughout the exterior of the original building. There is a combination of individual windows with arched tops, a triple bay on the front façade, and a fashionable polygonal bay window to the south side overlooking the site of the formerly large conservatory, whose plinth remains in the ground.

**The windows are similar to those found on priest hill, the conservatory was a wonderful feature, but sadly we only can see it in pictures. The footprint of this has been replaced with a yew tree.**

The sites of the original toilets, and in one instance an original water closet attached to the north side of the building, attest to the remarkable completeness of the school building.

**The toilets were demolished in the 80s and I believe these were not original**

The block which originally housed music rooms survives, despite an unattractive 20th-century addition.

**The buildings on the site are terrapins, installed in eighties these were not replacing music rooms but additions to the school as part of modernising the school.**

There are two significant fireplaces which remain inside the building along with several boarded-up fireplaces of simple design. The interior panelling and shuttering remain around the principal windows, and there is a very fine staircase of several levels as well as original floor tiles and a panelled oak door with what is likely to be the original brass knob at the front. Finally, there are artefacts from the school's history and archival materials which survive, as well as paintings and prints documenting the school at various moments in its history.

**There are several Victorian fireplaces in the building, but nothing worthy of any significance, they are plain in their design and made of cast iron as per the fireplaces of the day. The door is not original nor is the door Knob. Sadly there is no Victorian coloured glass in the building, some of the windows are of traditional sash. The plaster is not original on the walls or ceilings due to modernising it for daily school use.**

**The building or structure is the work of a notable local or national architect/engineer/builder:** Yes.

**Please provide further comments or explanation:** The Reading Mercury reported on 18 August 1860 that the school was designed by H Jones, London. Horace Jones was active in Caversham at that time. He designed the steel framed Caversham Park for William Crawshaw following a major fire in 1850; and also St Anne's Primary School and the Parish School, which became the Caversham Centre for Adult Education, now Caversham Health Club. All the evidence points towards Horace Jones being the architect for Hemdean House.

Sir Horace Jones PPRIBA (20 May 1819 - 21 May 1887) was an English architect particularly noted for his work as architect and surveyor to the City of London from 1864 until his death. He served as president of the Royal Institute of British Architects from 1882 until 1884, and was knighted in 1886. His most recognised work, Tower Bridge, was completed posthumously.

<https://www.towerbridge.org.uk/discover/people/sir-horace-jones>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Horace\\_Jones\\_\(architect\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Horace_Jones_(architect))

Horace Jones has been the subject of a new biography: Horace Jones, Architect of Tower Bridge by David Lascelles (Cornwall: Profile Books, 2024)

**Firm confirmation of this would be welcomed.**

**The building or structure shows innovation in materials, technique, architectural style or engineering:**

Yes

**Please provide further comments or explanation:** The school's architecture is certainly progressive for a date of the later 1850s, as it displays the polychromy that was coming into fashion during this decade in part due to the architectural writer John Ruskin and the Oxford style -- for example, the Natural History Museum in Oxford by Benjamin Woodward and Thomas Deane (1855-59). Instead of the gothic style so popular in Oxford, however, Hemdean House displays classical features that were to reappear during the emergent Arts and Crafts Movement, which it anticipates in some ways.

It appears as though the brief of the school's architect was to build in a progressive style that was absolutely up-to-date for 1850s Britain, while working to a budget and keeping features simple. The major decorative features are subtle ones, such as the prominent keystones above the windows.

**We can confirm the keystones are attractive and the simplicity of the design, appealing,**

**The buildings/structures form a group which as a whole has a unified architectural or historic value to the local area:** Yes.

**Please provide further comments or explanation:** The significance of the girls' school for 165 years, from 1859 to 2024, and its integral link to Caversham House Academy in the heart of Caversham Village has significant historic value to Caversham.

The link of the polychromatic brickwork of Hemdean House to the slightly later terraced housing surrounding it has previously been noted.

The building does not form part of a group of structures though it does have a similar style of other Victorian buildings in the area. While it does hold a historical connection to Caversham village centre, the original school site no longer exists to provide the connection. Though, it no doubt adds to the patchwork of rich history in Caversham village, its significance is limited in comparison to role Caversham Bridge or St Anne's Well played in the development of the village.

**The buildings/structures are an example of deliberate town planning from before 1947: No**

**Please provide further comments or explanation:**

**Please upload any evidence you have assembled that help to make the case as to why the building or structure fulfils the above criteria:** Hemdean House School testimonies.docx, CB.Jun-p10\_17.05.24.pdf, CB.Jun-p11\_17.05.24.pdf

**Please briefly describe the relevance of the evidence you have attached:** 2 PowerPoints have been emailed to the Conservation Officer:

1. Architecture
2. Period Images

Uploaded files include testimonies from former teachers and pupils and a recent article about the school in the Caversham Bridge newspaper.

**Please provide any additional comments that you would like to make in support of adding this building or structure to the Local List:** Hemdean House School, which is visible from Hemdean Road and from Balmore Walk, is a striking building of architectural importance. The site with the Lodge at the bottom of the hill still evokes the school built for girls in 1862. The emphasis on the importance of girls' education was ahead of its time, and 165 years is a remarkable period for a school to provide continuous education. It leaves an important legacy.

The legacy of the Knighton family who occupied Caversham House, Church Street for almost 100 years remains important. Their lengthy contribution to education at both Caversham House Academy and Hemdean House School deserves full recognition.

**It would be nice if the Knighton contribution to education is recognised, we appreciate that they were not the first to do this and that beliefs and attitudes towards womens education was changing and they were part of this change.**

**Name:** Helen Lambert, CADRA Chair

**Email address:**

**Date of nomination:** 17/07/2024

### **Appendix 3: Proposed local list text**

Founded by Mr. Francis Knighton, an important educator in Reading and Caversham, Hemdean House School is one of the earliest girls' schools in the region. It played a pivotal role in the development of academic education for women, reflecting the broader social changes initiated by the Education Act of 1870. The school remained operational for 165 years, providing education to generations of girls until its closure in 2024. It also holds historical significance through its alumni, including Elsie Smith MBE, a missionary and nurse; Lizbeth Webb, a renowned soprano; and Babita Sharma, a former BBC News presenter and author, further underscoring the institution's lasting impact on the community and beyond.

Together, Hemdean House School and Lodge represent an important example of mid-Victorian architecture, notable for their fine detailing and their contribution to the architectural landscape of Caversham and Reading. Constructed in 1862, the buildings exemplify a distinctive mid-19th-century architectural style, combining elements of Victorian classical design with local building traditions. Unlike the typical patterned brickwork seen in Reading, the brickwork of Hemdean House School and Lodge features a mix of Flemish and English bonding with red brick, contrasted by cream-coloured single-brick stripes. This characteristic detailing is emblematic of the mid-1850s to late 1870s, adding a unique dimension to the local architectural vernacular and enhancing the architectural significance of the area.

The main school building occupies a prominent position and is distinguished by an unusual domestic appearance integrating formal educational use with the flexibility of Victorian design principles with Italianate influences. The asymmetrical principal elevation includes three bays, with a shallow-pitched roof supported by dentil-bracketed eaves and carved bargeboards. The central bay features a double-storey projection, a front door beneath a stone bracketed hood, and round-headed windows on the upper floors. The typical bay design is visible on the left, defined by vertically aligned marginal glazed windows with stone segmental arches, prominent keystones, and stone cornices. The southern side elevation consistently mirrors these features, incorporating a ground-floor Victorian bay window and a two-storey, two-bay left element. Built on a more modest scale, the Lodge reflects the main school building's design with a more 'old English style'. Constructed from red brick in Flemish bond, the building has two gable design under stone-tiled roofs, surviving original features of bargeboards, ridge tiles, and ornamental chimneys. The central entrance features a noticeable small projecting gable with an arrowslit ventilator surrounded by patterned cream brickwork. The Lodge's design closely follows that of the main building, with a distinctive gothic window on the right gable of its street-facing elevation. Hemdean House School and Lodge, with their architectural and cultural significance, constitute a group and remain important markers in the history of education and the built heritage of Caversham and Reading.

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2 April 2025



**Reading**  
Borough Council  
Working better with you

<b>Title</b>	<b>PLANNING APPLICATION REPORT</b>
<b>Ward</b>	Abbey
<b>Planning Application Reference:</b>	PL/24/0173 (FUL)
<b>Site Address:</b>	Broad Street Mall, Reading, RG1 7QE
<b>Proposed Development</b>	Part-demolition of existing retail units, car park and service areas, demolition and rebuild of car park ramp, and construction of a residential-led, mixed-use development fronting Queens Walk and Dusseldorf Way, including all necessary enabling and alteration works required.
<b>Applicant</b>	McLaren (Broad Street Mall) Ltd and UREF III LP
<b>Report author</b>	Richard Eatough
<b>Recommendations</b>	Delegate to the Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection Services (ADPTPPS) to i) <b>GRANT</b> full planning permission, subject to the satisfactory completion of a s106 legal agreement and delegate to ADPTPPS to make such minor changes to the conditions, Heads of Terms and details of the legal agreement as may be reasonably required to issue the permission or ii) Refuse full planning permission if the legal agreement is not completed by 4 August 2025 (unless officers on behalf of the Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection Services agree to a later date for completion of the legal agreement).
<b>HEADS OF TERMS</b> <b>1. Affordable housing:</b> <b>On site provision</b>	<p><b>Not less than 65 units (10.1% of the total) affordable housing units to be provided on site at Discounted Market Rent level</b>, capped at the lower of 80% Market Rent or LHA or equivalent, inclusive of service charges.</p> <p>Delivery of affordable housing units as per revised affordable housing delivery/phasing plan supplied on 4/3/25), ie:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not less than 10 affordable housing units to be provided in Block A before any BTR (non-affordable) units provided</li> <li>• Not less than 8 affordable housing units to be provided in Block B before any BTR (non-affordable) units provided</li> <li>• Not less than 7 affordable housing units to be provided in Block C before any BTR (non-affordable) units provided</li> <li>• Not less than 5 affordable housing units to be provided in Block D before any BTR (non-affordable) units provided</li> <li>• Overall mix of affordable housing units to match the overall dwelling mix (27x studio/1-bed; 31x 2-bed; 7x 3-bed)</li> </ul>

	<p>Affordable housing to be supplied at no more than LHA rent levels in perpetuity in accordance with Policy H4.</p> <p>(policies: CC9, H3, H4, Affordable Housing SPD)</p>
<p><b>2. Affordable housing: Deferred payment mechanism (DPM)</b></p>	<p><b>The provision of affordable housing (via a commuted sum to go towards affordable housing elsewhere in the Borough), subject to a Deferred Payment Mechanism (DPM) to potentially increase the overall provision to a maximum of equivalent 30% policy compliance, as follows:</b></p> <p><b>DPM</b> to check for potential uplift in profits at two stages:  <b>1. at Build to Rent (BTR) ‘forward fund’ stage; and</b>  <b>2. At BTR ‘build/sell’ stage. Key DPM input assumptions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Profit share trigger threshold at 12.5% of Gross Development Value (GDV) and shared on a 50/50 side by side basis</li> <li>• Profit trigger point at 1. ‘Gateway 3’ approval (ie. Practical Completion and before first occupation of the development) for Forward Fund stage option and 2. <u>whichever is the earlier of either 80% occupancy or 12 months from Practical Completion for the Build/Sell stage</u></li> <li>• ‘Open book’ disclosure of costs and values as appropriate need to be market-facing, prevailing and benchmarked</li> <li>• RBC to have accepted or rejected within 3 months</li> <li>• Fixed inputs/assumptions of Benchmark Land Value (BLV) of scheme at £6.4m 12.5% profit on GDV, professional fees of 9% and Finance at 2% above base</li> </ul> <p>The maximum potential affordable housing contribution shall be a maximum equivalent 30% provision, in accordance with Policy H3.</p> <p>(policies: CC9, H3, Affordable Housing SPD)</p>
<p><b>3. Queens Walk Public Realm Scheme (QWPRS)</b></p>	<p><b>No commencement of Block A above existing BSM car park roof level (unless, in the event that the QW podium is to be removed, in which case, prior to commencement of works and a s278 agreement is required) shall take place unless and until a public realm scheme for Queens Walk (index-linked) has been submitted.</b></p> <p>Elements of the QWPRS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applying for and agreement of s278 agreement as required</li> <li>• Repaving of QW area (extent shown on plan)</li> <li>• Streetlighting improvements</li> <li>• Drainage systems, including elements of SUDs directed to landscaping beds</li> <li>• Shrubs and soft landscaping</li> <li>• Ecological planting</li> <li>• Childrens’ play</li> <li>• Public art (could include collaboration with Hexagon).</li> </ul> <p><b>RBC to consider QWPRS and to advise to approve or reject within 3 months.</b></p>



	<p>No commencement of QWPRS until the developer has undertaken a full intrusive structural survey of the QW podium. Survey results to be passed to RBC.</p> <p>RBC to either:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. agree to the survey and seek warranties</li> <li>2. Seek that further structural support is undertaken to obtain a warranty; or</li> <li>3. Require that the podium is rebuilt.</li> </ol> <p>In any of the above events:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-podium structural loading standard to be suitable to enable the applicant's indicative landscaping scheme to be built/installed and in any event, be not less than the originally designed-QW loading standard; and</li> <li>-for the avoidance of doubt, the QWPRS shall be provided in full, irrespective of the works required to ensure the structural integrity of the podium.</li> </ul> <p><b>Completion of the agreed QWPRS no later than first occupation of Block A.</b></p> <p>(policies: CC7, CC9, CR3, EN12, EN14)</p>
<p><b>4. Düsseldorf Way Public Realm Scheme (DWPRS)</b></p>	<p><b>No commencement of Block C shall take place until:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-s278 agreement has been agreed; and</li> <li>-a public realm scheme for Düsseldorf Way (DWPRS) has been submitted.</li> </ul> <p>Elements of the DWPRS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Full details of the replacement DW podium (extent indicated in public realm area in application submission and to include the full width of DW with reference to a plan to be appended to the s106), to include materials, levels, interface with MQ podium area, sections and full structural calculations;</u> thereafter:</li> <li>• Repaving of the DW area (same extent shown on plan above)</li> <li>• Streetlighting improvements</li> <li>• Drainage systems, including elements of SUDs directed to landscaping beds</li> <li>• Shrubs and soft landscaping</li> <li>• Ecological planting</li> <li>• Childrens' play</li> <li>• Public art</li> <li>• In the event that the development comes forward ahead of the redevelopment of the Minster Quarter redevelopment, the DWPRS to also include appropriate DW Temporary Measures to include hoarding at the southern site edge, murals/art, green wall(s), and meanwhile uses. The DW Temporary Measures to be retained and maintained in good order to the Council's satisfaction until such time as the/a Minster Quarter redevelopment public realm scheme is implemented.</li> </ul>

	<p><b>RBC to consider DWPRS and to advise to approve or reject within 3 months.</b></p> <p>For the avoidance of doubt:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-podium structural loading standard to be suitable to enable the applicant's indicative landscaping scheme to be built/installed and in any event, be not less than the originally designed-DW loading standard; and</li> <li>-for the avoidance of doubt, the DWPRS shall be provided in full, irrespective of the works required to ensure the structural integrity of the podium.</li> <li>-part of the DWPRS is to include a suitable structure to demonstrate feasibility for retaining existing trees on DW to include supporting and shuttering the tree pits, any retaining walls/stabilisation and any further preservation works, which may as necessary include moving trees in the pits.</li> </ul> <p>No commencement of DWPRS until the developer has provided the replacement DW podium, to warranty level to the Council's satisfaction.</p> <p>Provision of joint working arrangement with Minster Quarter development to ensure seamless public realm with Minster Quarter development.</p> <p><b>Completion of the agreed DWPRS no later than first occupation of Block C.</b></p> <p>(policies: CC7, CC9, CR?, EN12, EN14)</p>
<b>5. Public Art Strategy</b>	<p><b>Prior to commencement, submission of a scheme for inclusion of Public Art</b> within the Queens Walk and Düsseldorf Way areas, to consist of the agreement of a scheme for street-based art projects in the public realm. Subject to an award of tender to artist(s) via an art feasibility study (of no greater value than <b>£10,000</b>).</p> <p>RBC to agree or to reject within three months.</p> <p>Completion/installation of public art no later than completion of QWPRS or DWPRS, as appropriate.</p> <p>(policies: CC7, CC9, CR3)</p>
<b>6. Medical Facility</b>	<p><b>Safeguarding of Unit 106-107 of the Broad Street Mall (the former "Bride to Be" shop unit, first floor) for use by the NHS for a GP surgery</b> within the existing Broad Street Mall.</p> <p>Upon completion of the s106 agreement, the NHS shall be given a 12 month exclusivity period within which to trigger notification to the developer to complete the lease of Unit 106-107 (details of the lease to be set out and appended to exclusivity agreement).</p> <p><b>Contribution of £450,000</b> to be secured in kind towards the occupation of Unit 106-107 for NHS GP uses (<b>further details to be advised in updated report</b>).</p> <p>NHS will have the ability to use the s106 monies (£450,000) in part or in total as capital works to the unit and /or rental subsidy as they see</p>

	<p>fit.</p> <p>Lease terms, based off reasonably agreed prevailing open-market lease terms and Landlord contributions shall include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-rent-free period</li> <li>-landlord fit-out contribution</li> <li>-reasonable, proportionate and appropriate occupier costs</li> <li>-indicative length of lease: 10-15 years.</li> </ul> <p>The remaining £350,000 to thereafter be used for medical/GP/NHS services within Abbey Wards or adjoining wards. To be spent within 15 further years.</p> <p>In the event that the walk-in centre is closed, Unit 106-107 continues as a stand-alone medical facility.</p> <p>(Policy CC9).</p>
<b>7. Transport</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Highways improvement works</b>, consisting of (i) entering into an agreement under s278 of the Highways Act for <b>regrading part of Hosier Street; and (ii) contribution of £5,000 per TRO towards a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO)</b> for the applicant to secure the necessary highways marking/Order changes to Hosier Street.</li> <li>• <b>Car park management and allocation plan</b> to be submitted prior to commencement of any phase indicating the breakdown of the 100 residential and 353 public parking spaces.</li> <li>• To provide details of a <b>car club for two vehicles</b> on site, within the multi storey car park, for a period of not less than five years following practical completion. Provision no later than first occupation of Block C.</li> <li>• Prior to first occupation of the development the applicant must undertake the improvement/rearrangement works to the basement area as illustrated on drawing 332110742/5500/015 Rev P05 to facilitate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The new entrance to the multi storey car park</li> <li>• The new exit from the multi storey car park</li> <li>• The alterations to the Penta Hotel service area</li> <li>• The provision of the roundabout</li> <li>• The provision of the 5 Hexagon parking bays along with access and egress from these parking bays</li> <li>• The provision of the droppable bollards to aid servicing for the Hexagon</li> <li>• Infilling gaps between existing pillars unless undertaken as part of Hexagon redevelopment works</li> <li>• All signing and lining associated with the above</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Policies CC9, TR1, TR3, TR5, Revised Parking and Design SPD</p>
<b>8. Heat Network and Energy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Safeguarding for the possible provision of a district heating connection</b> as follows:</li> </ul>

	<p>-Before the end of the 'Gateway 2' stage, a feasibility study for future connection to a District Heat Network shall have been submitted to the Local Planning Authority for consideration.</p> <p>-Feasibility Study to consider a strategy for a communal ground (GSHP) or air (ASHP) source heat pump with connection to the heat network (using all up to date and relevant data to the HN)</p> <p>-Feasibility Study to set out the full schedule of costs for the communal/individual HP options</p> <p>-No later than six months from receipt of the Study, the Council shall have confirmed whether the development must connect to the heat network</p> <p>-If approved for connection, the developer shall provide a scheme to ensure the provision of a GSHP or ASHP and connection to the district heating system</p> <p>-If not feasible, the applicant to submit an alternative energy strategy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>£290,106 (as set out in updated energy strategy February 2025 update) zero carbon offset financial contribution</b> to be paid on commencement of development</li> </ul> <p>Policy H5, CC2, CC3, CC4 and the Sustainable Design and Construction SPD.</p>
<b>9. Employment and Skills Plan</b>	<p><b>Provision of Employment, Skills and Training (Construction Phase only) Plan or in lieu financial contribution – developer to provide in kind or otherwise</b> payable in accordance with the Employment Skills and Training SPD on implementation of the development.</p> <p>Applicant's ESP to have prior written agreement by the Council/Reading UK CIC no later than three months prior to the commencement of the development and thereafter be implemented; or</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the event that the developer chooses not to provide the ESP themselves then the following will be sought in lieu of the related plan:</li> </ul> <p><b>£2,500 x GIA 55,262 sqm (source Savills Economic Benefits Information) /1000</b>  <b>= £138,155</b></p> <p>(Policy CC9 and the Employment, Skills and Training SPD)</p>
<b>10. Build to Rent restrictions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All Affordable units to be identified on plan to be attached to S106 agreement [prior to permission]. No future changes other than as agreed in writing by the LPA .</li> <li>• Affordable Housing Covenant period – in perpetuity. In the event of a change from Build to Rent tenure all affected Affordable units revert to Affordable Rent tenure with rents set no higher than LHA. The affected units to be offered for sale to a Registered Provider and the Council. In the event that an RP or the Council do not take control of the units an equivalent financial contribution shall be made to the Council to enable AH provision elsewhere in the Borough to be determined by a mutually agreed valuation, or arbitration.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the event that the owner of a build to rent development notifies the Council that it intends to sell or otherwise transfers some or all of the units so that they no longer qualify as build to rent and the Council has provided written agreement to this change, the owner/operator shall provide a valuation of the Build to Rent accommodation immediately prior to the sale/transfer and a valuation of the value following the change to non-Build to Rent. A financial contribution equal to 30% of the increase in value shall be paid to the Council within 3 months of sale/transfer.</li> <li>• Service charges – All rents to be inclusive of service charge but exclusive of utility bills and council tax and ‘pay for’ services - hire of function room etc.</li> <li>• Assured Shorthold Tenancies offered at 3 years in length. Tenants may opt for shorter tenancy. Include 6 month tenant-only, no fee, break clause (2 month notice)</li> <li>• Rental growth limited to LHA.</li> </ul> <p><b><i>Nominations and Lettings – Discounted Market Rent (LHA)</i></b></p> <p><b><i>First Lets:</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Either a typical unit, show apartment or the marketing suite will be made available for viewings</li> <li>• Three months before Practical Completion, the Council will be notified of expected date units will be available.</li> <li>• The “Marketing Period” will start two months before Practical completion and the Landlord will provide information on rents, specification, floor plans and management details.</li> <li>• For the first 4 weeks of the Marketing Period the affordable homes will be exclusively marketed to Council nominees, and the following will apply: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Council has 10 working days to advertise the properties. This includes arranging viewing days for Applicants;</li> <li>• The Council then has 5 working days to confirm eligibility of the Applicants against the ‘Qualifying Criteria’ and then nominate those Applicants to the Landlord;</li> <li>• Subject to appropriate checks by the Landlord that the Qualifying Criteria has been met, Applicants will have then have 2 working days to confirm if they wish to take the property.</li> <li>• If the Landlord considers that the Qualifying Criteria has not been met, they will notify the Council who will be granted an additional 2 working days to nominate an alternative Applicant for this particular property.</li> <li>• Where more than one Applicant wants the same property, priority will be as per the Priority Hierarchy: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Households on the Council’s Housing Waiting List</li> <li>2. Households where at least one person both lives and works in the Borough</li> <li>3. Households where at least one person either lives or works in the Borough</li> <li>4. Households where at least one person lives or works in a neighbouring local authority</li> </ol> </li> </ul> </li> <li>• After the initial 4-week period, any remaining available affordable homes can be marketed by both the Council and the Landlord.</li> <li>• Within this period the Council may still nominate Applicants, however</li> </ul>
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	<p>priority will be determined on a first come first served basis, subject to the Qualifying Criteria being met.</p> <p><i>Subsequent Lets:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Existing residents will provide 2 months' notice of their intention to activate a break clause, at which point the property can be marketed.</li> <li>• As above, for the first 4 weeks of any marketing period for subsequent lets of the affordable homes will be ring fenced to Council nominees.</li> </ul> <p><b>Qualifying Criteria for all tenants</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Can afford the rents proposed [affordability to include money provided through the benefits system]</li> <li>2. Are an appropriate household size for the available property (to be defined in the agreement)</li> <li>3. Suitable references &amp; credit checks (to be defined in the agreement)</li> <li>4. Have no rent arrears or history of rent arrears</li> <li>5. No history of anti-social behaviour (to be defined in the agreement)</li> <li>6. Satisfactory face-to-face interview with the Landlord's representative (to be defined in the agreement)</li> </ol> <p><b>Priority Hierarchy:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Households on the Council's Housing Waiting List</li> <li>2. Households where at least one person both lives and works in the Borough (to be defined in the agreement)</li> <li>3. Households where at least one person either lives or works in the Borough</li> <li>4. Households where at least one person lives or works in a neighbouring local authority</li> </ol> <p><b>Management Strategy:</b></p> <p>3 months before Practical Completion the Landlord to submit a Management Strategy to the Council for approval to include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Details of the individual weekly rent and service charge (noting that all rents are inclusive of service charges)</li> <li>• Management, maintenance and servicing arrangements for the affordable units/ occupiers (e.g. on-site presence hours, bin disposal, visitor parking etc)</li> <li>• Details as to how the affordable homes will be marketed to prospective occupiers (for both first and subsequent lettings) and the different forms of media proposed to be used.</li> <li>• No dwelling to be occupied in any part of the development until the Strategy has been approved in writing by the Council. No dwelling to be occupied other than in accordance with the approved Strategy.</li> </ul> <p>In accordance with Policy H4.</p> <p><b>General Build to Rent Provisions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 20 year minimum as BTR from Practical Completion of each Block A, B, C, D.</li> <li>• Assured Shorthold Tenancies (ASTs) offered at 3 years in length. Tenants may opt for shorter tenancy. Include 6 month tenant-only,</li> </ul>
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	<p>no fee, break clause (2 month notice). [as per NPPG guidance]. Unless otherwise agreed in writing by the LPA.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual statement to RBC, confirming the approach to letting the affordable units, their ongoing status, and clearly identifying how the scheme is meeting the overall affordable housing level required in the planning permission. [as per NPPG Paragraph: 006 Reference ID: 60-006-20180913]</li> <li>• All tenancies, and Title documents, for Blocks, A, B, C, D shall include provisions enabling all residents to have the right to access and use the Communal Facilities within all residential areas, subject to reasonable management requirements and for the avoidance of doubt the charges and other terms of use shall be the same for all residents (regardless of tenure).</li> <li>• To provide and manage the Communal Facilities in perpetuity. Except where alternative amenity facilities of equivalent effect and a timetable for their provision and arrangements for their management have been agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority AND no earlier than the expiration of 20 years from Practical Completion of Blocks A, B, C and D.</li> <li>• Definition and demarcation of all communal facilities on plans. Clarification of nature/function of each to be included in the s106 agreement.</li> </ul> <p>(Policy H4)</p>
<b>11. Rooftop Car Park Improvement Scheme</b>	<p><b>Rooftop Car Park Improvement Scheme (CPIS)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No commencement of development above roof level until a <b>CPIS</b> scheme has been submitted.</li> <li>• Scheme to indicate, through best endeavours and practical means: hard and soft landscaping, green walls, pergolas or similar partial covering of parked cars and painting/art to improve residential outlook, whilst maintaining suitable access to parking spaces and circulation (subject to further surveys and due diligence).</li> <li>• Scheme to be brought forward in tandem with any current lessee.</li> <li>• RBC to have approved or rejected within 3 months</li> <li>• Approval of Scheme no later than Practical Completion of Block A.</li> </ul> <p>Implementation of scheme no later than practical completion of Block B. Completion of scheme no later than practical completion of Block B.</p>
<b>12. IDR Scheme</b>	<p><b>Provision of a study into a feasibility scheme for bridging and/or environmental improvements over the IDR from the BSM development/Minster Quarter area (to a maximum value of £10,000)</b></p>
<b>13. Sundry obligations</b>	<p><b>Completion of each tower Block in its entirety, using the phasing A,B,C,D once there has been commencement of that Block.</b></p>
<b>14. Monitoring, costs/other etc.</b>	<p><b>£20,000</b> S106 monitoring cost</p> <p>Applicant to pay the Council's reasonable legal costs in preparing the</p>

	<p>s106 agreement (whether or not the s106 proceeds to completion) to an agreed maximum value.</p> <p>All financial contributions index-linked from the date of permission. Any unexpended monies to be repaid within ten years (unless otherwise specified)</p>
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<b>Conditions</b>	<p><u>Conditions to include:</u></p> <p>General:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. TL1 - Full - time limit - three years</li> <li>2. Approved Plans</li> <li>3. Samples of materials (samples including sample panels to be approved, showing how materials fit together, window reveals, etc.)</li> </ol> <p>Pre-commencement conditions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Archaeological WSI</li> <li>5. Contaminated Land 1: Assessment (To be submitted)</li> <li>6. Contaminated Land 2:</li> <li>7. Remediation Scheme (to be submitted)</li> <li>8. Construction and Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) for both demolition and construction phases</li> <li>9. Scheme for temporary location of public toilets within BSM</li> <li>10. Landscaping scheme full details (in accordance with indicative landscaping plans submitted)</li> <li>11. CCTV (re-)location strategy</li> </ol> <p>Specified trigger points:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>12. Noise Mitigation Scheme for residential from other uses e.g. gyms (prior to commencement of any residential tower)</li> <li>13. Sprinkler system details (prior to commencement of any residential tower)</li> <li>14. Building maintenance arrangements (prior to construction of any residential tower)</li> <li>15. Submission of details of marshalling area for food delivery vehicles (prior to construction of public realm at Dusseldorf Way)</li> <li>16. No plant installed prior to a noise assessment (?)</li> <li>17. Odour Assessment and Odour Management Scheme including flue strategy (prior commencement above podium level)</li> <li>18. Contaminated Land 3: Remediation Scheme (implement and verification)</li> <li>19. Contaminated Land 4: Unidentified Contamination</li> <li>20. Land Gas Remediation Scheme (to be submitted)</li> </ol> <p>Pre-occupation (of any residential dwelling):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>21. Landscape management plan</li> <li>22. Biodiversity Enhancements (before occupation of any residential dwelling)</li> <li>23. Submission of details of marshalling areas for food delivery vehicles.</li> </ol>
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	<p>24. Arboricultural Method Statement (to be submitted)</p> <p>25. Security Strategy</p> <p>26. Building Management scheme (pre-occupation)</p> <p>27. Resident Cycle Parking details</p> <p>28. Public Cycle Parking details</p> <p>29. Waste and Recycling details</p> <p>30. Delivery and Servicing details</p> <p>31. Car Park Management Plan (To be approved)</p> <p>32. Air Quality Mitigation Scheme (to be submitted)</p> <p>33. Hours of Deliveries/Waste Collection for all uses</p> <p>34. Ventilation and Extraction details (to be submitted)</p> <p>Restrictive/ongoing conditions:</p> <p>35. Hours of construction/demolition (standard)</p> <p>36. No Bonfires</p> <p>37. Accessible Lifetime Homes retained</p> <p>38. Vehicle Parking and EV Charging Points (as specified)</p> <p>39. Parking Permits 1 (notification to LPA)</p> <p>40. Parking Permits 2 (notification to occupants)</p> <p>41. PD rights removed for telecoms (roof of blocks)</p> <p>42. No Piling (Environment Agency)</p> <p>43. TV/radio interference study</p> <p>44. Detailed hard and soft landscaping, including implementation and management (pre-commencement)</p> <p>45. Bat Licences</p> <p>46. Green Roofs</p> <p>47. Foul Drainage (Environment Agency)</p> <p>48. Surface Water Runoff Contaminants (Environment Agency)</p> <p>49. Erosion Control, drainage systems and inspection (Environment Agency)</p> <p>50. Borehole Management (Environment Agency)</p> <p>51. Water Network Upgrades (Thames Water)</p> <p>52. Sustainable Drainage (pre-commencement)</p> <p>53. Sustainable Drainage (as specified)</p> <p>54. BREEAM</p> <p>55. SAP Assessment – Major - design stage</p> <p>56. SAP Assessment – Major – As Built</p> <p>57. Car park rooftop improvement scheme</p> <p>58. Restriction on some Class E uses (no office uses, etc.)</p> <p>59. Hours of Operation for retail uses: 0800hrs-0000hrs</p> <p>60. External Lighting Strategy (to be submitted)</p>
<b>Informatives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive and Proactive requirement</li> <li>• Pre-commencement conditions</li> <li>• Highways</li> <li>• S106 agreement applies</li> <li>• Terms and Conditions</li> <li>• Building Regulations approval required</li> <li>• Complaints about construction</li> <li>• S59 Highways Act</li> <li>• Encroachment</li> <li>• Contaminated land</li> <li>• Tree related subsidence</li> <li>• Community Infrastructure Levy</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No parking permits for residents</li> <li>• Thames Water informatives</li> <li>• Fire strategy controls</li> <li>• Planning permission confers no rights of access</li> <li>• Possible need for aviation warning lights</li> </ul>
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## 1. Executive summary

- 1.1. This Major proposal would enable the redevelopment of a brownfield site allocated for a significant residential-led mixed-use scheme whilst retaining the existing shopping mall. The proposals would provide up to 643 residential units, 65 of which would be affordable, significant public realm improvements including public art and an improved access into the existing public car park. The development would be of a high-quality design which would sit appropriately within the longer views of the town centre, remaining subservient to the tallest buildings in the Station Area Cluster. The proposal would result in less than substantial harm to a number of heritage assets nearby. It would also be a significant improvement in terms of biodiversity and tree planting in the town centre. Residential standards are in the main, very good for a central area residential scheme and overall, significant public benefits will be delivered.
- 1.2. Officers have weighed the benefits and harm in the planning balance, and consider that overall, the benefits of the proposal would outweigh the harm, and therefore the application is recommended for approval.

## 2. Introduction and site description

- 2.1. The site is approximately 0.62 hectares in area (0.79 hectares at basement level), and comprises part of the existing Broad Street Mall, an established shopping centre in Reading which opened in 1971. The site is bounded to the north by Oxford Road, to the east by St Mary's Butts, to the south by Hosier Street and Dusseldorf Way and to the west by Queen's Walk and the Penta hotel and student accommodation.
- 2.2. The site is shown below on the location plan, bounded by the red line. The blue line indicates the extent of the applicant's ownership. This application solely relates to the redevelopment of the southern part of the Broad Street Mall, and the public realm beyond. The remainder of the shopping centre would be retained and it is intended would continue to trade throughout the construction phase.

Location Plan (ground floor level (basement level is different))



- 2.3 The shopping centre has a servicing basement area with ground (ie. podium level) and a first floor trading floor in a balcony arrangement which includes the present NHS walk-in surgery. A multistorey public car park sits behind the retail units within the structure of the building, extending to roof level, comprising a total of approximately 700 parking spaces.
- 2.4 The basement level extends underneath the entirety of the Broad Street Mall, including the proposed development site and includes plant rooms, waste storage area, storage facilities for retail units and service areas. The basement and public car park are accessed from Castle Street and Caversham Road (the IDR). Above the Mall and to the north of the development area is office space within Fountain House on the northwest corner and Quadrant House on the southeast corner. The surrounding area is a mix of retail, commercial and leisure uses.
- 2.5 In terms of planning designations in the adopted Reading Borough Local Plan 2019, the site is within Central Reading, the West Side Major Opportunity Area, Western Grouping Tall Building Area, Central Core, Office Core and the Primary Shopping Area. The site is also within the Minster Quarter Development Framework Area and the emerging Hosier Street Framework Area. The site is within Flood Zone 1 (ie. at lowest risk of flooding).
- 2.6 The site is not within a conservation area but lies adjacent to the St Mary's Butts/Castle Street Conservation Area and close to the Russell Street/Castle Hill/Oxford Road Conservation Area. There are also a number of Listed Buildings in close proximity to the site, including the Grade I Listed Reading Minster/Church of St Mary, Grade II\* Listed St Mary's Church (Castle Street), Grade II Listed Sun Inn (Castle Street), Grade II Listed 33, 35, 37 St Marys Butts and The Horn pub amongst others. It would also be visible from longer views elsewhere in the town, none of which are identified as 'protected views'.
- 2.7 The Broad Street Mall was constructed in the 1960s, opening in 1971 as The Butts Centre. Since then, there have been a large number of planning applications related to the site. Those most relevant to this application are set out below:

182054	Demolition of all existing structures, erection of a part 7, part 8 storey building for use as 101 bed Hotel (Class C1 Use) at Ground - 8th Floor and Restaurant with ancillary Bar (Class A3/A4 Use) at ground floor, with means of access, servicing and associated works. [Premier Inn proposal on Hosier Street] Permission 4/11/2019, lapsed 4/11/2022
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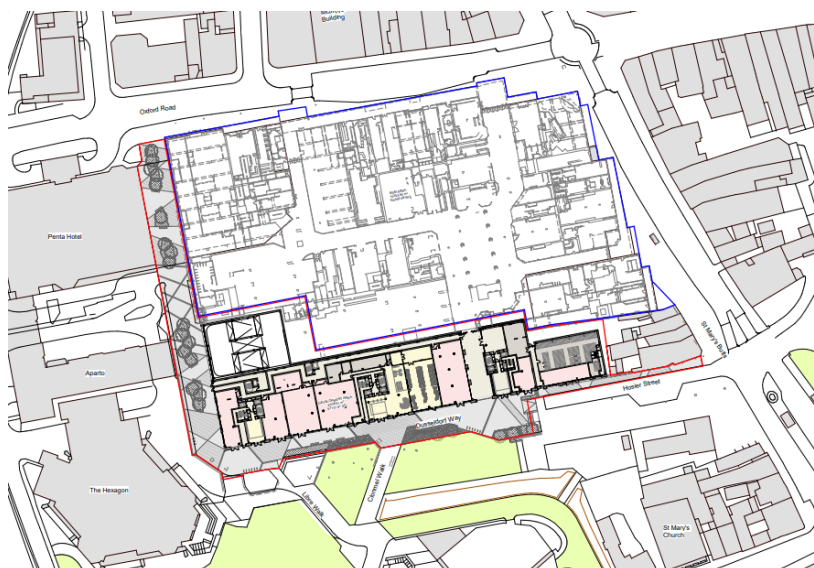
182137	Construction of three residential buildings (Use Class C3) ranging in height from 5 to 20 storeys above Broad Street Mall (Site E to provide 42 units, Site B to provide up to 134 Units and Site A to provide up to 148 units) and provision of a podium level amenity area. Site C - construction of 16 storeys above Broad Street Mall (total of 18 storeys from ground level on South Court) comprising ground and first floor retail (Use Class A1/A2/A3) and residential over upper floors (Use Class C3, to provide up to 98 units). Creation of ground floor retail units (Use Class A1/A3/A4) fronting Dusseldorf Way and ground floor retail (Use Class A1/A2/A3) fronting Queens Walk, all necessary enabling and alteration works required within the existing Broad Street Mall basement, ground and upper floors. Associated car park alterations, provision of servicing and refuse storage, cycle parking, public realm, landscape, and other associated works. Permission 06/12/2021, lapsed on 06/12/2024
231464	The amalgamation of units 49- 50 and 52 and a change of use from Use Class E (Commercial, Business and Service) to a sui generis use to enable a family entertainment centre to come forward. Permission 06/12/2023, implemented
PL/24/0174	Part-demolition of podium deck on Dusseldorf Way and Queens Walk, to existing retaining wall, excavation works and road and hardstanding re-alignment to create a temporary construction area related to proposed redevelopment works at Broad Street Mall. Withdrawn 21/3/25 [this 'enabling' works application was overtaken by adjustments to the main application and the applicant decided it was no longer required]

### 3. The proposal

3.4. Full planning permission is sought to redevelop the southern side of Broad Street Mall to create a residential-led, mixed use development. The proposals can be summarised as follows:

- Demolition of part of Broad Street Mall, including existing retail floorspace, part of the car park and the existing car park ramp
- Construction of four residential towers on the southern side of Broad Street Mall. Block A at the western end of the site would be 30 storeys (142.55m AOD (Above Ordnance Datum) or 97.195m from podium level) Block B would be 26 storeys (130.355m AOD or 85m from podium level), Block C would be 19 storeys (106.255m AOD or 60.9m from podium level) Block D would be 8 storeys (72.79m AOD or 27.405m from podium level). These would house a maximum of 643 purpose-built Build to Rent (BTR) tenure dwellings, 1,737sqm of flexible Class E (flexible commercial) uses at ground floor level and an enhanced entrance to the existing Mall from Dusseldorf Way/Hosier Street
- Internal amenity spaces and external communal amenity space at ground and first floor levels and external amenity areas at 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> levels (total of 2,033sqm external private amenity space) for use by all future residents
- Provision of 'back of house', bin and cycle storage at basement and ground floor levels

- Construction of a new car park ramp and associated amendments to car park access arrangements. This results in a reduction of 331 public car parking spaces
- Amendments to car parking at 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and rooftop levels to accommodate the new residential buildings and amenity areas
- Amendments to the existing road and servicing access to Broad Street Mall, including the provision of new delivery bays



- 3.5. The proposal would provide 10.1% of the units as Affordable Housing at Local Housing Allowance (LHA) levels. The unit mix would be as follows:

Type	Market BTR	Affordable BTR	Total
<b>Studio/1 bedroom flat</b>	271	27	298 (46.2%)
<b>2 bedroom flat</b>	266	31	297 (46.1%)
<b>3 bedroom flat</b>	42	7	49 (7.6%)
<b>Total</b>	579 (89.9%)	65 (10.1%)	643 (100%)

- 3.6. The application scheme would also provide a public realm and landscaping scheme for areas outside of the applicant's ownership, namely on Dusseldorf Way and Queen's Walk, which form part of the wider Minster Quarter redevelopment area. The public realm works would retain existing trees (just outside the red line of the application site on Dusseldorf Way) and introduce new trees in planters, provide new paving and hard landscaping, free standing timber benches, cycle parking, plaza areas adjacent to the Hexagon and the residential entrance to Block B and public art.
- 3.7. The proposals would demolish and re-provide the basement level car park ramp, making amendments to access and egress to the Broad Street Mall. During the construction phase, the car park would be closed to the public, and re-opened once construction of the ramp is complete. The works would permanently reduce capacity of the car park from 784 to 453 spaces. Up to 100 of these retained spaces would be allocated for residential flats associated with the new residential use. The scheme would provide 347 cycle parking spaces for future residents. A further 30 spaces would be provided for public use on Dusseldorf Way and Queens Walk.

- 3.8. In terms of general phasing for the development, the applicant's indicative Phasing Plan and other supporting information indicates that the main phases are (in summary):
- Phase 1 Enabling Works, involving service diversions, structural strengthening, layout alterations. This phase of works would all be within the confines of the existing building and the car park remains open
  - Phase 2 demolition of sections of the existing Mall and demolition and rebuilding of the car park ramp (car park closed)
  - Commencement of towers from west to east (Buildings A, B, C, D)
- 3.9. The application submission information is extensive and the various documents are set out at Appendix 1. Included is a full Environmental Statement (ES). The applicant has estimated the CIL contribution required for this project as approximately £6.3M.
- 3.10. Members of the Committee conducted an accompanied site visit on 27 February 2025 to help inform consideration of this Major planning application.

#### **4. Consultations**

##### **External Consultees**

##### ***Thames Water***

- 4.1. No objections subject to several conditions and informatives.

##### ***Environment Agency***

- 4.2. No objections subject to several conditions relating to surface water, boreholes, piling, foul drainage and erosion controls. These are recommended for inclusion.

##### ***Health and Safety Executive***

- 4.3. The HSE assessed the proposals and confirmed that the information submitted was sufficient for this stage of the scheme.

##### ***Design: South East (D:SE)***

- 4.4. The proposals were assessed at pre-application stage and D:SE were generally positive regarding the proposals. A fuller discussion is provided in the design discussion sections below.

##### ***Historic England***

- 4.5. Historic England objects to the proposals due to the impact the development would have on the significance of the Grade I Listed Church of St Mary's, also known as the Reading Minster, the St Mary's Butts/Castle Street Conservation Area and the Listed Buildings contained within it through a negative change to their setting and a consequently diminished ability to appreciate their significance. The increase in scale of the proposed towers compared to the extant\* permission would result in a greater degree of harm to the historic environment. Recommends that amendments to the scheme to reduce the bulk and height of the towers to levels which would result in less harm as described above.. ***\*Officer comment: note that there is no longer an extant permission.***

##### ***NHS Integrated Care Board (ICB)***

- 4.6. The NHS initially objected to the proposals due to a lack of contribution towards provision of the NHS facility within the Broad Street Mall. Following discussions and negotiations with officers, the applicant has offered to safeguard a unit adjacent to the existing NHS centre for use by the NHS when the scheme comes forwards.

***Defence Infrastructure Organisation***

- 4.7. No objection.

***Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue***

- 4.8. No objection.

***Natural England***

- 4.9. No objection.

***RBC Transport Strategy***

- 4.10. Raised numerous concerns about the proposals, and issues in relation to basement servicing and other neighbouring land-uses took some time to resolve, but all issues have now been resolved to the Highway Authority's satisfaction. There is now no objection, subject to conditions, obligations, s278 agreements and a Traffic Regulation Order.

***RBC Parking Services Manager***

- 4.11. Considers that the inclusion of pergolas and landscaping, etc. on the roof of the present Mall, as indicated in the proposals, will be challenging and such inclusion with parked cars is not advisable/workable.

***RBC Waste and Recycling***

- 4.12. Further information was requested regarding frequency of collections, space for waste storage, swept path analysis plans and commercial waste. The applicant provided the required information, which was considered acceptable. Conditions are recommended for a Waste Management Plan.

***RBC Housing Development***

- 4.13. Welcome the offer of affordable housing, although the amount is below policy requirements, the mix is reflective of the scheme as a whole. The units proposed are capped at the LHA rate and should include service charges, which is acceptable. The criteria for letting and income threshold requirements will be required to be agreed prior to completion of the legal agreement.

***RBC Valuations***

- 4.14. The Valuations team have been involved in negotiations in order to arrive at the affordable housing offer in items 1 and 2 of the Recommendation above.

***RBC Conservation Officer***

- 4.15. The Conservation Officer objects to the application. The proposed development, due to its scale, form, architectural language and design, would visually compete with the Grade I, Grade II, and Grade II\* listed buildings, their settings, conservation areas and their settings and historic core of Reading.

- 4.16. The proposal would result in 'less than substantial harm at the highest level' to the significance of listed buildings and conservation areas, including their settings and wider Reading. This harm should be weighed against the proposal's environmental, social and economic benefits in the planning balance.

***RBC Environmental Protection***

- 4.17. Additional information relating to noise and air pollution was required and has been provided. Conditions relating to noise, air quality, land contamination, bin storage, hours of construction and a CMS are recommended.

***RBC Planning (Natural Environment) Team***

- 4.18. Additional information relating to landscaping, tree provision and protection, the landscaping management plan and SUDS was requested and provided. The Natural Environment Team has no objections subject to conditions relating to an updated arboricultural report and landscaping.

***RBC Ecology***

- 4.19. The proposals would have no impact on protected species or priority habitats, therefore no objection to the proposals. Conditions relating to landscaping and biodiversity enhancements are recommended.

***RBC CCTV Officer***

- 4.20. No objection to the proposals providing the two existing cameras are retained/replaced during construction and after completion. The applicant has confirmed that this would be the case.

***Berkshire Archaeology***

- 4.21. No objection subject to condition relating to archaeological investigation.

***RBC Energy Manager***

- 4.22. Has been involved in negotiations regarding energy and connection to the Minster Quarter Heat Network, see discussion in the Energy and Sustainability section below.

**Resident Groups**

- 4.23. The Reading **Conservation Area Advisory Committee (CAAC)** objects to the application as follows:
- Failure to respect the 1970s architectural heritage of the Broad Street Mall
  - Does not comply with the principles of the Minster Quarter Framework
  - Excessive height and mass of the towers
  - Fails to protect or enhance the character and appearance of the adjacent Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings
  - Is detrimental to short and long range views into the area
  - Is unimaginative in design and materials
  - Unacceptable impact on the quality of life of nearby residents



4.24. The Baker Street Area Neighbourhood Association (BSANA) objects to the application as follows:

- Unacceptable height and massing, exceeding the maximum heights set out in the MQADF
- Harm to nearby heritage assets and longer range views
- Lack of open space and play areas
- Unacceptable environmental cost as a result of demolition
- Lack of Affordable Housing
- Lack of contributions to mitigate the harm to Reading
- Conflicts of interest

### **Public Consultation**

4.25. A total of 852 neighbouring properties were consulted by letter on the following streets:

- St Mary's Butts
- Queens Walk
- Oxford Road
- Castle Street
- Broad Street
- Dusseldorf Way
- Hosier Street
- Bridge Street
- Cheapside
- Gun Street
- Howard Street
- Baker Street
- Body Road
- Anstey Road
- West Street
- Alfred Street

4.26. Six site notices were also displayed at the application site.

4.27. In addition to the letters from the residents' associations referred to above, a further nine letters were received throughout the lifetime of the application. Eight of these letters were in support of the proposal and one objecting to the height and orientation of the scheme.

## **5. Legal context**

5.1. Section 16(2) and 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the local planning authority to have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of special interest which it possesses.

5.2. Section 72 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the local planning authority in the exercise of its functions to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.

- 5.3. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy framework (NPPF) - among them the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'. However, the NPPF does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making (NPPF paragraph 12).
- 5.4. In this regard, the NPPF states that due weight should be given to the adopted policies of the Local Plan 2019 according to their degree of consistency with the NPPF (the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the NPPF, the greater the weight that may be given).
- 5.5. Accordingly, the latest NPPF and the following development plan policies and supplementary planning guidance are relevant:

**National Policy – National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (December 2024)**

Section 2 – Achieving Sustainable Development  
Section 4 – Decision Making  
Section 5 – Delivering a sufficient supply of homes  
Section 6 – Building a strong, competitive economy  
Section 7 – Ensuring the vitality of town centres  
Section 8 - Promoting healthy and safe communities  
Section 9 - Promoting sustainable transport  
Section 11 – Making Effective Use of Land  
Section 12 - Achieving well-designed places  
Section 14 - Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change  
Section 15 - Conserving and enhancing the natural environment  
Section 16 – Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

**Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 Policies:**

CC1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development  
CC2: Sustainable Design and Construction  
CC3: Adaptation to Climate Change  
CC4: Decentralised Energy  
CC5: Waste Minimisation and Storage  
CC6: Accessibility and the Intensity of Development  
CC7: Design and the Public Realm  
CC8: Safeguarding Amenity  
CC9: Securing Infrastructure  
CC10: Health Impact Assessments (emerging policy)  
EN1: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment  
EN2: Areas of Archaeological Significance  
EN3: Enhancement of Conservation Areas  
EN4: Locally Important Heritage Assets  
EN5: Protection of Significant Views with Heritage Interest  
EN6: New Development in a Historic Context  
EN7: Local Green Space and Public Open Space  
EN9: Provision of Open Space  
EN10: Access to Open Space  
EN12: Biodiversity and the Green Network  
EN14: Trees, Hedges and Woodland

EN15: Air Quality  
 EN16: Pollution and Water Resources  
 EN17: Noise Generating Equipment  
 EN18: Flooding and Drainage  
 EN19: Urban Greening Factor (emerging policy)  
 EM1: Provision of Employment  
 EM4: Maintaining a Variety of Premises  
 H1: Provision of Housing  
 H2: Density and Mix  
 H3: Affordable Housing  
 H4: Build to Rent Schemes  
 H5: Standards for New Housing  
 H10: Private and Communal Outdoor Space  
 TR1 Achieving the Transport Strategy  
 TR3: Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters  
 TR4: Cycle Routes and Facilities  
 TR5: Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging  
 RL1: Network and Hierarchy of Centres  
 RL2: Scale and Location of Retail, Leisure and Culture Development  
 RL5: Impact of Main Town Centre Uses  
 OU1: New and Existing Community Facilities  
 CR1: Definition of Central Reading  
 CR2: Design in Central Reading  
 CR3: Public Realm in Central Reading  
 CR4: Leisure, Culture and Tourism in Central Reading  
 CR6: Living in Central Reading  
 CR7: Primary Frontages in Central Reading Borough Council  
 CR10: Tall Buildings  
 CR12: West Side Major Opportunity Area

#### Local Plan Partial Review

- 5.6. The current version of the Local Plan (adopted in November 2019) turned five years old on Tuesday 5th November 2024. The Local Plan was reviewed in March 2023 and around half of the policies in the plan are considered still up to date. However, the rest need to be considered for updating to reflect changing circumstances and national policy. A consultation version of the draft updated version of the Local Plan was published on 6th November 2024.
- 5.7. Although there is a five-year period for carrying out a review of a plan after it is adopted, nothing in the NPPF or elsewhere says that policies automatically become “out of date” when they are five years old. It is a matter of planning judgement rather than legal fact whether a plan or policies within it are out-of-date. This will depend on whether they have been overtaken by things that have happened since the plan was adopted, either on the ground or through changes in national policy, for example.
- 5.8. Officer advice in respect of the Local Plan policies pertinent to this application listed above is that they remain in accordance with national policy and that the objectives of those policies remains very similar in the draft updated Local Plan. Therefore, they can continue to be afforded weight in the determination of this planning application and are not considered to be ‘out of date’. The RBLP section above includes two new emerging planning policies which will be discussed in the Appraisal section below.

Supplementary Planning Documents

Affordable Housing (2021)

Planning Obligations under S106 (April 2015)

Sustainable Design and Construction (Dec 2019)

Employment, Skills and Training (2013)

Parking Standards and Design (2011)

Minster Quarter Area Development Framework (2018)

Other relevant documents:

Conservation Area Appraisal – Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road Conservation Area

Conservation Area Appraisal – St Mary's Butts/Castle Street

Reading Town Centre Public Realm Strategy, DRAFT October 2024 (and has been the subject of public consultation)

Reading Tree Strategy

**6. Appraisal**

6.1. The main considerations are:

- i. **Principle of development**
- ii. **Height, scale, massing and appearance**
- iii. **Heritage and views**
- iv. **Public realm (landscaping, trees/ecology, art and leisure)**
- v. **Quality of accommodation**
- vi. **Unit mix**
- vii. **Affordable housing**
- viii. **Neighbour amenity**
- ix. **Transport**
- x. **Energy and sustainability**
- xi. **S106 legal agreement**

**i. Principle of development**

6.2. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (as reflected in Policy CC1) introduces a presumption in favour of sustainable development (Para. 11) with three overarching objectives, Economic, Social and Environmental. Sustainable development should therefore be approved where it accords with the development plan unless the adverse impacts of doing so would significantly outweigh the benefits of development.

6.3. The NPPF also states that planning policies and decisions should define a network and hierarchy of town centres and promote their long-term vitality and viability – by allowing them to grow and diversify in a way that can respond to rapid changes in the retail and leisure industries, allows a suitable mix of uses (including housing) and reflects their distinctive characters (Para. 90). The NPPF also encourages the effective use of land by reusing land that has been previously developed; (Para. 123), especially where that land is under-utilised, and within a settlement.

6.4. The NPPF has identified an increased need for housing across the country, including Reading Borough. The Emerging Local Plan (the Partial Review) includes provisions for an increased housing target in Reading under Policy H1. These positions combined, points towards an increased demand for housing in this location.

- 6.5. The Minster Quarter Area Development Framework (MQADF) sets out that the immediate environs of the Minster Quarter Area represent one of the largest brownfield regeneration opportunities within Central Reading.
- 6.6. The site also forms part of the West Side Major Opportunity Area (MOA) set out in Policy CR12. The policy vision for this area seeks to create a *“mixed use extension to the west of the centre containing high quality mixed use environments and fostering stronger east west links into the central core”*. Within this policy, sub site CR12d ‘Broad Street Mall’ sets out the below:

**CR12d, BROAD STREET MALL:**

*The site will be used for continued retail and leisure provision, maintaining frontages along Oxford Street and St Mary’s Butts, and improving frontages to Hosier Street and Queens Walk, with uses including residential, with some potential for offices, on upper floors. This may be achieved by comprehensive redevelopment. Alternatively, a development which retains the existing mall with additional development above may be appropriate where it improves the quality of the existing mall frontages.*

Site size: 2.75 ha

Indicative potential: 280-420 dwellings, retail and leisure (no significant net gain assumed).

- 6.7. The application site is previously developed land within the Central Reading area and is part of an allocated site for retail, leisure and residential development. The proposed development would significantly upgrade the existing (external) retail frontages within Broad Street Mall whilst incorporating residential development at upper floors. It would also make a significant improvement at street level when compared to the previously approved scheme (PL/18/2137 (FUL)), which retained the existing frontages along Hosier Street, Dusseldorf Way and Queens Walk. This application proposal increases the active frontage along the southern and western boundaries of the site, and improves the quality of retail/leisure floorspace, whilst effectively integrating the proposed scheme with the existing retail/leisure offer at the Mall.
- 6.8. The accessibility of the application site is considered to accord with Local Plan Policy CC6 (Accessibility and Intensity of Development) and the reconfigured commercial units are within an existing retail centre in the Primary Shopping Area (Policy CR1). The additional provision of 643 units of new housing is also in accordance with the objectives of Policy H1 (Provision of Housing) to assist in meeting the Borough’s annual housing targets and CR6 (Living in Central Reading). Furthermore, the increase in housing beyond the previous lapsed permission (PL/18/2137) would assist in meeting forthcoming increases in housing need as per the emerging Local Plan and therefore it is right that developments such as this (identified as target for dense redevelopment) should increase in density accordingly.
- 6.9. Local Plan Policy CR10 ‘Tall Buildings’ specifies ‘areas of potential for tall buildings’, defining tall buildings as exceeding 12 storeys of residential accommodation. The application site sits within the Western Grouping of Tall Buildings defined as sub area CR10b. Blocks A, B and C would be defined as tall buildings, and given the allocation, are considered to be acceptable in principle in this location. The Western Grouping, as a whole, is described as a secondary cluster of tall buildings to create a distinctive grouping to mark the area as the civic heart of Reading and a gateway for the centre. Tall buildings in this area should be subservient to the Station Area Cluster by being generally lower in height than the tallest building planned in the Station Area Cluster; be linked to the physical regeneration of the wider area; not

intrude on the Key view between Greyfriars Church and St. Giles Church, and a view from the open space in the Hosier Street development to St. Marys Church. The policy also sets requirements for all tall building proposals to be of excellent design and architectural quality as these buildings will be visible from a wide area.

- 6.10. The previous permission (which featured three slightly lower towers) was extant at the time of this application's submission but has since lapsed, meaning that it has no weight as a material consideration in the planning balance, however, it is useful for comparison. Although the proposed scheme is taller than the previous scheme (the tallest element of permission PL/18/2137 was 128m AOD compared to 142.855m AOD in the proposed scheme), the proposals would remain subservient to the Station Hill development. The tallest element of the Station Hill permission stands at 163m AOD. This proposal has Block A (at the western end of the site) at 142.855m AOD, with blocks B and C stepping down from this height to the east. The application site also encompasses a significant area of public realm improvements and other contributions towards public realm, the NHS facility within the Mall itself as well as towards sustainability targets and employment, skills and training. The proposed development is set within the footprint of the existing BSM so is not considered to intrude on the protected views identified above. Matters of design and architectural quality are set out sections below.
- 6.11. The proposal also needs to be considered in relation to the objectives of the MQADF. The MQADF seeks to set out the, *"principles for promoting the development of the area to ensure co-ordinated, high quality, comprehensive development creating a multi-purpose urban quarter for central Reading"*. The indicative Development Framework Master Plan (fig 10 within the MQADF) shows indicative development above the present roof level of Broad Street Mall with areas of private roof garden allocated for residential use, and the activation of the southern façade along Dusseldorf Way/Hosier Street.
- 6.12. The MQADF sets indicative parameter heights for tall buildings at 20 storeys above the podium level. This proposal would build up from below the podium, introducing residential elements (foyers, communal areas) to podium level, with servicing below podium level. This would better integrate the scheme into the existing building form on and around the site. The tallest element would be 30 storeys in height, with Buildings B and C and then D stepping down from there. However, the Framework also allows for height beyond the 20 storey indication:  
*"Whilst 20 storeys above podium has been arrived at as an indicative building height limit, in recognition of the height of revised consents at Station Hill, applications should demonstrate that the height, layout and massing of development has been designed to avoid or minimise harm to the character or appearance of the adjacent conservation areas, including impacts on their settings. The quality of architecture, including materials and detailing should seek to provide an enhancement of views from the conservation area with frontages that positively address the conservation areas rather than directing blank faces towards them."*
- 6.13. Furthermore, since the adoption of the Local Plan, MQADF and the Tall Buildings Strategy, the need for additional housing has been identified and demonstrated by NPPF updates and by an increase housing target number in the emerging Local Plan. This has resulted in an increase in the amount of residential envisaged on this site from up to 450 to now 600 units in the allocation in the Emerging Local Plan. A full analysis of the impacts of the scale, height and massing of the proposals has been provided later in this report, however, tall buildings are considered acceptable in principle in this location.

- 6.14. The MQADF (section 3) also sets out the importance of the creation of a new public realm for the community. The document seeks significantly enhanced existing routes including Queens Walk and Dusseldorf Way as active multi use spaces with high-quality landscape treatment with each having its own distinct character. New street trees should be planted into the ground wherever possible but where this is not achievable planted or raised beds can be used. Sustainable material choices should also be capable of replication. The application proposes new public realm on Dusseldorf Way and Queen's Walk, which would stand alone even if the redevelopment of the Minster Quarter site does not come forward, or does not come forward for some time. A full assessment of the Public Realm provision is provided later in this report.
- 6.15. Therefore, the proposed residential and retail uses, and public realm improvements are considered to be acceptable in principle and in accordance with the applicable elements of the specific sub-area designation. The form of development, including Tall Buildings located within a designated Tall Building Cluster is also acceptable in principle, subject to examination of their impact on the wider area and other material planning considerations as set out below. The section below discusses the impact of the design in further detail.

## **ii Height, scale, massing and appearance**

- 6.16. The NPPF states that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development and is inextricably linked to good planning. In determining planning applications, local authorities should ensure developments are sympathetic to local character, including the surrounding built environment and landscape, whilst not preventing or discouraging appropriate change.
- 6.17. Local Plan Policy CC7 states that, "*all development must be of high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area*". Policy CR2's purpose is to secure appropriate relationships between buildings, spaces and frontages within the centre of Reading. Policy CR3 requires proposals to make a positive contribution towards the quality of public realm in the central area of Reading.
- 6.18. The site is within the West Site MOA (Policy CR12), which also indicates that an increased amount of change and development is expected. However, proposals should ensure that they respect the immediate character and appearance of the area as well as preserving and where possible, enhancing heritage assets.
- 6.19. The development proposals were considered at pre-application stage by the Design South East (DSE) Review Panel in July 2023 and the scheme was amended to incorporate suggested comments. The Panel was generally positive about the overall design and provided some guidance on further improvements. The Panel considered that the proposals were an improvement on the extant planning permission due to the increase in height and the improved interaction with the public realm. Concerns were raised regarding the style of architecture, the quality of north-facing apartments, a lack of private amenity space, sustainability and placemaking with Minster Quarter. The application's Design and Access Statement Addendum responds with commentary on the various revisions made in response to the DSE's comments.

6.20. Buildings A, B and C are tall buildings within the Western Grouping as identified in the Local Plan. Given this, they are considered against the detailed criteria within Policy CR10 below (with a fuller assessment of the design later in this Appraisal):

- *Be of excellent design and architectural quality.*  
The proposal would represent high quality design and appropriate architectural quality, and was received positively by the Design Review Panel. Following design review and submission of the scheme further amendments were made to improve the design further.
- *Enhance Reading's skyline, through a distinctive profile and careful design of the upper and middle sections of the building;*  
The proposed buildings each have a clearly defined 'base' which integrates with the existing Mall. The 'middle' and 'upper' sections use differing materials becoming more lightweight at the highest point to enhance their appearance on the skyline.
- *Contribute to a human scale street environment, through paying careful attention to the lower section or base of the building, providing rich architectural detailing and reflecting their surroundings through the definition of any upper storey setback and reinforcing the articulation of the streetscape;*  
The podium level of the proposals would significantly enhance the street scene and human experience due to the increase in active frontage and improved shopfront design, with materials reflecting the immediate surrounding area.
- *Contribute to high-quality views from distance, views from middle-distance and local views;*  
The verified views and supporting visualisations sufficiently demonstrate compliance in this regard.
- *Take account of the context within which they sit, including the existing urban grain, streetscape and built form and local architectural style;*  
The proposal is located in an area of very mixed urban grain with the proposals seeking to provide a transition from the historic to contemporary development.
- *Avoid bulky, over-dominant massing;*  
The towers are taller and wider than those previously approved at the site. However, it is considered that they would not be over-dominant due to their position, orientation and quality of design.
- *Preserve and, where appropriate, enhance the setting of conservation areas and listed buildings;*  
This is considered in detail in the 'effect on heritage assets' section below.
- *Use high quality materials and finishes;*  
The proposal would comply with this, subject to a suitable condition for submission of sample materials and a worked-up sample panel.
- *Create safe, pleasant and attractive spaces around them, and avoid detrimental impacts on the existing public realm;*  
Improvements to the public realm form a major part of the proposals, and would be a significant benefit of the proposals.
- *Locate any car parking or vehicular servicing within or below the development;*  
No additional car parking is proposed and the servicing is via the existing Mall



basement service area and improving with the separate proposal to access the multi-storey car park.

- *Maximise the levels of energy efficiency in order to offset the generally energy intensive nature of such buildings;*  
This is considered in detail in the Sustainability section of the Appraisal.
- *Mitigate any wind speed or turbulence or overshadowing effects through design and siting;*  
The applicant has submitted evidence which shows that there would be no adverse impacts.
- *Ensure adequate levels of daylighting and sun lighting are able to reach buildings and spaces within the development;*  
This has been assessed as acceptable via independent specialists.
- *Avoid significant negative impacts on existing residential properties and the public realm in terms of outlook, privacy, daylight, sunlight, noise, light glare and night-time lighting;*  
There would be some negative daylight and sunlight impacts on nearby residential and student accommodation uses, however officers consider on balance that the identified daylighting deficiencies are not sufficient to warrant the refusal of this application, when applying an overall critical planning balance.

6.21. Policy CR10 also provides specific requirements for tall buildings within the Western Grouping, which this site falls within:

- *Contribute to the development of a cluster of tall buildings that is clearly subservient to the Station Area Cluster;*  
The proposals would be lower in height than the Station Area Cluster, are more slender than those at Station Hill, and when viewed in long views would remain subservient.
- *Be generally lower in height than the tallest buildings planned for the Station Area Cluster;*  
As above, the tallest element of the Station Area Cluster would be 163m AOD, with the tallest element of this proposal at 142.855m AOD.
- *Be linked to the physical regeneration of a wider area and should not be proposed in isolation;*  
The proposals would integrate directly with the immediate public realm, the Mall and the forthcoming development at Minster Quarter to the south.
- *Where buildings are to be integrated or front onto existing streets, include upper storeys of the taller structures that are set back from a base which is in line with the general surrounding building heights, particularly where the structure adjoins a conservation area;*  
The upper storeys would not be set back from the street frontage, but would include large gaps between towers, and a high quality of design which would ensure that the relationship with the street is appropriate.
- *Not intrude on the key view between Greyfriars Church and St. Giles Church, and a view from the open space in the Hosier Street development to St. Mary's Church*

The position of the buildings are such that these views are sufficiently maintained.

- 6.22. Overall, the proposal meets the aims of Policy CR10. It is therefore considered, on balance, that this submission has made an appropriate justification for proposed tall buildings and complies with the tall buildings policy.



Image of the proposed scheme

- 6.23. The proposed buildings, A, B, C and D (from west to east), will form a group of towers which step down from the tallest point at the western end of the site, down to Block D which is considered to be a mid-level building, although taller than buildings to the east on St. Mary's Butts. This layout is similar to the previously approved scheme, although the proposed buildings are taller and wider. The increased scale of the buildings would result in a more prominent and visible scheme, and would be larger than that illustrated in the indicative scheme suggested in the MQADF. The Framework, though, is clear that the heights suggested are indicative, therefore allowing for taller and larger schemes, providing that development seeks to minimise harm to the appearance of the area or to heritage assets. The proposals would also represent a significant improvement compared to the previous permission in detailed design terms, as well as where the buildings adjoin the public realm at ground floor level.
- 6.24. The buildings themselves would be clearly defined in architectural terms by having a discernible 'bottom', 'middle' and 'top', and would integrate with the public realm and retail function of the Mall at lower levels. The lower levels would have columns at the base of the towers with a 'chequer board' brick detail framing the proposed retail units and residential entrances, which would continue through the length of the lower levels and serve as a reminder of the appearance of Reading Minster. At mid-levels, windows would be framed with grey brick, three-storey frames, and metal infill panels introduced adjacent to windows, with each building utilising a different colour to differentiate them. The colours chosen (light bronze, bronze and

flint) are considered to be sympathetic to the tone of materials of the Reading Minster. Balconies would also be included below 8 storeys to further break up the mass of the buildings and would also help to connect the towers to street level by providing a feeling of public interaction and 'ownership'. At the top of each tower, a 'lantern/crown' detail is provided by metal cladding panels which reflect the panels used at lower levels, and a roof terrace is provided to create a shoulder in the massing of each tower, which also helps to lessen the perceived width of the towers.

- 6.25. External communal amenity areas are proposed in between each tower at lower levels, which directly interact with internal communal areas for future residents. These gaps between the taller elements would break up the massing and provide green spaces which would also be discerned from the street.
- 6.26. Building D is not considered to be a 'tall building' in terms of the definition in Policy CR11 (at eight storeys). Sitting at the eastern end of the site it would provide a visual link from the lower heights along St. Mary's Butts into the application scheme and would reflect similar design cues as the taller elements to the west. It would represent an appropriate design response to the surrounding existing buildings at that end of the site, and would sit comfortably next to both the taller proposal and the neighbouring buildings and help to signal the southern entrance to the Mall on Hosier Street/Dusseldorf Way.
- 6.27. The proposal would be read as a 'family' of buildings, which relate to each other, but have subtly different approaches through use of materials and the orientation of the top level "lantern/crown" elements, especially as they increase in height. The buildings also relate well to the character of the surrounding area, particularly at ground floor level, and through the use of materials. Recesses, framing, shoulder cut-backs and balconies help to reduce the appearance of bulk, as do the columns framing the ground and first two floors. The overall design of the development would represent an appropriate approach for the redevelopment of this allocated site. Although the scale of the proposals is large, it would represent an appropriate response to the indicative approach in the MQADF, and would be acceptable in design terms.
- 6.28. It is considered that the proposed design of the buildings achieves a high quality approach and would result in a significant improvement to the existing appearance of this part of Broad Street Mall through the introduction of a high quality active frontage for the entire southern elevation of the Mall, and improving access into the existing shopping centre. The proposals incorporate high quality materials (detailed samples of which are to be secured by way of condition) and successfully provide a cohesive form of development within the family of buildings whilst transitioning between the contemporary and historic character of site and its surroundings. The section below examines the impact on heritage assets in more detail.

### **iii Heritage and views**

- 6.29. The NPPF requires developments to sustain and enhance the significance of heritage assets, including their settings, and to assess the significance of any heritage asset and the impact of a proposal upon it when weighing the planning balance.
- 6.30. Policy EN1 of the Local Plan seeks to protect heritage assets and their settings and where possible, enhance them. Proposals which affect heritage assets and their settings should seek to avoid harm in the first instance. Any harm identified requires

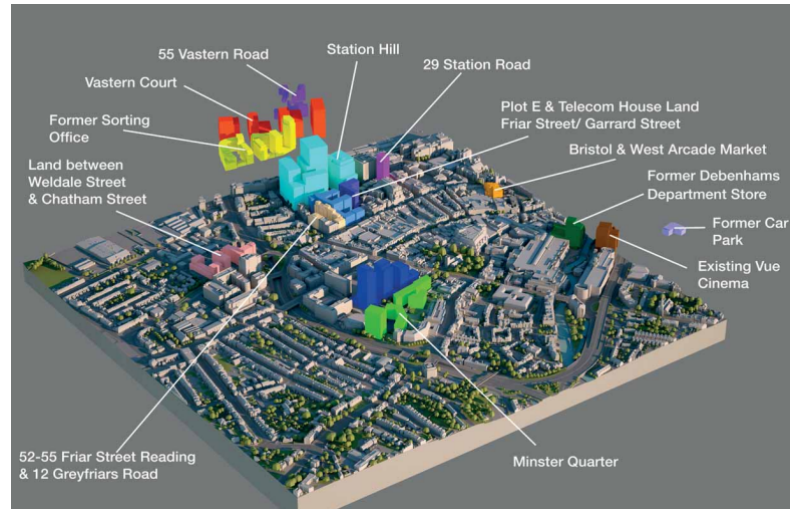
clear and convincing justification, usually in the form of public benefits. Policies EN3 and EN6 of the Local Plan seek to ensure that the special interest, character and architecture of Conservation Areas is conserved and enhanced. Development proposals in conservation areas should make a positive contribution to the historic townscape and be sensitive to the historic context. The MQADF supports development which enhances the nearby heritage assets.

- 6.31. The application proposal is adjacent to two Conservation Areas, St Mary's Butts/Castle Street and Russell Street/Castle Hill/Oxford Road and views material with the application demonstrates that it would be directly visible from both. There are also numerous listed buildings nearby, including the Grade I Listed Reading Minster. The application is supported by a Heritage, Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment (HTVIA) and a further Heritage and Townscape Response submitted following the consultation period and some amendments to the scheme. This document includes various views of the development as Buildings A, B, C and D would be visible in short, medium and long range views from the surrounding area. These have been reviewed by officers and it has been concluded that the buildings would not significantly negatively impact upon these distant views. The view below shows the cumulative development of Reading when viewed from Mcllroy Park, along with a colour coded key of the other developments either approved or proposed in Reading town centre. The proposal is in dark blue on the right of the image.

**The cumulative development of Reading when viewed from Mcllroy Park**







**Colour coded key of the other developments either approved or proposed in Reading town centre**

- 6.32. The comments of objectors on the submitted HTVIA have been carefully considered by officers. Within the November 2024 Townscape, Built Heritage and Visual Impact Assessment, two views (viewpoints 03 and 09), located on Oxford Road looking east towards the proposed development along the northern boundary of the Conservation Area have been included. A further verified view from Baker Street looking east out of the Russell Street/Castle Hill/Oxford Road Conservation Area towards the application site was also submitted. It is noted that this is the only outward looking view indicated on the Character Area Appraisal map and that Historic England do not raise concerns in relation to the Russell Street/Castle Hill/Oxford Road Conservation Area.
- 6.33. Policy EN5 lists views of acknowledged historical significance including **View 1** from Mclroy Park towards Chazey Barn Farm, the Thames Meadow and the Chilterns escarpment and **View 2** Northwards down Southampton Street from Whitley Street towards St Giles Church, St Marys Church and Greyfriars Church.
- 6.34. It is confirmed that the proposals will not appear in View 1, as this is further towards the north (or left of the above viewpoint). In relation to View 2 this is addressed by the Heritage Assessment and TVIA. Proposed Buildings A, B and C are visible in this view but due their siting within the existing Mall footprint, they are slightly offset and retain the view of these three churches. It is therefore considered that the scope of the submitted information is adequate to assess the impact of the development on Heritage Assets.



**View 2 as depicted by View 14 in the Heritage Assessment and TVIA**

- 6.35. The application's supporting material sets out the harm resulting from the proposals to all of the nearby heritage assets and concludes that the proposals would result in some harm to heritage assets, although this would be at the lower end of 'less than substantial harm'. Historic England were consulted on the proposals and they advise that there would be clear harm to heritage assets, at a 'less than substantial level'. The Council's Conservation Officer agrees that the proposals would result in 'less than substantial harm at the highest level'.
- 6.36. In particular, harm has been identified to the settings of the Grade I Listed Reading Minster/Church of St Mary's, Grade II\* Listed St Mary's Church (Castle Street), Grade II Listed Sun Inn (Castle Street), Grade II Listed 33, 35, 37 St Marys Butts and the Horn Inn and the St Mary's Butts/Castle Street Conservation Area along with the Listed Buildings contained within the Conservation Area.
- 6.37. The proposed buildings would be readily visible within the setting of many heritage assets. In particular, this is evident in the TVIA's viewpoint 6 (From Gun Street/Bridge Street junction looking north west) where the proposals would be visible behind the Listed Buildings on the corner of St Mary's Butts and Castle Street and in the context of the Conservation Area. Viewpoint 7 (From in front of Reading Minster looking west) and Viewpoint 18 (Chain Street looking west through the Reading Minster Churchyard) shows the proposals when viewed in the context of the Grade I Listed Reading Minster, competing with the tower of the church. Viewpoints 15, 16, 17a, b and c, show several viewpoints from within the St Mary's Butts/Castle Street Conservation Area along Castle Street looking north towards several Listed Buildings in the foreground (St Mary's Church, The (Rising) Sun Inn and The Horn pub) and the proposal in the background. In these views, the bulk and height of the towers reduce the prominence and importance of the heritage assets and result in a significant change to the backdrop of one of the most important areas in terms of heritage in the Borough.
- 6.38. The proposals would also be visible from a number of viewpoints within the Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road Conservation Area, due to the height of the buildings and the proximity of the Conservation Area. Whilst the scheme would be readily visible, it will generally be in the form of background or glimpsed views and therefore it is not considered that it would result in harm to the special character of the Conservation Area.

- 6.39. The applicant has provided design improvements during the course of the application, focused mainly on materials and detailed design as opposed to form, scale and massing. The amendments were presented to Historic England, who maintain their objection.
- 6.40. In summary, officers advise that the proposals would result in less than substantial harm to the various heritage assets nearby, predominantly due to the scale, position and massing of the buildings. The detailed design of the scheme would represent a significant improvement on the previously approved scheme, and although it is larger (and therefore resulting in more of an impact on heritage assets), it is considered that the increase in scale is mitigated by the significant improvement in design and materials, and so in summary, officers advise that a similar level of harm as the previously approved scheme is caused by the proposed scheme. Overall, less than substantial harm to several heritage assets has been identified, and so this must be weighed against the benefits of the scheme in the planning balance.
- 6.41. Officers advise that given the competing pressures and impacts above, at a human-scale, it will be very important for the public realm to be high-quality and the section below discusses this.

#### **iv Public realm (landscaping, trees/ecology, art and leisure)**



Ground floor use/layout

- 6.42. Policy CR3 requires proposals to make a positive contribution towards the quality of the public realm in the central area of Reading. At street level, the interconnection between the public realm within the application site and the remainder of the Framework Area, adjacent retail frontages and Conservation Areas beyond, is a fundamental consideration for the acceptability of the scheme.
- 6.43. Within the MQADF, the 'Public Realm Parameters' set out that areas of open space and interconnecting public realm are to be well designed, functional, adaptable and capable of effective maintenance. These spaces must also be designed to ensure a vibrant, lively and thriving public space. Also sought are enhancements to existing routes including Queen's Walk and Dusseldorf Way, which are to contain active multi use spaces with high quality landscape.

- 6.44. This application differs from the approved scheme (PL/18/2137) in that a designed landscaping and public realm scheme has been worked up and submitted, covering Queen's Walk, Dusseldorf Way and part of Hosier Street. The previous scheme secured a financial contribution towards public realm improvements, but no designed comprehensive scheme. It is a complicated site, given the forthcoming Minster Quarter development, and the red line boundary of this planning application encompasses some of the Minster Quarter site, to allow for the application scheme to come forward in isolation if necessary. The officer approach to the public realm, particularly given the MQADF's aspiration for multi-use spaces, is to ensure that the areas are as valuable as possible, providing places to move through, relax, dwell in, play and enjoy.
- 6.45. The present public realm on Queen Walk and Dusseldorf Way to Hosier Street is tired, in poor order and has been attracting antisocial behaviour (ASB). It is important to ensure that the new environment is vibrant, well-designed and makes people feel safe and is welcoming.

#### Queen's Walk

- 6.46. Queen's Walk currently suffers from a combination of inactivity of frontages and a poor hard-surfaced environment, meaning it is an unattractive route in this pedestrian precinct/podium. The application proposal shows an indicative design for this space as below.



Queens Walk

- 6.47. The first consideration for the improvement of Queen's Walk is the delivery of an improved space and whether the structure holding up the podium is suitable. These



matters are set out in the Recommendation box with the delivery of the area linked to the building of Block A.

- 6.48. Queen's Walk is long and narrow and in order to break up this long vista, a diagonal pattern of grey and red/brown pavements is proposed. These would echo the proportions and style of the Hexagon theatre. A greyer area is proposed in the area in front of the Fountain House entrance to indicate a changing space between that and the courtyard to the student block opposite. Although red pavements are part of the town's identity (and associations with bricks and tiles) the Town Centre Public Realm Strategy (TCPRS) advises that the over-use of red pavements is competing in the town centre and advises a general restraint on their over-use. But here there are no red-brick buildings and the red makes for a pleasing contrast.
- 6.49. The TCPRS suggests that Queens Walk could be a pilot area to test different pop-up activities and it is clear that innovative public realm design is needed here to turn this into an attractive street. This will be partially assisted by the inclusion of the new shopfront units which should lead to restaurants and cafés spilling out onto the new paved areas and the redeveloped Hexagon, enlivening the street. Given the narrow width, the detailed street furniture, planting beds, etc, will need to be carefully executed, particularly given the need for vehicular access for servicing and emergencies.
- 6.50. Queens Walk will always be a more purposeful thoroughfare and the intention of the indicative design is to produce a sort of blended animated pedestrian street. This means that the public realm will have to be very adaptable and multi-purpose.
- 6.51. Primarily, additional greening is required in Queens Walk, to soften the street and help to mitigate the visual impact of the tall buildings which will be produced. Officers have given acknowledgement to emerging Local Plan Policy EN19 (Urban Greening Factor) and recommend that a 'nature-first' approach is applied to the landscaping here. This will be challenging, given the nature of the podium, however, the applicant's indicative landscaping proposals show trees and shrubs in the centre of the street and these will need to be either in surface planters or in tank planters set into the podium. (If the podium needs to be replaced, this would give more opportunity for the latter). The increase in canopy cover would help to combat the effects of climate change and meet the aims of the Tree Strategy and the paucity of canopy cover in Abbey Ward. Although the podium presents engineering challenges, efforts need to be made to incorporate SUDs schemes too. Such landscaping installations should also work harder than just providing amenity planting, though, and species should be carefully selected to ensure they are native, good for wildlife, wildflower-friendly, possibly even providing herb gardens. These should not be just amenity spaces for passers-by as officers are recommending that the leisure needs of the residents are also provided in the street, in the form of 'play on the way' type play equipment and playful public art. Other street furniture (lighting, benches, bins, bike stands, etc.) should build on the playful theme and provide a much more natural setting to the current austere, hard-surfaces.

#### Dusseldorf Way

- 6.52. The diagonal paving theme would continue along Dusseldorf Way. The space outside the Hexagon is a key node and the surfacing in this area should acknowledge this point and act as a way finder.
- 6.53. Dusseldorf Way will eventually connect to the Minster Quarter scheme but, as there is still no planning application for that site, if planning permission for this

redevelopment of Broad Street Mall is granted it is likely to be developed ahead of any redevelopment of Minster Quarter.

- 6.54. In terms of implementation, the whole of the present podium known as Dusseldorf Way, as far as the ramp down to Hosier Street, will need to be removed (as part of the application scheme) and completely rebuilt. This has two main advantages. First, it may allow more integrated landscaping into a wider and grander new street. Secondly, it means that this application is proposed to deliver the entirety of the width of the new street, until such time as the Minster Quarter development comes forward. However, in doing so, there will need to firstly be a comprehensive intermediate hoarding scheme and thereafter a seamless transition to the neighbouring development.



- 6.55. Much of the principles discussed above in relation to Queens Walk also apply to Dusseldorf Way. The proposed public realm and landscaping scheme includes the retention of all existing trees on Dusseldorf Way/Hosier Street. These trees are large, attractive specimens, and their retention in this area of low canopy cover is very important, and would positively contribute to the wider public realm.
- 6.56. A Public Art Strategy has also been submitted, and demonstrates that the applicant would work with key local stakeholders to deliver public art in the public realm. The applicant has provided three options from local artists, which all provide some community improvement aspect in terms of useable art, and a method of selecting the public art to be used, implementation and maintenance would be secured through the legal agreement.
- 6.57. The improvement of the area needs to extend into the night-time and evening and vitality and security are important factors. Streetlighting will need to be carefully considered. CCTV camera coverage is currently good but will be disturbed in the construction period, therefore a strategy for their location and management both in construction and within the final development, is required, via condition.
- 6.58. The proposed Public Realm improvements are considered to be extensive and detailed, providing an indicatively suitable basis for a suitable and deliverable scheme if this proposal came forward in isolation. The public realm proposals would link into the proposed retail units and residential entrances, providing an active frontage on both Dusseldorf Way. The public realm proposals themselves would produce an increase in greening and softening this urban environment, particularly on Queens Walk, and would significantly improve the appearance of the public realm in this part of Reading. It would link with forthcoming developments, including at Minster Quarter and the Hexagon, ensuring access is maintained and improving movement through this area. The improvements to the public realm are therefore a

significant beneficial element of the application scheme and comply with local plan policy aims and the MQADF.

- 6.59. The proposal would introduce a significant increase in planting and landscaping across the site and in the public areas. There are several large landscaping podium areas within the development, at 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> floor levels, resulting in over 2,000sqm of landscaped amenity space. These areas would include lawns, play, living roofs, private terraces, trees and other planting. Given the nature of the site, new trees would be in planters within the landscaped areas.
- 6.60. The Council's Parking Service Manager has expressed reservations about the proposed roof top parking situation which is posed to be resolved and the combination of pergolas art and landscaping. The borough council currently leases the BSM car park including the roof area and RBC would need to be in agreement as a public car park provider to these changes. There is clearly a tension here and closing the section 106 agreement will need to require that a basic scheme to deliver can be achieved.
- 6.61. The proposals would represent a significant improvement to the existing arrangement, and would result in a significant increase in tree cover, planting and landscaped areas. Conditions are recommended to secure an Arboricultural Method Statement, Landscaping details and a Management Plan to ensure that the proposed landscaping is implemented and managed appropriately.

#### Ecology

- 6.62. Policy EN12 requires development to provide a net gain in biodiversity wherever possible. The existing site is of limited ecological value due to the existing built form. The application was submitted prior to the National mandatory BNG requirements. The applicant has provided an ecology report which concludes that the development is unlikely to affect protected species or priority habitats once precautions are put in place for nesting birds. Some parts of the site were found to have a moderate suitability for roosting bats, however, multiple emergence and re-entry surveys were undertaken which found no evidence of roosting bats. The Council's ecologist advises that the proposals would not have any significant impact on existing habitats, subject to precautions for nesting birds, as per the submitted information.
- 6.63. Given the paucity of existing habitat within the application site, the proposal (subject to final details) is able to create a 463% Biodiversity Net Gain, through the introduction of the following habitats:
- Biodiverse Green Roof (814sqm)
  - Intensive Green Roof (134sqm)
  - Shrub Planting
  - Urban Trees
  - Ornamental Hedges (142m)
- 6.64. Given the significant uplift in biodiversity, the proposals would far exceed the requirements set out in Local and National Policy, and would be secured through conditions. The introduction of such an increase in biodiversity in this central, urban site would be considered a positive benefit of the proposals when weighed in the planning balance.

#### Leisure and Recreation

- 6.65. Local Plan policies EN9, EN10 and H10 require the leisure needs of residents to be met. This is a very urban location and there will be a range of household needs for outdoor leisure provision, including a significant proportion of family accommodation and three bed flats.
- 6.66. As set out above, private amenity space would be provided in the form of upper podium level roof gardens, roof terraces and some balconies, which is welcomed. The improvements to the public realm surrounding the site are also beneficial in this regard and officers are recommending that the usual leisure requirements, important though they are, in this instance be channelled into improving the immediate public realm instead, as described above.

## **V. Quality of accommodation**



Layout of accommodation, Level 01 (car park roof level)

- 6.67. Policy H5 (Standards for New Housing) seeks that all new build housing is built to high standards. In particular new housing should adhere to the Nationally prescribed space standards, water efficiency standards above the Building Regulations requirements, zero carbon homes standards (for major schemes) and provide at least 5% of dwellings as wheelchair user units. Policy CR6 does allow for residential development within the town centre to provide units below the Nationally Described Space Standards. Policy EN16 (Pollution and Water Resources) seeks to protect future occupiers from the impacts of pollution. Policy H10 (Private and Communal Outdoor Space) seeks that residential developments are provided with adequate private or communal outdoor amenity space.
- 6.68. All units within the scheme would meet the Nationally Described Space Standards, ensuring that an appropriate amount of floorspace is provided for future residents. Furthermore, all units are designed to be wheelchair-adaptable or accessible. Dual stair cores have also been provided to comply with current Fire Safety legislation requirements.
- 6.69. The width of the towers mean that there would be 58 single-aspect, north facing units (9% of the total). Whilst these units would not have an optimal outlook in terms of limited sunlight penetration, the high density town centre nature of the site will mean that it is not uncommon for some of the units falling short. The applicant has

submitted a daylight/sunlight report which has been assessed on behalf of the LPA, and demonstrates that 82% of habitable rooms would exceed the BRE's requirements, with the majority of the remainder of the rooms being within 20% of the BRE 2022 guidance. As a BTR development, users also have access to good quality internal and external amenity areas too.

- 6.70. The units within the scheme would benefit from appropriate levels of privacy, with the distances between towers 22.5m at the closest point, across the communal amenity areas. This would be an adequate separation distance which would satisfy Local Plan requirements. Units which would be adjacent to amenity areas all benefit from significant privacy buffers in the form of planting and private terraces (details to be secured by condition).
- 6.71. Balconies are proposed for units up to the 8<sup>th</sup> floor on each building, with additional communal roof terraces across several floors for a total of 1,920sqm of external amenity space. This would be complemented by 1,635sqm of internal amenity provision for residents, in the form of lounges, games rooms, co-working space, a gym and bookable suites. Overall, the amenity provision is considered acceptable and would provide an appropriate level and quality of amenity space for residents in this town centre location.
- 6.72. The applicant has submitted a noise assessment which demonstrates that the future residents would be adequately protected from noise pollution through appropriate sound insulation. Several concerns relating to noise between uses within the building were raised by the RBC Environmental Protection Team (e.g. sound/vibration transmission between the gym and residential uses). The applicant has agreed to conditions to secure further information relating to noise mitigation between these uses. Overall, it is considered that future residents' living conditions would be acceptable in terms of noise.
- 6.73. The appearance of the upper podium level car park has also been carefully considered by officers. The proposed residential units and the communal amenity space at deck level is directly adjacent to the existing car park on the roof of the Mall, with the majority of views from residential units across the proposed amenity space or outward looking from the site. Some units would look directly onto the car park to the north, with some units having this as their only outlook aspect. This would be most immediate at the lower levels. The applicant has recognised that this outlook is not desirable/ideal and has agreed to a condition which would require them to submit a feasibility study and carry out works to the car park roof where necessary and possible. The applicant has provided some indicative images of what may be possible, including the use of pergolas, planting and artwork to improve the appearance of the car park for residents facing north. A feasibility study would be secured by condition.



- 6.74. It should also be noted that in this BTR scheme, typical tenancies are some three years or so and the units most affected are a proportion of the one-bed units. Given that these could be the most transiently occupied and as one-bed units, the residents may be more reliant on communal facilities as well, these are considered to be partially mitigating factors to what would otherwise be a considerable shortfall in amenity standards.

#### Wind and microclimate

- 6.75. An assessment of microclimate/wind impacts of the proposed development on future occupiers (and also nearby occupiers and future users of the area), was submitted with the application. This demonstrates that with the proposed development in place, the wind microclimate in the public realm at ground level would remain suitable for the planned uses. The wind comfort at elevated levels, in particular, the external amenity areas, would be acceptable and additional planting has been proposed to ensure that the microclimate is suitable. This planting has been included in updated landscaping proposals, which would be secured by condition. This has been reviewed and its findings are considered to be reasonable and robust within the boundaries of best practice for wind microclimate assessments within the UK and relevant components of the corresponding local plan policies.
- 6.76. In summary, although some aspects of the proposal would produce some shortfalls in amenity, particularly in respect of outlooks and light for some units, overall it is considered that the proposals would provide a high standard of amenity for future occupiers.

#### **vi Unit mix**

- 6.77. Policy CR6 (Living in Central Reading) seeks as a guide that residential developments within the town centre area should incorporate a maximum of 40% of 1 bedroom units and a minimum of 5% of 3 bedroom units.
- 6.78. The proposed scheme would have a unit mix as below:

Type	Total
<b>1 bedroom</b>	298 (46.2%)
<b>2 bedroom</b>	297 (46.1%)
<b>3 bedroom</b>	49 (7.6%)



<b>Total</b>	643 (100%)
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- 6.79. This unit mix does not meet the guideline in Policy CR6 for unit mix, with an over-provision of one bedroom units, at the expense of two bedroom units. However, the proposals would also exceed the 5% requirement for three bedroom units and 49 three bedroom dwellings in a single development is over-delivering on a key aspect of the MQADF in that it is providing larger family-sized accommodation within the central area and attempting to redress, to a certain extent, the loss of such accommodation which has occurred in the central area. On balance, whilst it is not considered that the over-provision of one bedroom units is harmful, it does not fully meet the policy aims. Therefore, it is considered that the unit mix is neutral in terms of the planning balance.

## **vii Affordable Housing**

- 6.80. Local Plan Policy H3 requires development to make an appropriate contribution towards affordable housing to meet the needs of Reading Borough. For this Major development, 30% of the total dwellings are expected to be provided as affordable housing, with the expectation being on site provision, and this requirement has been continued and augmented in the emerging Local Plan Partial Review. If proposals present an offer which falls short of the 30% policy requirement, then the developer must clearly demonstrate the circumstances justifying a lower contribution through an open-book viability assessment. Additionally, the supporting text to Policy H4 (Build to Rent Schemes) (at para. 4.4.31) clarifies that *"The Council will expect rental levels for the affordable housing or Affordable Private Rent housing to be related to Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rate levels (including service charges) and be affordable for those identified as in need of affordable housing in the Borough. The Council will expect such housing to remain affordable in perpetuity"*.
- 6.81. The applicant has confirmed that the following affordable housing amount and mix is proposed to be provided on site:

<b>Type</b>	<b>Market</b>	<b>Affordable</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>1 bedroom</b>	271	27	298 (46.2%)
<b>2 bedroom</b>	266	31	297 (46.1%)
<b>3 bedroom</b>	42	7	49 (7.6%)
<b>Total</b>	579 (89.9%)	65 (10.1%)	644 (100%)

- 6.82. All of the units would be rented at no more than the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) cap, and would be spread throughout the scheme. However, as this amount of affordable housing falls short of the policy requirement, the applicants have submitted a viability assessment to justify the shortfall.
- 6.83. It is a requirement within Policy H3 (as proposed to be adopted within the Partial Review of the Local Plan) that the proposal includes a Deferred Payment Mechanism, which would ensure that in the future, if any positive gains were made in viability due to lower construction costs and/or an expected uplift in values, the developer would pay an enhanced further contribution. The 'cap' for these contributions would be equivalent to the Gross Development Value derived maximum contribution for the development which could mean that the equivalent financial contribution of 30% affordable housing could be achieved.
- 6.84. The Housing Development Team were consulted as part of the application and although the proposal cannot provide policy compliant levels of affordable housing,

they agree that the mix and tenure of the proposed affordable units to be provided on site is acceptable.

- 6.85. In accordance with the Affordable Housing SPD and Policy H3 (as proposed to be amended), an agreed Deferred Payment Mechanism has also been agreed. There is more detail on this in the S106 Legal Agreement section below.

#### **viii Neighbour amenity**

- 6.86. Policy CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity) and CR6 (Living in Central Reading) seek to protect the amenity of existing surrounding occupiers. Policy EN16 (Pollution and Water Resources) seeks to protect surrounding occupiers from the impact of pollution. Policy CR10 (Tall Buildings) also seeks that that new development ensures adequate levels of daylight and sunlight are able to reach buildings and spaces within the development and avoid significant negative impacts on existing residential properties and the public realm in terms of outlook, privacy, daylight, sunlight, noise, light glare and night-time lighting.
- 6.87. The application site is separated from the majority of existing nearby residential properties by roads or Queens Walk which is primarily used by pedestrians. There are no directly adjacent residential uses to the site, given its position set away from other properties with sensitive uses.

#### Daylight, sunlight and overshadowing

- 6.88. The applicant has submitted a daylight, sunlight and overshadowing report with the application, which has been reviewed by officers. The following properties were identified as potential sensitive receptors:
- 40-42 Oxford Road
  - 38 Oxford Road
  - McIlroys Building
  - 61-62 St Mary's Butts
  - 59-60 St Mary's Butts
  - 58 St Mary's Butts
  - 57 St Mary's Butts
  - 55-56 St Mary's Butts
  - Reading Minster
  - 2-6 Castle Street (The Horn public house)
  - 8 Castle Street
  - St Mary's Church, Castle Street
  - 16 Castle Street (The Sun Inn public house)
  - 15 Queens Walk (Queens Court)
- 6.89. In terms of daylight, the report makes two assessments. The first is of Vertical Sky Component (VSC) which measures the percentage of the total unobstructed view that is available once the development is placed within the view, calculated from the centre of a window, measuring the amount of light available following the introduction of the new buildings. The other assessment relates to No Sky Line (NSL). The NSL divides those areas of the room which can receive direct sky light from those which cannot. If a significant area of the room lies beyond the NSL (i.e.



it receives no direct sky light), then the distribution of daylight in the room will be poor.

- 6.90. With regards VSC, 691 windows serving 366 rooms within the 14 nearby properties were surveyed. 626 (91%) of the windows surveyed would meet the BRE Guidelines in terms of Vertical Sky Component (VSC), with 670 (97%) of windows either meeting the VSC requirements or only experiencing a Minor Adverse effect. 18 (3%) windows would experience a Moderate Adverse effect, and 3 (>1%) would experience a Major Adverse effect. In terms of NSL, 356 (97%) of the 366 rooms assessed would meet the BRE criteria, with 7 (3%) experiencing a Minor Adverse effect according to the BRE guidance. It was concluded by the report, and has been agreed by officers, that the following properties would not experience a noticeable change in levels of daylight:

- 40-42 Oxford Road
- 38 Oxford Road
- 61-62 St Mary's Butts
- 58 St Mary's Butts
- 57 St Mary's Butts
- 55-56 St Mary's Butts
- Reading Minster
- 8 Castle Street

- 6.91. The remaining six properties would experience noticeable effects in relation to daylight. However, 2-6 Castle Street is a vacant public house, St Mary's Church is a place of worship and 16 Castle Street is also a public house, and so are not sensitive uses and so there would be no unacceptable impact. The remaining three properties include residential use or student accommodation and are assessed in detail below.

- 6.92. **The McIlroys Building** is to the north of the site on the northern side of Oxford Road. It has commercial uses at ground and first floor, with residential above. 189 (96%) of windows assessed on this building would meet the BRE criteria for VSC, with 8 (4%) windows would fall below the BRE VSC criteria by between 20% and 29.9%, which is considered a 'minor adverse effect'. In terms of NSL, 100% of the rooms would meet the BRE criteria.

- 6.93. **59-60 St Mary's Butts** is to the east of the site on the eastern side of St Mary's Butts. It has a commercial unit at ground floor, with residential units above. All 6 windows would meet the BRE criteria for VSC. With regards NSL, 5 of the 6 rooms would meet the BRE criteria. The room which falls below the BRE criteria experiences alterations which are considered to be a Minor Adverse effect. The room itself is however, approximately 8m deep. Where rooms are greater than 5m deep and lit from one side only, the BRE Guidance allows for greater movement of the NSL.

- 6.94. **15 Queens Walk (Queens Court)** is to the west of the site on the western side of Queens Walk. It is in use as student accommodation, with each window serving a student study bedroom. 242 (83%) of the 293 windows would meet the BRE criteria for VSC. Of the 51 windows that fall below the criteria, 30 would experience a Minor Adverse effect, although 15 of these would retain a VSC between 15% and 19%, which is considered appropriate in an urban location. 18 windows would experience a moderate adverse effect, with the remaining 3 windows experiencing a Major Adverse effect. In terms of NSL, 219 (97%) of the rooms would meet the BRE

criteria. 4 (2%) rooms would experience a Minor Adverse effect, with 2 (1%) rooms experiencing a Moderate Adverse effect.

- 6.95. In terms of sunlight, ten of the above properties were considered appropriate for assessment. Those excluded are directly to the south of the site (2-6 Castle Street, 8 Castle Street, St Mary's Church and 16 Castle Street) and are not assessed for sunlight due to their orientation compared to the proposal, in accordance with the BRE Guidance. Of the remaining ten properties, 243 rooms were assessed. 238 (98%) of rooms would meet the BRE criteria for annual sunlight penetration. All rooms assessed would meet the BRE criteria for winter sunlight. The only property which does not meet the BRE criteria for sunlight is 15 Queens Walk, and this is discussed below.
- 6.96. **15 Queens Walk (Queens Court)** is the student accommodation block described above. 129 rooms were assessed, with all rooms meet the criteria for winter sunlight. 124 (96%) meeting the BRE criteria for total sunlight. The remaining 5 (4%) of rooms would experience a Major Adverse effect.
- 6.97. Overall, there are three buildings on which the proposal would have an adverse impact in terms of daylight and sunlight. The McIlroys Building and 59-60 St Mary's Butts would experience a Minor Adverse impact as a result of the proposals. However, the buildings are in an urban environment and can expect some minor changes to daylight/sunlight where development occurs. The changes to daylight/sunlight in this case is considered to be minor and would be commensurate with suitable changes in the urban environment, especially where major development proposals are envisaged by planning policy. It is not considered that this impact would be significantly harmful to the amenities of this property.
- 6.98. Queens Court would experience a more significant impact as a result of the proposals. However, the building is not permanent residential and is in use as student accommodation and offers either 44 or 51 week tenancies. Short stays at the site (as short as a week) are also offered. These arrangements indicate that there is some turnover of tenants within the building, and although there are some short stays, many of the tenants are likely there for a year, but may stay longer if tenancies are available. Although each student has their own bedroom, there are numerous other amenity facilities within Queen's Court, including communal kitchens, a gym and fitness studio, cinema room, games rooms and study areas, as well as external courtyard amenity space. This allows residents other spaces to use other than their study-bedrooms which are most affected by the proposals. Given this, it is considered that whilst the impact on the identified rooms and windows is significant in places, the nature of the use of the building is such that this is considered suitable, due to the nature of occupancy.
- 6.99. In terms of overshadowing of open spaces, an analysis was undertaken for the six public open spaces that have been identified around the development. These spaces are Oxford Road at the junction of St Mary's Butts, St Mary's Butts, Reading Market, two areas of Hosier Street and Queens Walk. Of these spaces, five would achieve the recommended two hours of sunlight to over 60% of the areas, which is in excess of the BRE criteria (which is 50%). The space which does not meet the criteria is Queens Walk, which would receive two hours of sunlight in 33% of the space. However, it should be noted that the current space would receive two hours of sunlight on 44% of the space, and as such, the additional impact of the development is relatively minor. Given the nature of the space, predominantly as a

thoroughfare, and the minor adverse impact, it is not considered that there would be a significant degree of harm as a result of overshadowing to public areas.

#### Other impacts on neighbours' amenity

- 6.100. Given the distances to the nearest residential uses (at least 100 metres in all cases), it is not considered that the proposals would result in any loss of privacy for existing residents. The site is closer to 15 Queens Walk, the student accommodation, but due to the offset nature of the tower compared to 15 Queens Walk, there would be no direct overlooking across Queens Walk, and the buildings would be separated by at least 20 metres.
- 6.101. Although the proposal is significant in terms of its height and scale, and would be visible from nearby residential properties, the distances would ensure that it would not appear directly overbearing to these properties. It is in closer proximity to the student accommodation, and would have a greater impact, however, given the site is in an urban area and the nature of the use at 15 Queens Walk, it is not considered that this would be an unacceptable impact., especially when compared to the previously approved scheme.
- 6.102. The increase in activity at the site would be significant due to the introduction of such a high number of residential units. However, due to the nature of the site, in the town centre, it is not considered that there would be any undue increase in noise or disturbance for existing neighbours, especially given the distances involved.
- 6.103. Overall, whilst the proposal would result in some impacts on neighbouring living conditions, particularly with regard to daylight and sunlight at 15 Queens Walk, the nature of the site in an urban location and the other mitigating factors discussed above would ensure that any harm would be minimal and overall, appropriate.
- 6.104. An immediate neighbour is the Hexagon Theatre, itself soon to undergo significant re-construction and extension to ensure its long-term viability and further animation to the Minster Quarter area and Queen's Walk. The new residents of the BSM development will no doubt be exposed to some break-out noise from performances from time to time and disturbance at podium level from patrons. However, this is to be expected in an urban area and officers advise that the 'agent of change principle' (as set out in the NPPF) is invoked here and the residents would be expected to acknowledge and to a certain degree, accept such impacts as part of high-density urban living. The vertical break between the theatre and the lowest level of flats in the towers should also help to alleviate such impacts. There will be disturbance to the theatre's operation during the long construction period. In a transport sense, access will be maintained to the Hexagon, but in terms of construction noise and disturbance to the operation of the theatre, this may be a matter to be resolved between the respective developers as it is not a planning matter (as no residential amenity would be involved).

#### **ix Transport**

- 6.105. Policy TR1 of the Local Plan requires developments to promote and improve sustainable transport. Policy TR3 states that consideration will be given to the effect of a new development on safety, congestion and the environment. Proposals should provide acceptable access to the site and ensure that there would not be a detrimental impact on the functioning and safety of the transport network. Policy TR5 states that development should provide car parking and cycle parking that is

appropriate to the accessibility of locations within the Borough to sustainable transport facilities, particularly public transport.

#### Pedestrian and cycle access

- 6.106. The proposal would provide pedestrian and cycle access to the residential entrances from Dusseldorf Way, with each tower having its own entrance. Dusseldorf Way will also provide pedestrian access into the proposed retail units, which would have an access corridor to the rear for servicing. A main pedestrian entrance to the existing Mall would be retained from Dusseldorf Way. A new pedestrian car park entrance is also proposed on Queens Walk, replacing the car park entrances on Dusseldorf Way.
- 6.107. The scheme would also provide improvements to the pedestrian and cycle environment between Hosier Street and Dusseldorf Way, removing steps and making a more level access, widening the route. In order to undertake this work, changes to the pay and display bays in this location would be required, to be secured through a (separate) Traffic Regulation Order, and in the s106 and s278 legal agreements. This improvement in the pedestrian and cycle environment combined with the wider resurfacing works on Dusseldorf Way and Queens Walk would represent a benefit of the scheme.

#### Vehicular access

- 6.108. Queens Walk is pedestrianised with limited vehicular access but the landscaping proposals are suitable in showing sufficient space for emergency access.
- 6.109. To facilitate construction of the proposed development, the existing car park ramps are proposed to be demolished, removing access to the public car park and requiring its closure. A new car park ramp is proposed to be constructed, with access from the A329 IDR as well as Castle Street, as existing. Vehicle tracking and gradients for the ramps has been submitted and is acceptable. Some changes to the road layout at basement level is required to facilitate this change. Following redesigns, these changes now work for all affected uses at basement level (BSM, Hexagon theatre, Penta hotel).
- 6.110. Pedestrian access within the development is now suitable. A detailed construction programme is required to ensure this development does not impede other proposals or the use of the car park. This would be secured through a condition.

#### Servicing

- 6.111. Servicing and delivery would take place from the existing basement service yard. Access would remain as existing from the A329 IDR, with a secondary access from Castle Street. The service yard would be reconfigured to provide dedicated areas for residential and retail elements of the scheme. This arrangement is considered acceptable.
- 6.112. A Waste Management Strategy was submitted alongside the application, which has been reviewed by the waste management team. The bin provisions, layout, and frequency of collections are considered to be acceptable.
- 6.113. Officers have also considered the extent to which the restaurants which are proposed to front Queens Walk and Dusseldorf Way are likely to attract powered cycles and mopeds as part of ancillary delivery functions. These vehicles should

be dissuaded from using the public realm and the applicant agrees. It is proposed that there should be a marshalling area for these in the Hosier Street area and a condition is recommended.

#### Highway Impacts

- 6.114. The proposal would introduce a mixed-use scheme in a town centre location. The retail provision would be similar to the existing, so no additional assessment would be required for the commercial uses. The residential aspect of the scheme would result in an increase in vehicular movements, so this aspect has been fully assessed.
- 6.115. The proposal would result in an increase in trips, however, the vast majority (82.5%) of trips are forecast to be made by non-car modes through limiting the provision of on-site car parking for future residents. Furthermore, due to the proposed reduction in car parking spaces at the existing car park, there would be a reduction in vehicle trips at the site. Overall, it is considered that the proposal would not have a significant impact on the road network.

#### Car parking

- 6.116. The existing car park has a total of 784 spaces across three levels. The proposal would reduce the capacity of the car park by 331 spaces, to a total of 453 spaces, of which 100 would be available for new residents. The applicant has undertaken parking demand analysis for this car park and four other town centre car parks to establish the occupancy and parking demand. This has shown that the combined maximum demand would not exceed the total number of spaces provided across the town centre car parks during both the construction phase and once the proposed scheme is complete. Furthermore, the Council's Parking Policy provides maximum levels of car parking spaces, but no minimum requirements. The evidence provided by the applicant, combined with the established policy position demonstrates that the reduction of public car parking spaces is therefore considered acceptable.
- 6.117. The proposal would be predominantly 'car-free', and have access to 100 spaces within the existing car park (1 space per 6.5 units). No detail has been provided showing how this would be managed, and so a Parking Allocation and Management Plan would be required prior to the commencement of development, secured through the legal agreement, as it would require consent from RBC as the operator (lessee) of the existing car park. Furthermore, a car club is proposed to be secured through the legal agreement, for use by future residents.
- 6.118. Overall, the proposals are considered acceptable with regards car parking provision and arrangements and comply with the RBLP transport policies and the Parking and Design SPD.

#### Cycle parking

- 6.119. The Council's adopted cycle parking standards require 347 spaces to be provided for future residents. The applicants have provided this amount in full in the form of two tier 'Josta' style (space-saving) cycle parking stands in an appropriate layout. The store would be secure and consolidated within the ground floor of Block D, with easy access from Dusseldorf Way and Hosier Street. This arrangement is considered acceptable. However, as Block D phasing does not come during the earlier stages of occupation the detail of interim arrangements is being clarified with the applicant.

- 6.120. As part of the public realm improvements, thirty cycle parking spaces (in the form of 15 Sheffield stands) would be provided for public use. This is acceptable and would be secured by condition. As discussed above, the final design of these should be high-quality, in keeping with the new image for the public realm.
- 6.121. Overall, following the attention of the applicant to a number of detailed areas -in particular basement servicing – the application is considered to be acceptable in transport terms.

## **x Energy and sustainability**

- 6.122. Local Plan Policy H5 'Standards for New Housing' requires that all new-build housing is built to high design standards. In particular, new housing should adhere to, water efficiency standards in excess of the Building Regulations, zero carbon homes standards (for major schemes), and provide at least 5% of dwellings as wheelchair user units. Policy CC2 (Sustainable Design and Construction) and Policy CC3 (Adaption to Climate Change) seeks that development proposals incorporate measures which take account of climate change. Policy CC4 (Decentralised Energy) requires developers to consider inclusion of decentralised energy infrastructure, in particular any development of more than 20 dwellings and/ or non-residential development of over 1,000 sq m shall consider the inclusion of decentralised energy provision, within the site, unless it can be demonstrated that the scheme is not suitable, feasible or viable for this form of energy provision.
- 6.123. The proposal would use high standards of insulation, on-site renewable energy generation and low carbon technologies to achieve a BREEAM Excellent rating in the non-residential elements of the buildings. It is proposed to use photovoltaic panels and mini air source heat pumps to achieve a 69.3% reduction in CO2 emissions, with the remainder reduction to net zero captured by a financial contribution (calculated at £1,800 per tonne of CO2) to the Council's Carbon Levy.
- 6.124. However, the adopted local plan policies and SPD also require that Major applications assess and consider all possibilities for maximising potential for decentralised energy. This is principally set out in Policy CC4 (Decentralised Energy) and amplified by the Sustainable Design and Construction SPD. It is critical in terms of the most major redevelopment schemes in the central Reading area that they are exceptional not just in terms of their architecture, design and liveability, but also that the maximum opportunity is provided to future proof them in terms of sustainability and energy consumption, as far as possible.
- 6.125. The first part of Policy CC4 requires developments to have considered ground source heat pumps (GSHPs) which rely on underground coils or boreholes to extract latent heat from the ground. In this instance the Council's Energy Manager advises that this is currently being undertaken close to the application site, under the Hexagon theatre building. The Minster Quarter scheme is also likely to be coming forward with a GSHP scheme. Whilst the application site is not suitable for GSHP itself due to the nature of its design, it may be able to plug into neighbouring schemes, such as at Minster Quarter, in the future.
- 6.126. At the outset of this application, the development was indicating that a communal ASHP system would be used. This is a 'wet' system and the advantage of this is that it would be compatible with a district heating system in the future. However, the applicant then cited construction cost issues and instead reverted to essentially a dry system (using mini ASHPs to heat hot water in each flat with electric panel

heaters). The concern that the Council's Energy Manager has with this arrangement is that in order to be able to have the ability to connect to the district heating system, a large, communal ASHP system would need to be in place as individual ASHPs would not be connectable. The BTR nature of the development would appear to make the incorporation of a communal heat pump easier to manage, as the building management arrangement is ongoing and there would be no leaseholders.

- 6.127. As well as the advent of the Borough's district heating system, the Energy Manager advises that the Government is looking to introduce Heat Network Zoning Regulations. Therefore, irrespective of planning policy, national law may require such developments to connect to heat networks.
- 6.128. But such a communal system would involve pipework between the pump which is likely to be towards the upper levels of the building and the connections to the network in the ground. Importantly, the connections and the system need to be compatible. The applicant's concern is that a potentially costly communal ASHP system would need to be installed and this additional cost would have viability implications for the delivery of this scheme.
- 6.129. The proposals demonstrate a 65% reduction in CO2 emissions over Part L of the Building Regulations and the carbon offset will bring the emissions to a neutral level.
- 6.130. The policy wording asks for the opportunity to be examined. In summary, officers advise that the likely building of the district system directly adjacent to this proposed major regeneration project are not sufficiently closely aligned in terms of timing and proximity at this point. It would also be unreasonable to require the development to be paused while the heat network rollout catches up. However, there needs to be some synergy between the two build outs such that one does not unacceptably compromise the other.
- 6.131. Following detailed dialogue between specialists for the applicant and the Council as described in the section above, it is regrettable that at the present time the opportunity to connect to a possible heat network at Minster Quarter is not considered to be feasible/requirable. However, the applicant has agreed to a pause within their development process to check if technology has moved on to see if a re-think of the heating energy system is required. This is considered to be an appropriate compromise. In accordance with the sustainable design and construction SPD, a zero carbon offset financial contribution would be secured in any event to secure the necessary energy targets. The final wording of this aspect is still under discussion with the applicant and proposed wording will be set out in the Update Report.
- 6.132. Overall, with the proposed high level of CO2 emission reduction including thermal efficiency, the financial contribution, the BREEAM Excellent rating and the proposed connection to the forthcoming Heat Network, the proposal is, on balance, considered to be acceptable in sustainability terms.

## **xi Legal Agreement**

- 6.133. The overarching infrastructure Policy CC9 (Securing Infrastructure) allows for necessary contributions to be secured to ensure that the impacts of a scheme are properly mitigated. The areas of mitigation have been carefully considered and agreed with the applicant before being presented to your meeting. Below is a brief discussion on the purposes of each.

- 6.134. There is considered to be a lack of any socio-economic data provided to demonstrate that this development will produce additional revenue or in any way cross-subsidise the existing retail mall in any sense, other than in increased footfall from the new residents. Officers identify this as a particular area of risk and therefore little weight should be placed on the ability of the development to improve the condition of the Mall itself.
- 6.135. This section of the report provides a brief overview of the reasoning for each of the section 106 contributions and obligations.

#### Section 106 obligations

- 6.136. **Affordable housing:** Policy H3 requires 30% on-site provision in Major schemes, although the Affordable Housing SPD advises the use of a deferred payment mechanism (DPM) in instances where the development, at the time of determination, cannot sustain the policy requirement level.
- 6.137. Following extensive discussions and examination of the scheme viability, agreement with the applicant has been reached on the provision of an (initial) on-site affordable housing provision, equating to 10.1% and the delivery and mix of the units is considered to be reflective of the overall dwelling provision. The figure of 10.1 percent or 65 units has been arrived at following an open book viability discussion between the applicant and the council and has been agreed as being deliverable.
- 6.138. **Affordable housing deferred payment mechanism:** via the open book viability discussion, it has been agreed that there would be two opportunities to potentially capture a policy compliant 30% (equivalent) affordable housing provision, on the basis that the development achieves better than expected returns.
- 6.139. **Public realm Queens Walk:** the Recommendation sets out firstly a requirement to ensure that Queens Walk is structurally stable, and then to implement a public realm scheme which includes paving, lighting, drainage, shrubs and soft landscaping, ecological planting, children's play, and public art. This is necessary to provide a suitable setting to the building and in the interest of public amenity.
- 6.140. **Public realm Dusseldorf Way:** similar to Queens Walk, however the requirement is for the complete rebuilding of the Dusseldorf Way podium in its entirety which continues on and links to the Minster Quarter land.
- 6.141. **Public art:** an obligation will set out to the requirements for procuring and providing a public art strategy to be provided within the public realm areas above. This will ensure that the art responds to its context and forms an integral part of the new and improved Queens Walk and Dusseldorf Way.
- 6.142. **Medical facility:** the NHS has provided a justification for a person yield generator for the development which will result in a contribution towards medical services. The intention is to provide a subsidised circa. 200 square metre GP surgery within the existing Broad Street Mall. There are a series of obligations and 'cascades' to ensure that this is made available for the NHS ICB, and fall-back arrangements should this not happen. The provision of the facility will provide a medium/long term GP surgery unit, either in association with or adjacent to the existing GP walk-in centre on the first floor of the Mall. This is required to offset the additional impact on medical facilities as a result of the population increase via the development in



accordance with Policy CC9 and emerging Policy H11. Other developments in the central area may also contribute towards this facility (as may be appropriate to those developments' individual circumstances and impacts).

- 6.143. **Transport:** there are various transport obligations required to ensure that the development is supplied with the necessary transport infrastructure, including traffic regulation orders (TROs), section 278 agreement(s), a car club, car park management plan and various basement area works which require the agreement of the borough council as a signatory also.
- 6.144. **Heat network and energy:** as discussed in the Energy and Sustainability section above
- 6.145. **Employment and skills plan:** this would be secured either 'in kind' or via financial contribution at both the construction and end user phases in order to ensure suitable skills, training and job opportunities are provided within the borough.
- 6.146. **Build to rent restrictions:** the Recommendation box includes a detailed list of BTR restrictions which are considered necessary and have been used for similar developments within the borough to ensure control over the BTR development, for instance, setting out suitable approaches to for nomination rights.
- 6.147. **Rooftop car park environmental improvements and management plan:** this is required to ensure that the rooftop treatment can be provided in order to maximise amenity and outlook for the residents of the blocks and is necessary because the applicant does not have complete control of the car park and so, therefore the Council also needs to be a signatory.
- 6.148. **IDR bridging/decking environmental study:** whilst it is accepted that this proposal of itself should not deliver this Minster Quarter Brief requirement, the clause would secure a feasibility study to assess the ability to deliver this aim and this is considered to be reasonable proportionate to this proposal.
- 6.149. **Monitoring section 106 costs/other:** this section includes the s106 monitoring costs and for the cancels reasonable legal costs to be paid.
- 6.150. Other obligations, as set out, are required in order to carefully control the delivery of the development and the trigger points and the details of the obligations themselves are considered to be necessary in order to provide a suitable development and deliver the various public benefits.
- 6.151. These obligations are considered to be reasonable, necessary and related to the development and required in order to mitigate the negative impacts associated with the development. They are considered to comply with government tests for obligations as set out in the national planning practice guidance (NPPG), they comply with the central infrastructure policy (CC9) and the Councils SPD on Planning Obligations and have been agreed with the applicant. However, any matters of detail regarding the obligations/s106 package arising between now and your meeting will be set out in an Update Report.

## **Other Matters**

### Flooding

- 6.152. The NPPF requires a risk-based approach to the planning process, seeking Sequential Tests in cases where sites are in vulnerable flooding zones. Local Plan Policy EN18 requires development to be directed to areas at lowest risk of flooding in the first instance. The site is in Flood Zone 1, which is at the lowest risk of flooding. It is a brownfield site and largely impermeable. The applicant has submitted a Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy. This demonstrates that the risk of flooding is low/negligible. The Drainage Strategy proposes drainage solutions to allow for surface water runoff to be contained within the site, preventing flows off the site. The Drainage Strategy proposes blue roofs to ensure that a SUDS system reduces the amount of runoff as much as possible before discharging into the sewer network. This is still being assessed and further comment will be provided in the Update Report.

#### Construction Impacts

- 6.153. This major redevelopment proposal will have impacts on transport, air quality, noise/vibration, etc. These matters are set out and quantified in the applicant's Environmental Statement and a comprehensive Construction Method Statement, to cover all demolition, construction and environmental matters. However, this was a high-level document on submission which has been overtaken by events, including the Hex Studio project and therefore a revised version will need to be submitted before construction commences and a condition is recommended.
- 6.154. Construction phasing of the scheme itself is largely west-east, from Block A, then B, then C, then D, although there may be some overlap. Officers are satisfied with this general arrangement, and the necessary obligations and public benefits have been designed accordingly, linked to the delivery of these blocks. The transport and servicing-related aspects have been approved and are proposed to be controlled by obligations and conditions.
- 6.155. The applicant has advised that the development will involve the temporary relocation of the public toilets on the 1st floor of the Mall. A condition for details of this arrangement is also recommended.

#### Archaeology

- 6.156. Local Plan Policy EN2 requires developments to ensure that development does not have an unacceptable impact on archaeological remains, and for proposals to undertake appropriate safeguarding. The applicant has submitted a desk-based archaeological assessment, which indicates that the site does not contain any heritage assets. It also determines that the site has a low probability of archaeological remains, given the extensive ground disturbance, particularly in the building of the Mall itself. A condition requiring investigations prior to commencement of development is recommended to ensure that appropriate measures are taken, as required.

#### Equality implications

- 6.157. Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to—
- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
  - advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;

- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

6.158. The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation. It is considered that there is no indication or evidence that the protected groups have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular application.

## **7. Conclusion and Planning Balance**

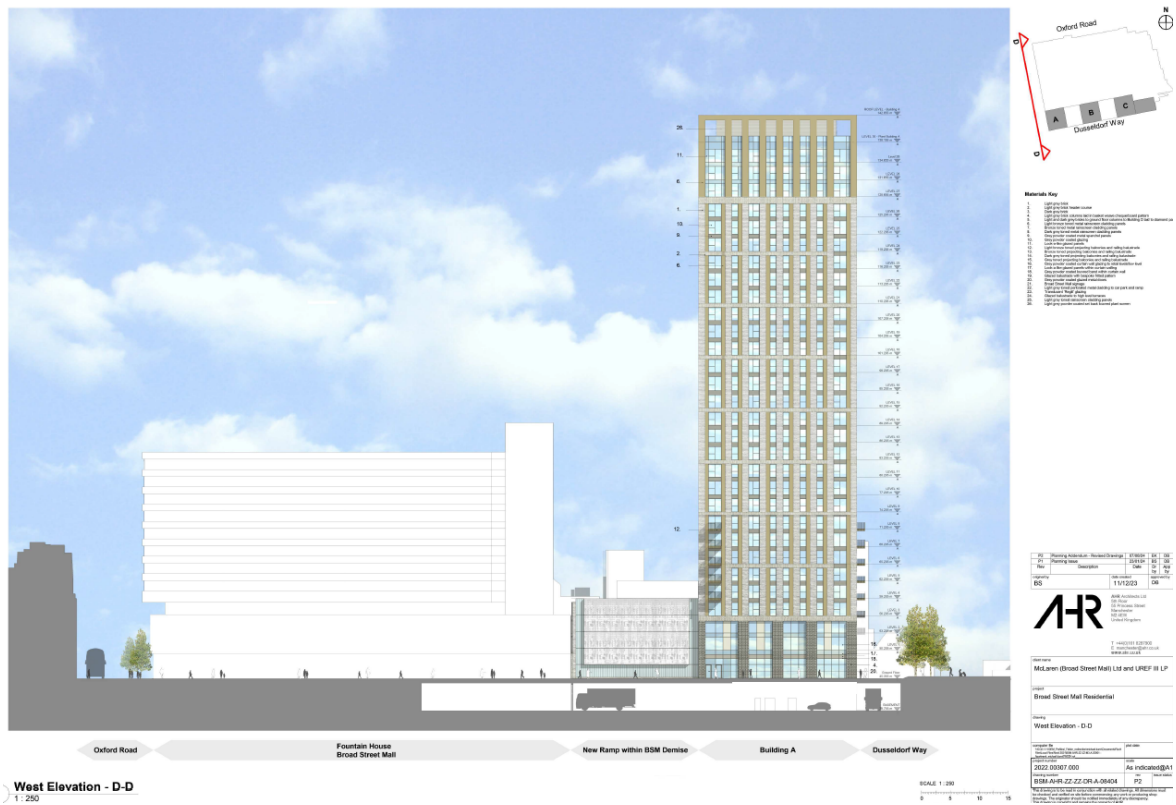
- 7.1. Although the previous planning permission has no weight in the planning assessment, it is accepted that the scheme for a taller, denser, tall building scheme which has a very low parking provision, is appropriate for this location and it would deliver significant dwelling units and contribute to meeting the targets in Policy H1.
- 7.2. The mix of accommodation, including affordable housing, on balance, is considered to be acceptable. The provision of a level of affordable housing at 10.1% on site (initially) is low, but suitable, given the economic circumstances of the development at the time of writing. The agreement to a two-stage deferred payment mechanism is considered to be a notable benefit of the scheme and allows the development to be delivered, although the viability does not support a policy-compliant scheme.
- 7.3. The development would substantially improve the public realm and built environment of a significant part of the town centre which is currently in a poor state. The improvements to the public realm immediately surrounding the site would be significant as a result of the proposals and can be considered a significant public benefit of the scheme.
- 7.4. Although there is little evidence to support the applicant's assertion that the proposal will increase footfall to the Mall itself, although the quality of the scheme, the updating of the Mall and the additional footfall/residential presence, is positive. The proposals would include a significant improvement to local health facilities and this weighs positively in favour of the proposals in the planning balance.
- 7.5. The height and scale of the proposals are considered to be acceptable in their context. Whilst the proposal would result in identified harm to Heritage Assets, that harm is at the 'less than substantial harm' level. Moreover, the public benefits of the scheme above would weigh heavily in the application's favour, resulting in an overall neutral impact.
- 7.6. The delivery of all 643 flats to the National minimum space standards is considered to be a significant benefit. However, 9% of the units (58) would have a relatively poor outlook, with a single, north-facing aspect and/or lack BRE compliant daylight/sunlight. Whilst this can be somewhat expected for dense, urban environments, overall it does not weigh positively in the planning balance. However, In the context of its siting, there would be a very low impact on surrounding properties and open spaces in terms of light/overshadowing and privacy, which is positive.
- 7.7. The proposal is considered to be satisfactory in terms of meeting policy requirements for energy and sustainability. The current failure to be connectable to a heat network is regrettable, however, the agreement to a future feasibility study is welcomed. The significant improvement in biodiversity, whilst easy to accomplish

due to the lack of biodiversity on the existing site, is a low-level, positive benefit of the scheme

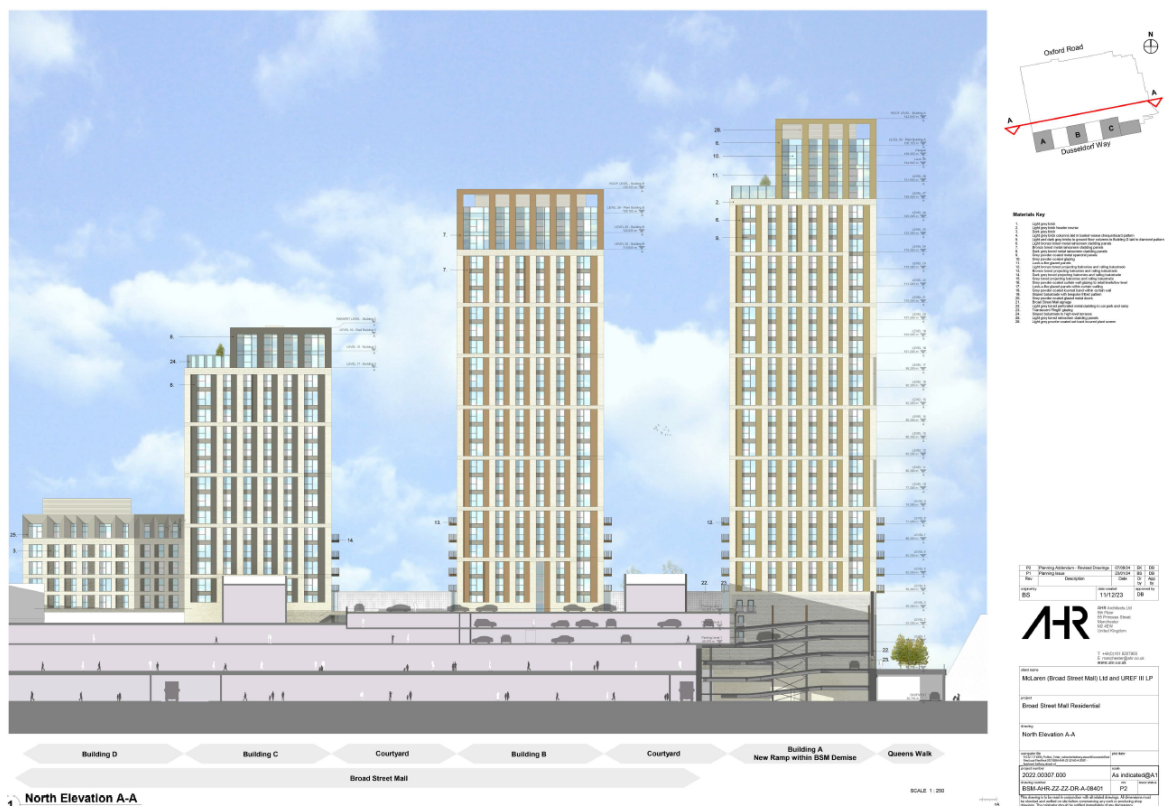
- 7.8. Officers have considered the benefits and harm identified above, and weighed them in the planning balance, with regard to achieving the NPPF aims of economic, social and environmental objectives. It is considered that the redevelopment benefits of the proposal, in particular the provision of housing, a high-quality design, extensive public realm improvements and the various contributions to be secured in the legal agreement would outweigh the resultant harms identified.
- 7.9. It is considered that officers have applied a suitable planning balance when reaching this conclusion. As such, this application is recommended for Approval subject to completion of a legal agreement and relevant conditions.

## APPENDIX – PLANS





### West Elevation



### North Elevation

## **BSM Appendix 1 application documents**

- Application Form and Ownership Certificates
- CIL Form
- Planning Drawings
- Environmental Statement, including
  - EIA Methodology
  - Air Quality Assessment
  - Noise Assessment
  - Daylight, Sunlight and Overshadowing Report
  - Wind and Microclimate Report
  - Heritage, Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment
- Accommodation Schedules
- Arboricultural Impact Assessment
- Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment
- Bat Survey and Preliminary Roost Assessment
- Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment
- BNG Calculator, Appendix A
- BREEAM Pre-Assessment
- CGI images of the proposed development
- Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP)
- Design and Access Statement, including Landscape DAS
- Design and Access, including Landscape DAS Addendum
- Economic Benefits Infographic
- Energy Strategy
- Fire Strategy and Qualitative Design Review
- Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy
- Heritage, Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment note
- Internal Daylight and Sunlight Report
- Landscape Management and Maintenance Plan
- Lighting Report
- Phase 1 Geo-Technical Report
- Planning Statement, including Consultation Statement and S106 Heads of Terms
- Planning Statement v2
- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal
- Property Management Strategy
- Public Art Strategy, as submitted
- Sustainability Statement
- Sustainability Statement Addendum and SAP Technical Note
- Transport Statement
- Transport Statement Addendum
- Travel Plan
- Utility Assessment
- Ventilation and Extraction Strategy
- Viability Report (replacing the Affordable Housing Statement)
- Waste Management Strategy
- Landscape Drawings
- Engineering Drawings
- Transport Drawings

## Appendix 2 BSM drawing schedule

Title	Number	Scale	Size	Revision						Revision Purpose
<b>Schedules</b>										
Scheme Accommodation Schedule	BSM-AHR-ZZ-ZZ-SA-A-08900	---	---	P1	P2	P2	P2	P2		Planning Addendum
Accommodation Schedule	BSM-AHR-ZZ-ZZ-SH-A-08900	---	A1	P1	P2	P2	P2	P2		Planning Addendum
Apartment Schedule A	BSM-AHR-BA-ZZ-SH-A-08901	---	A1	P1	P2	P2	P2	P2		Planning Addendum
Apartment Schedule B	BSM-AHR-BB-ZZ-SH-A-08902	---	A1	P1	P2	P2	P2	P2		Planning Addendum
Apartment Schedule C and D	BSM-AHR-BC-ZZ-SH-A-08903	---	A1	P1	P2	P2	P2	P2		Planning Addendum
<b>Site Plans</b>										
Site Plan - Basement	BSM-AHR-ZZ-B1-DR-A-08100	1:500	A1	P1	P2	P3	P4	P4	P5	Red line adjusted
Site Plan - Ground Floor	BSM-AHR-ZZ-00-DR-A-08100	1:500	A1	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	Red line adjusted
Site Plan - Level 01	BSM-AHR-ZZ-	1:500	A1	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	Red line adjusted



	01-DR-A-08101									
Site Plan - Level 02	BSM-AHR-ZZ-02-DR-A-08102	1:500	A1	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	Red line adjusted
Site Plan - Level 03	BSM-AHR-ZZ-03-DR-A-08103	1:500	A1	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	Red line adjusted
Location Plan - Ground Floor	BSM-AHR-ZZ-00-DR-A-08104	1:1000	A1	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	Amended to existing. Red line adjusted.
Location Plan - Basement	BSM-AHR-ZZ-B1-DR-A-08101	1:1000							P1	First Issue
<b>Existing Site Plans</b>										
Existing Site Plan - Ground Floor	BSM-AHR-ZZ-00-DR-A-08105	1:500	A1	P1	P1	P1	P1	P2	P3	Red line adjusted
Existing Site Plan - First Floor	BSM-AHR-ZZ-01-DR-A-08106	1:500	A1	P1	P1	P1	P1	P2	P3	Red line adjusted
Existing Site Plan - Podium Level	BSM-AHR-ZZ-02-DR-A-08103	1:500	A1	P1	P1	P1	P1	P2	P3	Red line adjusted
Existing Site Plan - Roof Level	BSM-AHR-ZZ-03-DR-A-08107	1:500	A1	P1	P1	P1	P1	P2	P3	Red line adjusted
Existing Site Plan - Basement	BSM-AHR-ZZ-	1:500	A1	P1	P1	P1	P1	P1	P2	Red line adjusted

	B1-DR-A-08108									
<b>Planning Boundary</b>										
BSM Development Scheme Site Plan - Basement	BSM-AHR-ZZ-B1-DR-A-08120	1:500	A1	P1	P1	P1	P1	P1		As Original Submission
BSM Development Scheme Site Plan - Ground Floor	BSM-AHR-ZZ-00-DR-A-08120	1:500	A1	P1	P1	P1	P1	P1		As Original Submission
BSM Temporary Construction Site Plan - Basement	BSM-AHR-ZZ-B1-DR-A-08121	1:500	A1	P1	P1	P1	P1	P1		As Original Submission
BSM Temporary Construction Site Plan - Ground Floor	BSM-AHR-ZZ-00-DR-A-08121	1:500	A1	P1	P1	P1	P1	P1		As Original Submission
<b>CIL Areas</b>										
BSM CIL Areas - Basement Level	BSM-AHR-ZZ-B1-DR-A-08910	1:500	A1	P1	P1	P1	P1	P1		As Original Submission
BSM CIL Areas - Ground Floor Level	BSM-AHR-ZZ-00-DR-A-08911	1:500	A1	P1	P1	P1	P1	P1		As Original Submission
BSM CIL Areas - First Floor Level	BSM-AHR-ZZ-01-DR-A-08912	1:500	A1	P1	P1	P1	P1	P1		As Original Submission

BSM CIL Areas - Second Floor Level	BSM- AHR-ZZ- 02-DR- A-08913	1:500	A1	P1	P1	P1	P1	P1		As Original Submission
BSM CIL Areas - Third Floor Level	BSM- AHR-ZZ- 03-DR- A-08914	1:500	A1	P1	P1	P1	P1	P1		As Original Submission
<b>GA Plans</b>										
GA Plan - Basement	BSM- AHR-ZZ- B1-DR- A-08200	1:250	A1	P1	P2	P3	P4	P4		Planning Addendum - Amendments to Car Park and Ground Floor
GA Plan - Level 00	BSM- AHR-ZZ- 00-DR- A-08200	1:250	A1	P1	P2	P3	P4	P4		Planning Addendum - Amendments to Car Park and Ground Floor
GA Plan - Level 01	BSM- AHR-ZZ- 01-DR- A-08201	1:250	A1	P1	P2	P3	P4	P4		Planning Addendum - Amendments to Car Park and Ground Floor
GA Plan - Level 02	BSM- AHR-ZZ- 02-DR- A-08202	1:250	A1	P1	P2	P3	P4	P4		Planning Addendum - Amendments to Car Park and Ground Floor
GA Plan - Level 03	BSM- AHR-ZZ- 03-DR- A-08203	1:250	A1	P1	P2	P3	P4	P4		Planning Addendum - Amendments to Car Park and Ground Floor

GA Plan - Level 04	BSM-AHR-ZZ-04-DR-A-08204	1:250	A1	P1	P2	P3	P3	P3	Planning Addendum - Highways Response
GA Plan - Level 05	BSM-AHR-ZZ-05-DR-A-08205	1:250	A1	P1	P2	P3	P3	P3	Planning Addendum - Highways Response
GA Plan - Level 06	BSM-AHR-ZZ-06-DR-A-08206	1:250	A1	P1	P2	P3	P3	P3	Planning Addendum - Highways Response
GA Plan - Level 07	BSM-AHR-ZZ-07-DR-A-08207	1:250	A1	P1	P2	P3	P3	P3	Planning Addendum - Highways Response
GA Plan - Level 08	BSM-AHR-ZZ-08-DR-A-08208	1:250	A1	P1	P2	P3	P3	P3	Planning Addendum - Highways Response
GA Plan - Level 09	BSM-AHR-ZZ-09-DR-A-08209	1:250	A1	P1	P2	P3	P3	P3	Planning Addendum - Highways Response
GA Plan - Level 10	BSM-AHR-ZZ-10-DR-A-08210	1:250	A1	P1	P2	P3	P3	P3	Planning Addendum - Highways Response
GA Plan - Level 11	BSM-AHR-ZZ-11-DR-A-08211	1:250	A1	P1	P2	P3	P3	P3	Planning Addendum - Highways Response
GA Plan - Level 12	BSM-AHR-ZZ-12-DR-A-08212	1:250	A1	P1	P2	P3	P3	P3	Planning Addendum - Highways Response
GA Plan - Level 13	BSM-AHR-ZZ-	1:250	A1	P1	P2	P3	P3	P3	Planning Addendum -

	13-DR-A-08213									Highways Response
GA Plan - Level 14	BSM-AHR-ZZ-14-DR-A-08214	1:250	A1	P1	P2	P3	P3	P3		Planning Addendum - Highways Response
GA Plan - Level 15	BSM-AHR-ZZ-15-DR-A-08215	1:250	A1	P1	P2	P3	P3	P3		Planning Addendum - Highways Response
GA Plan - Level 16	BSM-AHR-ZZ-16-DR-A-08216	1:250	A1	P1	P2	P3	P3	P3		Planning Addendum - Highways Response
GA Plan - Level 17	BSM-AHR-ZZ-17-DR-A-08217	1:250	A1	P1	P2	P3	P3	P3		Planning Addendum - Highways Response
GA Plan - Level 18	BSM-AHR-ZZ-18-DR-A-08218	1:250	A1	P1	P2	P3	P3	P3		Planning Addendum - Highways Response
GA Plan - Level 19	BSM-AHR-ZZ-19-DR-A-08219	1:250	A1	P1	P2	P3	P3	P3		Planning Addendum - Highways Response
GA Plan - Level 20	BSM-AHR-ZZ-20-DR-A-08220	1:250	A1	P1	P2	P3	P3	P3		Planning Addendum - Highways Response
GA Plan - Level 21	BSM-AHR-ZZ-21-DR-A-08221	1:250	A1	P1	P2	P3	P3	P3		Planning Addendum - Highways Response
GA Plan - Level 22	BSM-AHR-ZZ-22-DR-A-08222	1:250	A1	P1	P2	P3	P3	P3		Planning Addendum - Highways Response

GA Plan - Level 23	BSM-AHR-ZZ-23-DR-A-08223	1:250	A1	P1	P2	P3	P3	P3	Planning Addendum - Highways Response
GA Plan - Level 24	BSM-AHR-ZZ-24-DR-A-08224	1:250	A1	P1	P2	P3	P3	P3	Planning Addendum - Highways Response
GA Plan - Level 25	BSM-AHR-ZZ-25-DR-A-08225	1:250	A1	P1	P2	P3	P3	P3	Planning Addendum - Highways Response
GA Plan - Level 26	BSM-AHR-ZZ-26-DR-A-08226	1:250	A1	P1	P2	P3	P3	P3	Planning Addendum - Highways Response
GA Plan - Level 27	BSM-AHR-ZZ-27-DR-A-08227	1:250	A1	P1	P2	P3	P3	P3	Planning Addendum - Highways Response
GA Plan - Level 28	BSM-AHR-ZZ-28-DR-A-08228	1:250	A1	P1	P2	P3	P3	P3	Planning Addendum - Highways Response
GA Plan - Level 29	BSM-AHR-ZZ-29-DR-A-08229	1:250	A1	P1	P2	P3	P3	P3	Planning Addendum - Highways Response
GA Plan - Level 30	BSM-AHR-ZZ-30-DR-A-08230	1:250	A1	P1	P2	P3	P3	P3	Planning Addendum - Highways Response
<b>Car Park Demise Plans</b>									
Option 1 - Car Park Demise - Level 00	BSM-AHR-ZZ-00-DR-A-08930	1:250	A1	-- -	--- ---	P1	P2	P2	Planning Addendum - Amendments to Car Park

										and Ground Floor
Option 1 - Car Park Demise - Level 01	BSM-AHR-ZZ-01-DR-A-08931	1:250	A1	-- -	---	P1	P2	P2		Planning Addendum - Amendments to Car Park and Ground Floor
Option 1 - Car Park Demise - Level 02	BSM-AHR-ZZ-02-DR-A-08932	1:250	A1	-- -	---	P1	P2	P2		Planning Addendum - Amendments to Car Park and Ground Floor
Option 1 - Car Park Demise - Level 03	BSM-AHR-ZZ-03-DR-A-08933	1:250	A1	-- -	---	P1	P2	P2		Planning Addendum - Amendments to Car Park and Ground Floor
Option 1 - Car Park Demise - Basement	BSM-AHR-ZZ-B1-DR-A-08934	1:250	A1	-- -	---	P1	P2	P2		Planning Addendum - Amendments to Car Park and Ground Floor
Option 2 - Car Park Demise - Level 00	BSM-AHR-ZZ-00-DR-A-08935	1:250	A1	-- -	---	P1	P1			Planning Addendum - Highways Response
Option 2 - Car Park Demise - Level 01	BSM-AHR-ZZ-01-DR-A-08936	1:250	A1	-- -	---	P1	P1			Planning Addendum - Highways Response
Option 2 - Car Park Demise - Level 02	BSM-AHR-ZZ-02-DR-A-08937	1:250	A1	-- -	---	P1	P1			Planning Addendum - Highways Response

Option 2 - Car Park Demise - Level 03	BSM-AHR-ZZ-03-DR-A-08938	1:250	A1	-- -	---	P1	P1			Planning Addendum - Highways Response
Option 2 - Car Park Demise - Basement	BSM-AHR-ZZ-B1-DR-A-08939	1:250	A1	-- -	---	P1	P1			Planning Addendum - Highways Response
<b>Public Footway Plan</b>										
Public Footway Plan	BSM-AHR-ZZ-00-DR-A-08985	1:250	A1	-- -	---	P1	P2	P2		Planning Addendum - Amendments to Car Park and Ground Floor
<b>Sections</b>										
Building A - Section	BSM-AHR-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-08201	1:250	A1	P1	P2	P2	P2	P2		Planning Addendum
Building B - Section	BSM-AHR-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-08202	1:250	A1	P1	P2	P2	P2	P2		Planning Addendum
Building C - Section	BSM-AHR-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-08203	1:250	A1	P1	P2	P2	P2	P2		Planning Addendum
Section South	BSM-AHR-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-08204	1:250	A1	P1	P2	P2	P2	P2		Planning Addendum
<b>Elevations</b>										
North Elevation A-A	BSM-AHR-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-08401	1:250	A1	P1	P2	P2	P2	P2		Planning Addendum



South Elevation - B-B	BSM- AHR-ZZ- ZZ-DR- A-08402	1:250	A1	P1	P2	P2	P2	P2		Planning Addendum
East Elevation C-C	BSM- AHR-ZZ- ZZ-DR- A-08403	1:250	A1	P1	P2	P2	P2	P2		Planning Addendum
West Elevation - D-D	BSM- AHR-ZZ- ZZ-DR- A-08404	1:250	A1	P1	P2	P2	P2	P2		Planning Addendum
Building A - East Elevation E-E	BSM- AHR-ZZ- ZZ-DR- A-08405	1:250	A1	P1	P2	P2	P2	P2		Planning Addendum
Building B - East Elevation - F-F	BSM- AHR-ZZ- ZZ-DR- A-08406	1:250	A1	P1	P2	P2	P2	P2		Planning Addendum
Building B - West Elevation - G-G	BSM- AHR-ZZ- ZZ-DR- A-08407	1:250	A1	P1	P2	P2	P2	P2		Planning Addendum
Building C - West Elevation - H-H	BSM- AHR-ZZ- ZZ-DR- A-08408	1:250	A1	P1	P2	P2	P2	P2		Planning Addendum
Sectional Elevation in Context	BSM- AHR-ZZ- ZZ-DR- A-08409	1:500	A1	P1	P2	P2	P2	P2		Planning Addendum
<b>Bay Studies</b>										
Bay Study Sheet 1	BSM- AHR-ZZ- ZZ-DR- A-08450	1:50	A1	P1	P2	P2	P2	P2		Planning Addendum
Bay Study Sheet 2	BSM- AHR-ZZ-	1:50	A1	P1	P2	P2	P2	P2		Planning Addendum

[illegible]

02 April 2025



**Reading**  
Borough Council  
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<b>Title</b>	<b>PLANNING APPLICATION REPORT</b>
<b>Ward</b>	Abbey
<b>Planning Application Reference:</b>	PL/24/1501/FUL
<b>Site Address:</b>	20-30 Greyfriars Road, RG1 1NS
<b>Proposed Development</b>	Demolition of the existing building and the erection of a part-7, part-13 storey co-living building ( <i>Sui Generis</i> ) and associated communal amenity facilities, bins storage, cycle parking and plant equipment.
<b>Applicant</b>	Elder Developments (Greyfriars) Ltd
<b>Report author</b>	Alison Amoah - Principal Planning Officer
<b>Deadline:</b>	Original deadline 10 <sup>th</sup> February 2025, but an extension of time has been agreed with the applicant until 12 <sup>th</sup> June 2025
<b>Recommendation</b>	Delegate to the Assistant Director for Planning, Transport and Public Protection Services (AD PTPPS) to (i) GRANT full planning permission subject to the satisfactory completion of a Section 106 legal agreement or (ii) to REFUSE permission should the Section 106 legal agreement not be completed by the 12 <sup>th</sup> June 2025 (unless officers on behalf of the AD PTPPS agree to a later date for completion of the legal agreement) and subject to conditions.
<b>S106 Terms</b>	<p><b>Affordable Housing</b></p> <p>Contribution towards off-site affordable housing elsewhere in the Borough £3.566 million to be paid in instalments as follows:</p> <p>25% of the contribution prior to 25% occupation (66 units), 50% of the contribution prior to 50% occupation (132 units), 25% of the contribution prior to 75% occupation (198 units),</p> <p>All instalments to be indexed from the date of permission to the instalment date.</p> <p><b>Co-Living Units</b></p> <p>Secured under a single management company solely for the rental market. Council to be notified of details of company within one month of practical completion</p>

	<p>Operated under a single a management company, whilst allowing for appropriate transfers, in perpetuity with continuity of communal space, facility and service provision, in perpetuity, regardless of changes in ownership or management.</p> <p>Provide tenancies for private renters for a minimum of three months up to three years and structured and limited in-tenancy rent increases agreed in advance.</p> <p>Provide a high standard of professional on-site management and control of the accommodation.</p> <p>Provide a commitment to high-quality rental arrangements, through meeting the Reading Voluntary Rent with Confidence scheme (or any equivalent measures which supersede it).</p> <p>Each co-living unit to be occupied by a single resident only.</p> <p>Maximum of 266 co-living occupiers at any one time.</p> <p>No co-living unit (or units) to be occupied as a self-contained C3 dwelling and not to be run as a hotel or hostel.</p> <p>To provide, maintain and retain all Communal Facilities (as identified on the approved plans, to be annexed to the S106 legal agreement) in perpetuity. Rights of access to Communal Facilities, including charges and terms of use, to be the same for all residents regardless of size or unit occupied/duration of stay and not subject to further charges.</p> <p>All rents to be inclusive of service charges, utility bills and Council Tax. Service charges to be set at such a level as to cover the costs of services to which the charge relates and no more.</p> <p>Any qualifying criteria to include details of the management of tenancies where an individual's status changes, e.g. in the case of unemployment, pregnancy etc.</p> <p>Submission and approval of a management plan prior to first occupation and operated in accordance with the approved plan. The management plan to include details on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The number of residents;</li> <li>- Management and maintenance of internal and external communal spaces and overall maintenance, including detail regarding hours of operation and resourcing of communal areas;</li> </ul>
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- Tenancy matters including lengths of tenancies;
- Marketing arrangements including the promotion of inclusiveness of the development, with appropriate awareness of the accessible room provision and other features that cater to diversity of need rather than a particular demographic.
- Arrangements for moving in and out;
- Details of prompt issue resolution system;
- Agreed cap on the number of students that may occupy the co-living units and that students shall be enrolled in an educational institution within the borough of Reading;
- Availability of co-living rooms must be advertised on a recognised lettings listing or portal;
- Details of cycle hire scheme;
- Details of social value opportunities and engagement with the local community;
- Operational services must be provided;
- Events management;
- Staffing arrangements and provision of the concierge service;
- Cleaning and linen changing of both private and communal areas;
- Delivery arrangements for both servicing of the development as a whole and for individual residents;
- Storage of deliveries when resident is not immediately available;
- Security arrangements/measures (cctv);
- Safety procedures, including fire safety; and
- Monitoring and review of the management plan.

### **Employment, Skills and Training**

Secure a construction phase Employment Skills and Training Plan or equivalent financial contribution of £24,182.50 towards local skills and labour training as calculated in accordance with the Council's Employment, Skills and Training SPD (2013). Contribution to be paid prior to commencement of the development.

### **Health**

Secure a financial contribution of £86,400 to support a solution, identified by the Integrated Care Board (ICB) or any subsequent body that may take over the ICB function for Reading Borough, to provide extra primary clinical capacity needed to mitigate the increased impact of the development on primary care function in local GP practices in Abbey ward and adjacent wards. To be paid prior to first occupation of the development.

**CCTV connectivity**

No later than practical completion, to submit for approval a scheme of two external CCTV cameras on the development to cover the Greyfriars Road frontage which would:

- Accord with the reasonable requirements of the Council and Thames Valley Police for such a system;
- Is compatible with the system used by Thames Valley Police;
- Is linked to the CCTV system operating in Central Reading;
- Provides for connection to and control by the Council's town centre CCTV system (also controllable by the Council and Thames Valley Police);
- Secure access to the CCTV operation for the lifetime of the development for the Council and Thames Valley Police; and
- Address data sharing and data protection issues.

**Open Space/ Leisure**

Secure a financial contribution of £66,500 towards open space/ leisure improvements within Thames Parks. To be paid prior to first occupation of the development.

**Public Realm** (further detail to be included in an update report)

Prior to commencement, to submit for approval a scheme for street trees on Greyfriars Road/Garrard Street

Secure a financial contribution (to be agreed) for the ongoing maintenance of the street trees as approved. To be paid prior to first occupation of the development.

**Transport**

Applicant to enter into a Section 278 agreement to:

- (i) facilitate the closure of the existing vehicular dropped crossing on Garrard Street, resulting from the removal of the existing vehicular access to the basement car park, and reinstating and aligning the footway on Garrard Street.
- (ii) Resurface Garrard Street and Greyfriars Road footways;
- (iii) Provide two on-street Car Club Bays;
- (iv) Provide street trees along Greyfriars Road and Garrard Street.

	<p>The developer to provide and fund the provision of 2 car club bays, to include the procurement of a car club vehicle, for the approved bays and locations for a duration of 5 years. To be provided prior to first occupation of the development.</p> <p>Contribution of £5,000 towards the Traffic Regulation Order to facilitate the provision of on-street Car Club Bays. To be paid prior to first occupation of the development.</p> <p><b>General</b></p> <p>Contribution of £10,000 towards s106 monitoring costs plus a separate commitment to pay the Council's reasonable legal costs in connection with the proposed S106 Agreement will be payable whether or not the Agreement is completed.</p> <p>All financial contributions Index-Linked from the date of permission.</p>
<b>Conditions</b>	<p>To include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Standard Time Limit 3 years.</li> <li>2. Approved Plans.</li> <li>3. Pre-commencement, excluding demolition, submission and approval of external materials.</li> </ol> <p><b>Security</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Pre-commencement, excluding demolition, submission and approval of a Security Strategy to include access controls, internal cctv, minimum of 2 external cctv cameras, lighting and 24 hr concierge.</li> </ol> <p><b>Fire</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Pre-occupation implementation of fire strategy.</li> </ol> <p><b>Sustainability</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. Pre-commencement, excluding demolition, submission and approval of a Sustainable Drainage Strategy.</li> <li>7. Pre-occupation provision of Sustainable Drainage Strategy.</li> <li>8. Pre-commencement, excluding demolition, submission and approval of an interim BREEAM Certificate demonstrating a minimum BREEAM Excellent</li> <li>9. Pre-occupation submission and approval of a final BREEAM Certificate demonstrating a minimum BREEAM Excellent rating</li> </ol> <p><b>Use</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10. Pre-occupation submission and approval of an Operational Management Plan</li> <li>11. Pre-occupation provision of all communal areas shown on approved plans for use by all tenants and retention at all times thereafter.</li> </ol>

	<p>12. Compliance condition related to roof terrace hours.</p> <p><b>Transport</b></p> <p>13. Pre-commencement, excluding demolition, submission and approval of cycle parking.</p> <p>14. Pre-commencement, excluding demolition, submission and approval of two car club parking bays and implementation pre-occupation in accordance with approved details.</p> <p>15. Parking permits 1 (pre-occupation).</p> <p>16. Parking permits 2.</p> <p>17. Pre-occupation access closure and reinstatement.</p> <p><b>Waste</b></p> <p>18. Pre-occupation provision of refuse stores.</p> <p>19. Pre-occupation submission and approval of refuse collection, servicing and delivery details (Waste Collection, Servicing and Delivery Management Plan).</p> <p><b>Construction</b></p> <p>20. Pre-commencement construction method statement (including Transport and EP based requirements noise, dust and pest control) to be submitted and approved.</p> <p>21. Compliance condition relating to hours of demolition/construction works.</p> <p>22. Compliance condition relating to no burning of materials or green waste on site.</p> <p><b>Environmental</b></p> <p>23. Compliance condition in accordance with the approved noise strategy.</p> <p>24. Reporting of any unexpected contamination.</p> <p>25. Pre-piling submission and approval of piling method statement.</p> <p><b>Trees/ Ecology</b></p> <p>26. Pre-commencement, excluding demolition, submission and approval of hard and soft landscaping details to include a green wall within the courtyard.</p> <p>27. Pre-commencement, excluding demolition, submission and approval of a Landscaping Management Plan.</p> <p>28. Pre-commencement, excluding demolition, submission and approval of biodiversity enhancement scheme</p> <p>29. Compliance no site clearance during the bird nesting season.</p> <p>30. Pre-occupation submission and approval of lighting (including wildlife friendly).</p> <p><b>Archaeology</b></p> <p>31. Pre-commencement submission of a Written Scheme of investigation (WSI), in order to mitigate the impact of development on any remains, which may need to be retained in situ.</p> <p><b>Water</b></p>
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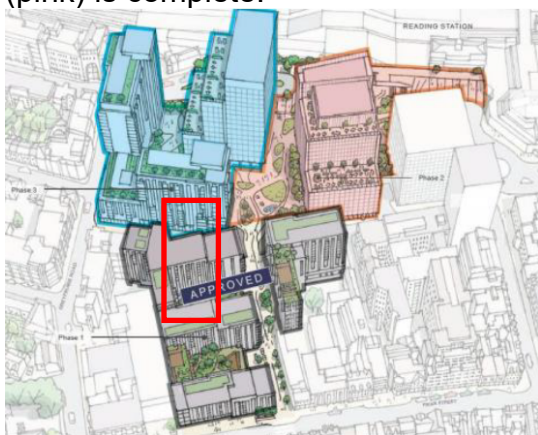
	<p>32. Pre-occupation submission and approval of water network upgrades or development and infrastructure phasing plan.</p> <p><b>Wind</b></p> <p>33. Pre-commencement, excluding demolition, submission and approval of wind mitigation measures.</p> <p>All pre-commencement conditions have been agreed with the Applicant.</p>
<b>Informatives</b>	<p>To include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Terms and conditions</li> <li>2. Building Regulations approval required</li> <li>3. Encroachment</li> <li>4. Damage to the highway and works affecting the highway</li> <li>5. Pre-commencement conditions</li> <li>6. S106</li> <li>7. Complaints about construction</li> <li>8. Community Infrastructure Levy</li> <li>9. Parking permits</li> <li>10. Biodiversity Gain condition</li> <li>11. Thames Water informative</li> <li>12. Positive and Proactive</li> </ol>

## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The proposal is for the demolition of a vacant office block and its replacement with a part seven, part thirteen storey purpose-built building comprising 266 'co-living' units with communal facilities.
- 1.2 It would result in a low level of 'less than substantial harm' to the setting of Greyfriars Church and Quadrant walls and railings to the former No 64 (Greyfriars Vicarage) group and in accordance with the NPPF this harm has been weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. Other harmful impacts mainly arise from its location within an already dense urban environment, which can largely be mitigated through conditions and S106 obligations.
- 1.3 The proposal would provide a beneficial complementary new use of living accommodation within the town centre and would harmonise well with the surrounding prevailing uses. It would provide a range of benefits including the design quality, effective reuse of a vacant brownfield site, employment and skills development during the construction and operational phases, enhancement of the sustainability, improved biodiversity, include wheelchair accessible units and accessible communal spaces, contribute towards affordable housing and deliver social value opportunities and engagement.
- 1.4 These benefits are considered to outweigh the harms, and it is considered to accord with the Development Plan and all material consideration and is, therefore, recommended for approval subject to conditions, and completion of a Section 106 legal agreement.

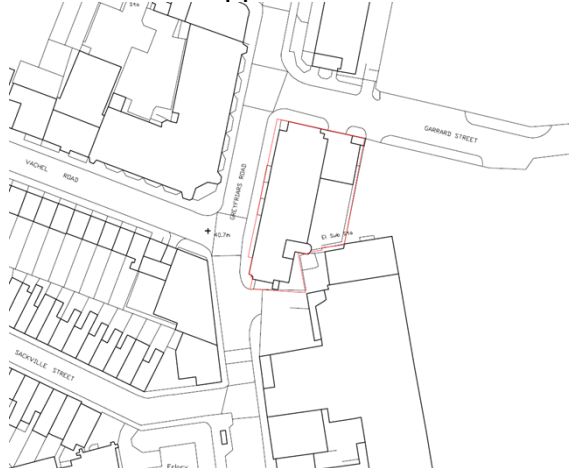
## 2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The application site is on the eastern side of Greyfriars Road on the corner of Garrard Street, in central Reading. It is currently occupied by a part six and part seven storey office building dating from the 1980s. Its external finish is smooth tiled panels with smoked glass windows. It comprises of approximately 3,000sqm of office space and although it is currently mostly occupied, the applicant has advised that the leases are coming to the end within the next 12 months.
- 2.2 The surrounding area comprises a mix of commercial and residential uses with a number of existing and approved tall buildings in a mix of building styles and forms.
- 2.3 On the corner of Friar Street and Greyfriars Road is a seven-storey student accommodation building known as Central Studios. To the west across Greyfriars Road are 3/4 storey office buildings with 2/3 storey terraced residential properties beyond along Vachel Road.
- 2.4 Immediately adjacent and to the east of the application site, is Phase 1 of Station Hill, which is complete and occupied. This comprises a 14-storey building (including basement) with 13 storeys (81.5AOD) adjacent to the application site. This comprises 599 Build to Rent residential units, 772 sqm (GEA) of flexible commercial and leisure and drinking establishment and hot food (Ebb & Flow development) (marked as 'approved' on the plan below. The red box roughly indicates the application site).
- 2.5 To the north (marked blue on the plan below) is a vacant site, which forms Phase 3 of Station Hill and has outline consent for a residential-led mixed use scheme. It would be a building with a minimum height of 67m AOD and maximum of 93m AOD. Phase 2 (pink) is complete.



- 2.6 The present office building has its main entrance on the corner of Garrard Street and Greyfriars Road and the vehicle access is from an undercroft on Garrard Street. To the south of the site on Greyfriars Road is the servicing and delivery entrance for the Sainsbury's supermarket which fronts Friar Street, with the remainder of the Sainsbury's building beyond.
- 2.7 It is a highly accessible location close to Reading station and there are a number of bus stops close by, which serve the local area and beyond.

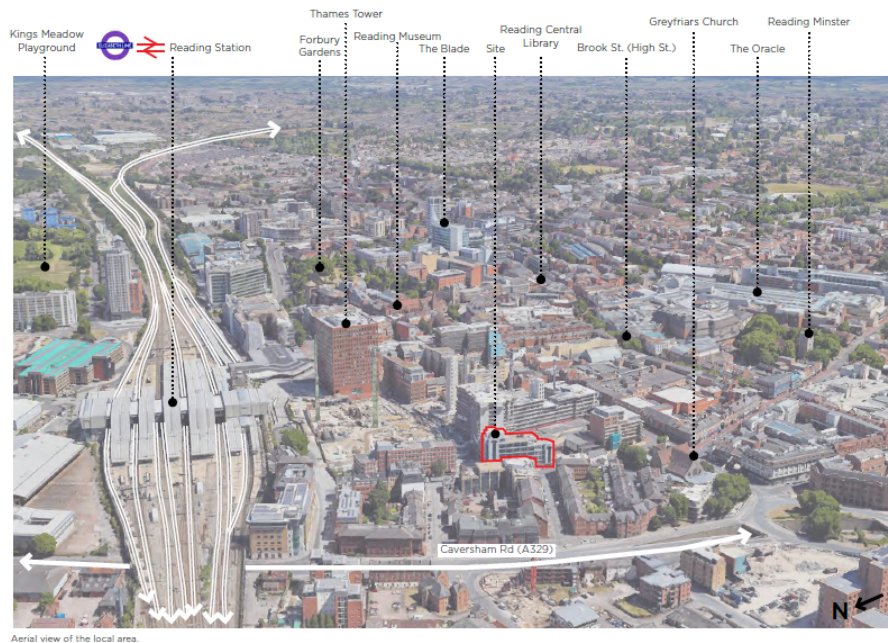
- 2.8 The site is part of an allocated site (CR11b – ‘Greyfriars Road Corner’) within the Reading Borough Local Plan (RBLP, 2019) under Policy CR11: Station/ River Opportunity Area, which allocates the area for a range of mixed-use high-density redevelopment.
- 2.9 The allocation also includes the Sainsbury’s building to the south and the student accommodation on the corner of Friar Street and Greyfriars Road.
- 2.10 The site also is within the following areas:
- Reading Central Area (covered by relevant Policies CR1-3, CR6)
  - The Air Quality Management Area (Policy EN15)
  - The Station Area Tall Buildings cluster (Policy CR10)
  - The Office Core (Policy CR1)
  - An Area of Archaeological Potential (Policy EN2).
  - Within the Station Hill South Planning and Urban Design Brief (2007) area and the Reading Station Area Framework (RSAF, 2010) area
  - Within the Article 4 restriction which restricts the change of use from Class E to C3 (residential).
- 2.11 Greyfriars Church to the south-west, is a Grade I Listed Building, and other Grade II Listed Buildings including the walls and railings at Greyfriars Vicarage, the former Mitre Inn on the corner of West Street and Friar Street (‘Thai Corner’) and 29-31 Caversham Road.
- 2.12 Prior to submission of the formal application there were a number of pre-application submissions and discussions and one of these was reviewed by FRAME design review panel (under ref: 240375). The full response from FRAME is included in Appendix 1 below. How the current proposal has responded to the pre-application discussions is set out within the appraisal section below.



*Site Location Plan*



*Existing aerial view looking south*



*Aerial view in context looking east (from submitted DAS)*

### 3 PROPOSAL

3.1 The proposed scheme is summarised as follows:

- Demolition of existing building and erection of a part seven, part thirteen storey building providing 266 co-living units of varying sizes (ranging from 18-32sqm – including 23 wheelchair accessible rooms).
- Communal co-working space, café, laundry and games room, gym facilities, fitness studio, lounge, postroom and library at ground floor level and communal internal amenity space comprising shared kitchen, private event room, media room at twelfth floor (823sqm equalling 3.09sqm per resident).
- External amenity space at ground, seventh and twelfth floors (423sqm equalling 1.59sqm per resident).
- Secure cycle storage facilities for 72 cycle spaces and provision for on-site hire of 22 folding bikes.
- Landscaping to ground floor and at levels seven and twelve and public realm works along Greyfriars Road and Garrard Street.

3.2 The building is proposed in a contemporary style to feature grey brick finish and inset rectangular windows in deep reveals and a darker, two-storey frame towards ground level. There is a lower mass element of the building towards the south (i.e. nearest Friar Street).

3.3 These proposals have been submitted following a series of pre-application discussions and meetings with your officers.

3.4 Consultation was undertaken by the applicant, prior to the formal application submission, and this is documented in their submitted 'Statement of Community Involvement'.

3.5 During the course of the application discussions were ongoing between the Planning Officer, and the applicant/agent, and this resulted in a number of amendments and

submission of further information as set out in the consultation and appraisal sections below.

- 3.6 This is a full planning application which is being reported to the Planning Applications Committee for determination as the application is in the Major category. A briefing note for members to conduct their own site visit to the site was supplied on 10 March 2025.
- 3.7 Submitted Plans and Documentation: Given the complex and detailed nature of this full planning application and the specific information in relation to the type of use and layout proposed, the application submission is supported by a wide range of documents, and these are listed at Appendix 1.
- 3.8 Community Infrastructure Levy: In relation to the Community Infrastructure Levy, and based on the developer's figures supplied in the completed CIL liability form, the existing in use building has a floorspace of 5219sqm (to be demolished) and the proposed floorspace 9,673sqm. The building was occupied until 31<sup>st</sup> January 2025 and assuming that the proposal would qualify for an 'in-use' offset (i.e. 6 months occupation within the last 3 years (prior to a permission being issued)) the CIL liability would be an estimate of **£819,356** (rounded), based on the 2025 CIL rate for residential of £183.96 per sqm.

## 4 PLANNING HISTORY

- 4.1 The relevant planning history is as follows:  
Application Site

**170229/FUL** - Change of use from Class B1(a) (offices) to C3 (dwelling houses) to comprise of 43 apartments comprising 23 one bed flats, 19 two bed flats and a single three bed flat. Notification under Class O, Part 3 of Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 - Approved: 05/04/2017 (lapsed)

**200211/FUL** - Change of use from Class B1(a)(offices) to C3 (dwelling houses) to comprise 43 flats. Prior Notification under Class O, Part 3 of Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (Permitted Development) Order 2015 - Approved 10/06/2020 (lapsed)

**230861/PREAPP** - Demolition of existing building and redevelopment to create a mixed use 15 storey building comprising 114 residential units and commercial floorspace at ground floor – Observations sent 1/9/2023

**240375/PREAPP** - Demolition of the existing building and erection of a new-build scheme at part 6- and part 12-storeys consisting of 253 Co-living units (Sui Generis) with associated internal and external amenities and a self-contained commercial unit fronting Greyfriars Road (Class E) – Observations sent 14/8/2024 [this scheme was subject to an independent design review by Frame Projects].

- 4.2 52-55 Friar Street and 12 Greyfriars Road (Sainsbury's)

**162210/FUL** - Demolition of existing building and structures (Class A1) and erection of 3 new buildings ranging between 6 - 12 (and basement) storeys in height to provide 135 (1xstudio, 54x1, 73x2 & 7x3-bed) residential units (Class C3), a flexible Class A1-A5 use

at ground floor level fronting onto Friar St, a flexible Class A1-5, B1(a) or D2 (gym only) use at ground floor level fronting onto Greyfriars Rd, with associated access, parking, servicing, landscaping and engineering works (amended description) - Approved 20/03/2018 (lapsed).

#### 4.3 Station Hill

This comprises three phases of development.

##### Plot F and North sites

**192032/HYB** - Hybrid application comprising (i) application for Full Planning Permission for Phase 2 (Plot G and public realm) including demolition of existing structures, erection of an eighteen storey building containing office use (Class B1) and flexible retail, non-residential institution and assembly and leisure uses (Class A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, D1 and D2). Provision of podium deck, vehicular access and parking. New public open space and landscaping. Bridge link over Garrard St and (ii) Application for Outline Planning Permission for Phase 3 (all Matters reserved) for four building plots (A, B, C and D). Demolition of existing buildings and structures. Mixed-use redevelopment comprising residential dwellings (Class C3), hotel (Class C1), residential institutions (Class C2), office use (Class B1). Flexible Retail, financial and professional services, restaurants and cafes, drinking establishments, hot food takeaways, non-residential institutions and assembly and leisure (Class A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, D1 and D2). Provision of podium deck and basement storey running beneath Phase 2 and 3. Formation of pedestrian and vehicular access. Means of access and circulation and car parking within the site. Provision of new public open space and landscaping. Granted following completion of s106 legal agreement 22/07/2021.

**201536/VAR** - Outline application (pursuant to Section 73 of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990) for mixed use redevelopment of the site through the demolition and alteration of existing buildings and erection of new buildings & structures to provide Offices (Use Class E (g)(i) and (g) (ii)), a range of town centre uses including retail and related uses (Use Class E (a),(b) and (c); Drinking establishments (sui generis) and Hot food takeaways (sui generis)), leisure and community (Use Class E (d), (e), and (f); Class F.1; Class F.2; and Theatres; Cinemas; Concert Halls; Bingo Halls; Dance Halls (sui generis)), and residential units (Use Class C3), associated infrastructure, public realm works and ancillary development (all matters reserved) as permitted by planning permission 190441 granted on 6 December 2019 (as amended). Granted following completion of s106 legal agreement 22/07/2021.

**201533/REM** - Application for the approval of reserved matters (access, scale, appearance, layout and landscaping) and submission of details (Conditions 12, 13, 15, 16, 17,18, 19, 20, 21, 22, and 52) for Plot F within the development site known as Station Hill, submitted pursuant to the Outline Planning Application ref. 201536/VAR. The proposals comprise the construction of a ground plus 12 storey building comprising 184 Build to Rent residential units, 762 sqm (GEA) of flexible retail, leisure and business floorspace (Use Class E, Sui Generis, F.1 and F.2), cycle storage, car parking, servicing, plant areas, landscaping, new public realm and other associated works. Granted following completion of s106 legal agreement 23/07/2021.

##### Station Hill Plot E



**201532/VAR** - Outline application under s.73 of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990 with all matters reserved for mixed use redevelopment of Plot E of the Station Hill site and neighbouring Telecom House site (48 to 51 Friar Street & 4 to 20 Garrard Street) to comprise the demolition of existing buildings and erection of new buildings/ structures to provide residential units (Use Class C3), a range of town centre uses, including retail and related uses (Use Class E (a),(b) and (c); Drinking establishments (sui generis) and Hot food takeaways (sui generis)), and leisure uses (Use Class E (d), (e), and (f); Class F.1; Class F.2; and Theatres; Cinemas; Concert Halls; Bingo Halls; Dance Halls (sui generis)), associated infrastructure, public realm works and ancillary development as permitted by planning permission 190442 granted on 6 December 2019 (as amended). Granted following completion of s106 legal agreement 22/07/2021.

**201537/REM** - Application for the approval of reserved matters (access, scale, appearance, layout and landscaping) and submission of details (Conditions 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 30, 34 and 62(i)) for Plot E within development site known as Station Hill, submitted pursuant to the Outline Planning Application ref. 201532/VAR. The proposals comprise the construction of a 12 storey building, plus basement storey, comprising 415 Build to Rent residential units, 722 sqm (GEA) of flexible commercial and leisure (Use Class E (a),(b) (c),(d),(e), (f), (g)(i), and (g)(ii), Use Class F.1 and Use Class F.2); the following sui generis uses: Drinking establishments; Hot food takeaways; Theatres; Cinemas; Bingo Halls and Dance Halls; cycle storage, car parking, servicing, plant areas, landscaping, new public realm and other associated works. Granted following completion of s106 legal agreement 23/07/2021.

## 5 CONSULTATIONS

- 5.1 Active Transport - Active Travel England has determined that standing advice should be issued and would encourage the local planning authority to consider this as part of its assessment of the application. Our standing advice can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/active-travel-england-sustainable-development-advice-notes>
- 5.2 RBC Housing - Supports the provision of the use but advises that this will have an impact on the local housing market which needs to be mitigated.
- 5.3 RBC Access Officer – the Access Officer has provided detailed commentary on how the building and the co-living units should be carefully designed in relation to accommodating those with mobility or other impairments.
- 5.4 Berkshire Archaeology – The applicant's desk-based assessment is accepted and suggests that there is a low potential for archaeology, as although the site is within the area of the Medieval street that is now Friar Street, archaeology may have been damaged by more modern development. A condition is recommended for the submission of a Written Scheme of investigation (WSI), in order to mitigate the impact of development on any remains, which may need to be retained in situ.
- 5.5 RBC Building Control – no comments received.
- 5.6 RBC Conservation Officer - The proposed development would have indirect and negligible impacts on the historic terraced streets. However, the proposal would cause 'less than substantial harm at a low level' to the setting of Greyfriars Church (Grade I)

and Quadrant walls and railings to the former No 64 (Greyfriars Vicarage) group. The negative impact due to the additional massing would be reduced by the proposal's high-quality architectural design. However, to minimise the impact of the scale, height, and massing, further inclusion of green elements and changes to the massing are suggested.

5.7 RBC Cultural Services – no comments received.

5.8 Ecology Adviser - The applicant's ecology report has been undertaken to the appropriate standard and concludes that the site is currently of very limited ecological value, and it is considered unlikely that the proposals will adversely affect protected species. Nonetheless, the buildings and vegetation may be used by nesting and roosting birds. As such, a condition is recommended to ensure that the site is not cleared during the bird nesting season and that a pre commencement check is undertaken to ensure pigeons have not started nesting in the building.

In terms of BNG, it seems very likely that the development will lead to a net gain. Consequently, if planning permission is granted, it will be contingent on meeting the pre-commencement general Biodiversity Net Gain condition. This condition requires the submission and approval of a Biodiversity Gain Plan, demonstrating how a 10% increase in biodiversity value will be achieved for the development.

The ecology report recommends the inclusion of bird and bat boxes within the development. This can either be subject to condition or details provided ahead of the application's determination.

There should also be a condition in relation to wildlife-friendly lighting.

5.9 RBC Environmental Protection –

- Satisfied with contaminated land assessment, no mitigation or further assessment required but recommend a condition regarding unforeseen contamination.
- Satisfied with air quality assessment, nothing further required
- Recommend bin storage condition in relation to vermin controls
- Recommend CMS noise and dust and pest control condition
- Noise assessment – very high level of noise from Sainsbury's service yard predicted. EP need clarification on the proposed mitigation as the target NR values for internal noise levels are appropriate, however, the proposed windows etc. don't seem to demonstrate compliance with these targets. Also, there is a heavy reliance on MVHR therefore we need further reassurance that the amount of cooling is enough to not need windows open in any conditions even hot summer days at the rear of the site due to the impact of Sainsburys noise. Is there anything that can be done to reduce the noise from Sainsburys e.g. an acoustic barrier

**Planning Officer note:** Further comments were received from the agent to confirm that that any overheating risk and level of cooling has been carefully considered in the submitted 'Energy and Overheating Assessment', which concludes that there would be no issues with overheating and no need for additional cooling. Co-living units (southern end of the building) closest to the Sainsbury's service yard, are from 2<sup>nd</sup> floor upwards. A response was also provided by their noise consultant Sol Acoustics:

*"The Acoustic Assessment evaluates the noise impact from the neighbouring Sainsbury's service yard and outlines an enhanced internal noise level criterion for residential spaces*



*to minimise health risks and disturbances. The glazing options presented in the report serve as examples of suitable solutions to meet the enhanced criteria in terms of Rw + Ctr. Please note that our noise intrusion assessments and glazing specifications are based on octave band frequency ranges from 63Hz to 8kHz and thus the example glazing provided is calculated to achieve the outlined Noise Rating criteria... A barrier could be considered, but due to the height of the development and close proximity to the Sainsburys, we believe a barrier to mitigate the noise would not be suitable/ practical without impacting other elements such as daylight sunlight and outlook etc.”*

The Environmental Protection Officer (EPO) subsequently confirmed that the applicant's response was satisfactory, but that the flats nearest Sainsbury's would be impacted by noise and although the proposed specification for windows and ventilation would mitigate that to a degree, it would not entirely, and ideally flats, located at that worst affected façade, would be avoided. This would need to be addressed as part of the planning balance. A condition was recommended to ensure the implementation of the noise assessment specifications.

- 5.10 RBC Private Sector Housing – Assuming the room sizes are correct, fire safety and the construction are carried out in accordance with current Building Regulations.

There are no objections or comments to be made regarding the Housing Act concerning the above proposed development

- 5.11 RBC Leisure – on the basis that the development will increase the use of leisure infrastructure there is a request for a financial contribution towards recreational facilities in the Borough as a result of the additional pressure on these facilities by the residents.

- 5.12 RBC Planning Natural Environment (Tree Officer) – The site sits within Abbey ward, which is the lowest canopy cover ward in the borough at only 5.5% - one aim of the adopted Tree Strategy to bring each ward up to 12% by 2030. It is also within the AQMA, where tree retention and planting is a higher priority to mitigate air pollution. As such, proposals should aim to include the maximum 'greening' possible (soft landscaping), within the confines of such a town centre site.

Overall, although the proposal is generally acceptable, it is considered that the proposal is rather disappointing and has come up short in providing the level of 'city greening' that was expected in the preapplication proposals. Three specific elements that warrant further exploration prior to a decision are considered to be 1 a green/brown or blue-green roof, 2) the SuDs strategy and 3) whether further greening at street level could be incorporated.

The Landscape Design Strategy indicates several planters at the entrance (north-east corner) and a one Small-leaved Lime tree (more fastigiate cultivar of) on the Greyfriars Road frontage. The tree proposed is acceptable and consistent with the species at Greyfriars Nursery (on corner of Greyfriars Rd & Friar St). The proposed trees in the courtyard are acceptable as is the proposed planting palette appears acceptable.

Green walls in the courtyard are going to be best as they will be looked after and not/less prone to vandalism.

Management & maintenance will need to be expanded upon in a Landscape Management Plan including being clear on how all the planting is irrigated.

The Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy Report includes a 'Below Ground Drainage General Layout' plan which shows an underground attenuation tank under the courtyard; with permeable paving being the other element of the SuDs strategy.

If you intend to approve the proposals without any further revisions, conditions for the submission and approval of hard and soft landscaping details and landscape management plan will be required.

**Planning Officer Note:** Further discussion of the points from the Tree Officer is provided in the Appraisal below. In summary the agent's response is as follows:

Emerging Policy EN19 - Urban Greening has yet to be through examination and has very limited weight. However, proposals maximise urban greening, evident through the BNG score and soft landscaping on both terraces and courtyard areas (including approx. 18 new trees).

The location of the cycle store, fire escape and substation mean that green walls are not feasible.

It is considered that the single tree and planters strike the right balance in delivering greening at street level whilst maximising active frontages along Greyfriars Road and Garrard Street.

The SUDS strategy has been revised to introduce raingardens and bio-diverse retentive planters to promote rain re-use before discharging into the attenuation tank.

- 5.13 RBC SUDS Manager (Local Lead Flood Authority – LLFA) - The proposed sustainable drainage system includes the provision of an attenuation tank at the rear of the site which is fed by a pipe network and an area of permeable paving with a flow control that limits the discharge from the site at 2l/s, which would be a betterment on the existing discharge and so the principle is deemed acceptable.

However, the drainage strategy has no connection into the green landscape on the site at the ground floor or terrace levels and no green roof has been proposed which would conflict with Local Plan Policy EN18, the applicant must therefore provide evidence that this cannot be provided or amend the drainage scheme so that it connects with the landscaping around the site.

The proposal also includes the provision of a private drainage connection on the Public Highway and as such this should be relocated so that it is situation within the application site.

Although the above must be addressed it is acceptable for this to be dealt with by way of conditions (sustainable drainage to be approved and implemented in accordance with approved scheme)

**Planning Officer note:** The agent responded to confirm that the manhole position will be reviewed following completion of the substructure. They advised that the SuDs scheme

will now include raingardens and bio-diverse retentive planters ahead of reaching the attenuation tank to further promote sustainable drainage and rainwater re-use.

The drainage strategy does not incorporate blue roofs, as this is not required to achieve a compliant drainage strategy for the scheme and presents challenges to the construction and delivery of the scheme.

- 5.14 RBC Transport Strategy– The site is in a very accessible central location. A car-free, high-density residential type development is proposed, which is considered to be appropriate on the basis that it is accepted that the proposed development will produce less vehicular trips on the transport network than the present office building. Parking permits for residents would not be appropriate and conditions and informative are recommended.

The site is served via an existing vehicle access from Garrard Street to basement level car parking area. As no parking is to be provided this access will not be required and therefore the kerb will need to be reinstated and aligned with the footway. Given that there are plans to re pave the footway on Garrard Street and Greyfriars Rd a S278 agreement will be required to facilitate those works.

I note that some of the doors illustrated on submitted plans open outwards, under section 153 of the Highways Act access doors should not open outwards. Revised plans are required.

The cycle store is located at first floor level at the southern end of the building, which can be accessed internally as well as directly from Greyfriars Road. There are no cycle parking standards for Co-living accommodation, however the Council's current Parking standards for C3 residential units states each 1- and 2-bedroom dwelling would require 0.5 storage spaces (this includes HMOs). The proposal is to provide 72 cycles storage spaces at a ratio of 0.27 spaces per room. This is below the standards required for 1 and 2 bedroom units. The applicant has submitted information based on their own sites, however, an independent evidenced based survey to support a lower provision will be required to confirm the proposed provision is appropriate. Given that cycle parking is contained within the building and there are no external areas for additional cycle parking, this must be addressed and confirmed at the application stage.

Plans also illustrate cycle stands provided for visitors on the footway on Garrard Street, any visitor parking associated with the development will need to be provided on site. Revised plans are required illustrating an alternative location within the curtilage of the site and not on the public highway.

Bin storage should not be located further than 10m from where the vehicle can wait to undertake collection. This is to avoid the stationing of service vehicles on the carriageway for excessive periods. Schedule 1, Part H of the Building Regulations 2000 defines locations for the storage and collection of waste. Key points in the approved document to part H include: Residents should not be required to carry waste more than 30m (excluding any vertical distance) to the storage point. Refuse store is to be proposed at ground floor level with collection from Greyfriars Road. As the applicant is aware the Station Hill Development is providing a cycle lane along Greyfriars Rd, and, therefore, any additional vehicles parking within the cycle lane to facilitate deliveries to the development could result in conflict between vehicles and cyclists, therefore, it should be relocated to Garrard Street which is reflective of the existing arrangements. A dropped kerb could be provided

in this area to facilitate the movement of bins. It is also recommended that the Council's waste and recycling team should be consulted.

A CMS will be required for this development and licences obtained from the Highways Team to undertake all works on the Public Highway.

**Planning Officer Note:** After further liaison the Transport officer confirmed that there would either need to be survey data with photos to demonstrate that a lower cycle provision would be acceptable, taken at a time when the vast majority of cycles would be located in the stores, or provide 72 cycle spaces plus 22 folding bikes for hire within the building equating to 0.36 spaces per unit, a compromise between halls of residence and 1 bed flat standards.

In terms of the servicing arrangement for refuse bins and obstruction of the cycle route the Transport officer confirmed that *"Given the constraints and the design elements of the remainder of the building, in principle it is accepted that the bins can be serviced from Greyfriars to speed up the collection process"* and this would be subject to the increase in bin storage as agreed with the Waste Team.

The applicant amended the scheme to provide 22 foldable bicycles in hire lockers located in the management office, resulting in an overall cycle provision of 94 spaces. The details are recommended to be secured via condition.

The details of bicycle hire are recommended as part of the Operational Management Plan.

The short-stay stands have been relocated to within the red-line and adjacent to the building entrance, confirmed as acceptable by the Transport officer.

5.15 RBC Valuations – have been closely involved with officers in the assessment of this application, from the perspective of the value of the development and relevant considerations for affordable housing contributions.

5.16 RBC Waste Operations – A development containing 266 residential units on the standards household waste collection service (general waste collection which alternates with a fortnightly recycling collection, and food waste is collected weekly) would need to have space for:

- 34 x 1100L bins for general waste
- 58 x 1100L bins for recycling
- 22 x 240L bins for food waste

The proposal is for 10 larger bins and 6 smaller bins. It is highly likely that for this number of residential units they would need a bigger bin store or to engage a paid for trade waste contractor to increase the frequency of bin collections from fortnightly to twice weekly. This would need to be detailed in a formal refuse strategy document agreed on by the Council.

Clarification is sought on where it is proposed the refuse vehicle will stop to empty these bins. There is a maximum bin pulling distance of 10m for operatives to pull 1100L bins, and this is measured from the rear of the collection vehicle to the end of the furthest away bin. Site managers/maintenance teams would need to be on site at the time of collection to pull the bins out of the bin store so they are within the 10m distance, and then return

the bins afterwards. The Council's waste collections start at 6am Mon-Fri, and so site managers/maintenance would need to be available from this time onwards to ensure the bins can be presented/rotated.

**Planning Officer Note:** Following further information from the applicant the Waste team confirmed that based on them working on provisions for 103 flats on a weekly collection for both general waste and recycling + weekly food waste – that the following would be required:

- 7 x 1100L bins for general waste
- 11 x 1100L bins for recycling
- 8 x 240L bins for food waste

The applicant further revised the scheme to provide a total of 20 by 1,100ltr bins and 10 by 240ltr bins for food waste.

The applicant confirmed that the location of the proposed refuse store had been carefully considered taking into account a number of design and operational matters. Although the refuse collection process would involve the temporary obstruction of the proposed cycle lane, it would only be once a week and most likely similar to other existing and proposed locations in Reading. They also highlighted that Greyfriars Road is a long straight road giving cyclists the ability to see and respond to any temporary obstruction.

The Waste Team confirmed that subject to a condition requiring the submission and approval of waste management plan that the proposed scheme would be acceptable. Such a scheme would need to detail the method of bins being pulled to a designated collection point by their staff and returned after collection. This would be with the likely need for staff to be on-site at the time of collection to present and rotate bins as leaving bins unattended on the public highway for long periods is not advised.

- 5.17 REDA – No overall concern with the loss of office accommodation. Residential type uses are considered beneficial to the vitality of the town centre. This particular proposal will assist in the provision of accommodation for such key workers and aid recruitment and retention of key staff and maintain a high level of public service to residents and businesses. Sector which would benefit include hospital staff, University and Reading College, schools, 'blue light' services, the Council, town centre retail and hospitality businesses and junior posts in office businesses.

A construction stage employment and skills plan should be secured in any permission.

- 5.18 Thames Valley Police – Designing out Crime Officer (DOCO) –  
The DOCO raised a number of concerns regarding the following detailed elements: The number of entrances and door controls; Compartmentation – residents should only have access to the parts of the building they need to; Merged Cores are present, which allows circular movement within the development (entering one stair core to leave by another); Laminated glazing should be used; Access control measures should follow guidance set out in Secured by Design Homes Guide 2024; CCTV and lighting - details of the proposed specification and location of CCTV should be provided and should be considered with lighting to ensure they are compatible.

**Planning Officer Note:** The applicant responded with a note responding to each matter raised and stated: *"Following receipt of the DOCO comments on 12th December, a meeting took place via Teams on the 3rd January 2025 attended by both the DOCO*

*Officer and Architects to discuss the comments and agree on any design amendment that could be incorporated.”* The DOCO confirmed that the note reflected the conversation, and recommended that planning conditions be included to secure specification and location of CCTV, details of access control measures and laminated glazing and matters as set out in the submitted Note. The submission and approval of a security strategy is a recommended condition.

- 5.19 NHS Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire & West Berkshire Integrated Care Board (ICB) - Integrated Care Board is a statutory NHS organisation, which was established on 1 July 2022 by The Integrated Care Boards (Establishment) Order 2022 and has the delegated function of commissioning of primary care services including GPs.

The ICB has no dedicated funding for any primary care estates development in their annual budgets. Reading Borough Council (the Council) has implemented Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) charging. To date no CIL contribution has been used towards health facilities. The ICB is currently working with the Council to discuss the potential of the use of CIL contributions towards health facilities.

Any financial contribution to be secured in this planning application will go towards capital costs of primary healthcare provision resulting from an increase in population and additional demand on healthcare facilities.

#### Proposed development

This full planning application is seeking to deliver 266 co-living units to the application site. Given that the proposal is intended to be single occupancy rooms, the proposed development will generate 266 new patients to the area.

#### Local GP Capacity

The application is within Reading Holybrook Primary Care Network (PCN), where the closest local GP practice is Reading Walk-in Health Centre, which is within Broad Street Mall. This currently has a total number of registered patients of 14,080, with a gross internal area (GIA) of 709.58 square metres.

For a GP practice which has a patient list size over 12,000, a minimum of 1,000 square metres of GIA is required. A capacity assessment for Reading Walk-in Health Centre shows that it is over-capacity. Therefore, there is a need to have additional clinical capacity to accommodate the new population generated from the proposed development.

An initial financial contribution of £224,640 towards primary care was sought and an objection raised in the absence of an appropriate healthcare mitigation.

**Planning Officer Note:** Further detail was provided by the applicant in terms of a relevant basis of contribution calculation and the ICB agreed that a financial contribution of £86,400 to provide extra primary clinical capacity would be acceptable. This is included as a recommended S106 obligation.

- 5.20 Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee (CAAC) – no comments received.
- 5.21 CCTV Officer – no comments received (although examination of the Council's cctv control room confirms that there is no camera coverage on Greyfriars Road).

5.22 Historic England – No comments supplied and advise that the LPA be guided by their own specialist conservation and archaeological advisers.

5.23 Reading Civic Society – no comments received.

5.24 Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue - The plans and proposals have been examined due to the height of the proposed building.

The documents for the proposed building appear to satisfy the provisions required within the Building Regulations for fire safety.

We await submission of a full building consultation in due course.

5.25 Southern Gas Networks – no comments received.

5.26 SSE – no comments received.

5.27 Thames Water – *Waste Comments* - Thames Water recognises this catchment is subject to high infiltration flows during certain groundwater conditions. The scale of the proposed development doesn't materially affect the sewer network and as such we have no objection, however care needs to be taken when designing new networks to ensure they don't surcharge and cause flooding. In the longer-term Thames Water, along with other partners, are working on a strategy to reduce groundwater entering the sewer networks.

The developer should liaise with the LLFA to agree an appropriate sustainable surface water strategy following the sequential approach before considering connection to the public sewer network.

As the proposed development is located within 15 metres of a strategic sewer Thames Water requests a condition requiring the submission and approval of a piling method statement.

With regard to surface water and foul water network infrastructure there is no objection.

#### *Water Comments*

There are water mains close to the development and advice is provided.

The existing water network infrastructure is unable to accommodate the needs of this development proposal and as such Thames Water request a condition to ensure that the network can accommodate the development. This is included in the recommendation above

**Planning Officer Note:** Conditions are recommended requiring the submission and approval of a piling method statement and with regard to water network upgrades. An informative regarding advice on working near Thames Water mains is included.

5.28 Site notices were displayed on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2025. Two letters of support were received from Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust and Royal Berkshire Hospital specifically with regard to the offer of on-site discount market rent (DMR) for key workers and how the lack of housing affects staff retention and that mitigating the high cost of living with housing and appropriate living spaces for staff is a shared strategic priority.

5.29 In addition to the above consultation, officers sought independent advice from consultants with respect to technical matters as follows:

- Daylight and sunlight to the co-living units and impact of the massing of the development on surrounding amenity in terms of overshadowing has been undertaken on behalf of the LPA by Hawkins Environmental, who conclude that the application scheme is generally satisfactory in these aspects.
- Energy and sustainability of the scheme has been assessed by Blewburton Ltd. on behalf of the LPA and their advice is that the Council's policies and SPD are complied with.
- Wind and microclimate has been assessed on behalf of the LPA by ArcAero who conclude that the street-level wind environment would be suitable and the elevated external amenity communal areas would be suitable for their intended purpose for the majority of the time they would be needed.

## **6. RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY AND GUIDANCE**

- 6.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which states at Paragraph 11 "*Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development*".
- 6.2 Section 16(2) and 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the local planning authority to have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of special interest which it possesses.
- 6.3 For this Local Planning Authority the development plan is the Reading Borough Local Plan (November 2019). The relevant national / local policies / guidance are:

### National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024).

The following chapters are the most relevant (others apply to a lesser extent):

- 2. Achieving Sustainable Development
- 4. Decision-making
- 5. Delivering a Sufficient Supply of Homes
- 8. Promoting Healthy and Safe Communities
- 9. Promoting Sustainable Transport
- 11. Making Effective Use of Land
- 12. Achieving Well-Designed Places
- 14. Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change, Flooding and Coastal Change
- 15. Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
- 16. Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

National Planning Policy Guidance (2014 onwards)

### Reading Borough Local Plan (November 2019)

The relevant policies are:



CC1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development  
 CC2: Sustainable Design and Construction  
 CC3: Adaptation to Climate Change  
 CC4: Decentralised Energy  
 CC5: Waste Minimisation and Storage  
 CC6: Accessibility and the Intensity of Development  
 CC7: Design and the Public Realm  
 CC8: Safeguarding Amenity  
 CC9: Securing Infrastructure  
 EN1: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment  
 EN2: Areas of Archaeological Significance  
 EN6: New Development in a Historic Context  
 EN9: Provision of Open Space  
 EN12: Biodiversity and the Green Network  
 EN14: Trees, Hedges and Woodland  
 EN15: Air Quality  
 EN16: Pollution and Water Resources  
 EN17: Noise Generating Equipment  
 EN18: Flooding and Drainage  
 EM3: Loss of Employment Land  
 H1: Provision of Housing  
 H3: Affordable Housing  
 H10: Private and Communal Outdoor Space\*  
 TR1: Achieving the Transport Strategy  
 TR3: Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters  
 TR4: Cycle Routes and Facilities  
 TR5: Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging  
 CR1: Definition of Central Reading  
 CR2: Design in Central Reading  
 CR3: Public Realm in Central Reading  
 CR6: Living in Central Reading  
 CR9: Terraced Housing in Central reading  
 CR10: Tall Buildings  
 CR11: Station/River Major Opportunity Area

Relevant Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) are:

- Employment Skills and Training SPD (2013)
- Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD (2011)
- Sustainable Design and Construction SPD (2019)
- Affordable Housing SPD (2021)
- Planning Obligations Under S106 SPD (2015)
- Reading Station Area Framework (2010)
- Station Hill South Planning and Urban Design Brief (2007)
- Town Centre Public Realm Strategy (2024) (Consultation draft)

Other relevant documents:

- Reading Borough Council Tree Strategy (March 2021)
- Reading Biodiversity Action Plan (March 2021)
- Reading Tall Building Strategy (2008)

- BRE Site Layout Planning for Daylight and Sunlight – A guide to good practice, (BR 209 2011 edition)
- The National Design Guide (2019)
- The National Model Design Code (July 2021)
- London Plan Guidance ‘Large-Scale Purpose-Built Shared Living’ (GLA, Feb 2024)

#### 6.4 Local Plan Update

The current version of the Local Plan (adopted in November 2019) turned five years old on Tuesday 5th November 2024. The Local Plan was reviewed in March 2023 and around half of the policies in the plan are considered still up to date. However, the rest need to be considered for updating to reflect changing circumstances and national policy. A consultation version of the draft updated version of the Local Plan was published on 6<sup>th</sup> November 2024.

Although there is a five-year period for carrying out a review of a plan after it is adopted, nothing in the NPPF or elsewhere says that policies automatically become “out of date” when they are five years old. It is a matter of planning judgement rather than legal fact whether a plan or policies within it are out-of-date. This will depend on whether they have been overtaken by things that have happened since the plan was adopted, either on the ground or through changes in national policy, for example.

Officer advice in respect of the Local Plan policies pertinent to this application listed above is that they remain in accordance with national policy. Of those listed above Policies CC2, CC3, CC4, CC7, CC9, EN12, EN14, EN18, H1, H3, H5, TR1, TR5, CR2, CR10 and CR11 are proposed for amendment, but the objectives of those policies remain very similar in the draft updated Local Plan, and at present, due to the status of the emerging Local Plan have limited weight in decision making. The current policies can continue to be afforded weight in the appraisal below and are not considered to be ‘out of date’.

It should be noted that there is an emerging policy H15: ‘Purpose- Built Shared Living Accommodation’ (co-living) (within Appendix 3 below). This provides criteria that co-living schemes need to meet. However, although it has informed the assessment of the proposed scheme, it has limited weight at present. The applicant submitted representations to the Local Plan seeking amendments to the policy wording.

## 7. **APPRAISAL**

The main matters to be considered are:

### **i) Land use considerations**

- *Local Plan*
- *Loss of office use*
- *The proposed use*

### **ii) The merits and impacts of this proposal for ‘co-living’**

- a) Impact on the housing market*
- b) Additional impacts on medical facilities*
- c) Additional impacts on public realm and parks/leisure facilities*

### **iii) Amenity considerations**

- *Residents' amenity*
- *Residents' security*
- *Noise environment*
- *Sunlight and daylight*
- *Privacy and overlooking*
- *Accessibility considerations for mobility impaired people*

#### **iv) Design considerations**

- *Design requirements*
- *Streetscene character of Greyfriars Road*
- *Streetscene character of Garrard Street*
- *Height, massing and design*
- *Impact on heritage and views*
- *Active frontages*
- *Wind and microclimate*

#### **v) Environment, energy and sustainability**

- *Landscaping and urban greening*
- *Ecology*
- *Energy and sustainability*
- *SuDs*
- *Air quality and contamination*

#### **vi) Transport, waste and servicing**

#### **vii) Other**

#### **i) Land use considerations**

##### Local plan

7.1 As described above the application site sits within an allocated site within the current local plan:



7.2 Policy CR11b states:

*“There will be active retail and leisure uses on the ground floor along Friar Street, with a mix of uses on higher floors and in the rest of the area. The edge of the site nearest to the areas of traditional terracing west of Greyfriars Road will require careful design treatment.*

*Indicative potential: 90-140 dwellings, offices, retail and leisure (no significant net*

gain assumed)”

### 7.3 The overarching Policy CR11 states that:

*Development in the Station/River Major Opportunity Area will:*

- i) Contribute towards providing a high-density mix of uses to create a destination in itself and capitalise on its role as one of the most accessible locations in the south east. Development for education will be an acceptable part of the mix;*
- ii) Help facilitate greater pedestrian and cycle permeability, particularly on the key movement corridors. North-south links through the area centred on the new station, including across the IDR, are of particular importance;*
- iii) Provide developments that front onto and provide visual interest to existing and future pedestrian routes and open spaces;*
- iv) Safeguard land which is needed for mass rapid transit routes and stops;*
- v) Provide additional areas of open space where possible, with green infrastructure, including a direct landscaped link between the station and the River Thames;*
- vi) Give careful consideration to the areas of transition to low and medium density residential and conserve and, where possible, enhance listed buildings, conservation areas and historic gardens and their settings;*
- vii) Give careful consideration to the archaeological potential of the area and be supported by appropriate archaeological assessment which should inform the development;*
- viii) Demonstrate that it is part of a comprehensive approach to its sub-area, which does not prevent neighbouring sites from fulfilling the aspirations of this policy, and which contributes towards the provision of policy requirements that benefit the whole area, such as open space; and*
- ix) Give early consideration to the potential impact on water and wastewater infrastructure in conjunction with Thames Water, and make provision for upgrades where required.*

#### Loss of office use

- 7.4 There have been various proposals to attempt to re-use the current building and prior approvals to residential which have not been realised. Furthermore, most office accommodation has been contracting in the town centre the trend has been towards more high-quality offices which largely reflects the overall desire for most occupants to have a significant element of homeworking. Therefore, it is considered that the loss of office use is acceptable in terms of Policy EM1.

#### The proposed use

- 7.5 ‘Co-living’ is a broad term for a type of accommodation where people share some of the facilities within the building, for instance an HMO or a house containing bed-sits would be a type of co-living. However, a more institutional form of built-and-managed large blocks for co-living have existed for approximately 10 to 15 years, mostly in London and larger cities. Although there are variations in this form of accommodation, they are usually either purpose-built developments or conversions from office uses. The offer is to provide an accommodation option for generally younger, newly qualified professional people, to be able to live and work in expensive locations, with a typical length of tenancy being three months to twelve months, but can be longer. In this case, the proposal is for a purpose-built block containing 266 co-living units and these units are supported by various communal uses, as set out above, to be shared by the residents.

- 7.6 This is the first proposal for co-living in Reading which has progressed as far as a planning application. The discussion which follows below is therefore in relation to the form of 'co-living' as proposed in this particular proposal, as others may well be different in nature.
- 7.7 Prior to submission of this planning application there were a number of pre-application submissions and discussions for the site. Co-living is a housing product, part of the Private Rented Sector (or PRS), which provides large-scale purpose-built shared living, generally made up of at least 50 private rooms and communal spaces. The large-scale shared dining, recreation and workspaces are to offset the fact that the individual units are smaller than the minimum national internal space standards for flats.
- 7.8 The current Local Plan does not have a specific policy relating to co-living, because it was not a use that was envisaged at that time, neither does it feature specifically in the current NPPF. However, it has been gaining popularity. It is covered in the emerging local plan with a specific policy (new Policy H15) and this identifies that sites within the Central Area, or on the edge of centre, could be appropriate locations for co-living schemes, providing they are well-connected and do not provide co-living on allocated sites instead of residential accommodation. At present, however, this policy wording carries limited weight.
- 7.9 In the absence of adopted policy relating specifically to co-living, officers are guided by the NPPF and the policies within the existing Local Plan. Inclusion of co-living within central Reading would support many of the themes of the NPPF including providing residential accommodation (although no homes), helping to support a strong, competitive economy and ensuring the vitality of town centres.
- 7.10 Co-living is a *sui generis* (i.e. unique) land use, and when proposed on sites allocated for residential, has the potential to adversely affect the planned delivery of allocations. The site forms part of a wider site allocation (CR11b), which identifies it for a mix of residential (90-140 units), office, retail and leisure and is covered by the central area policies, which seek to maintain residential densities and amenities. The proposal would not contribute to the uses envisaged within the allocation, because it would not provide C3 dwellings; however, it is considered that the applicant has provided sufficient justification as to why the proposed use would be acceptable in principle.
- 7.11 Policy CR2 of the Local Plan seeks to ensure that development in Central Reading ensures appropriate relationships between buildings and spaces and that development should be designed with consideration of adjacent development sites, and should not prevent or cause unreasonable burdens on the future development of those sites and in this case, we need to consider the Sainsbury's portion of the allocation site, which was granted approval for redevelopment for a residential-led mixed use proposal in 2018 (ref. 162210). Although this planning permission has since lapsed, it nonetheless demonstrated a development quantum and the proposal should ensure that it would not have an adverse impact on future development in this location, as it is possible that a new proposal could be provided at a similar design and density (subject to any changes to the quantum of residential in Policy CR11b if approved).
- 7.12 Officers consider that the development of this site would not have an overall detrimental effect on any future scheme which may come forward on the remainder of the allocation site, where dense mixed uses within the town centre is supported by policy. The previous lapsed scheme, as set out above, provides a reasonable indication that the remainder of the site could deliver the indicative capacity residential identified in the allocation, and it

should be noted that the emerging site allocation CR11b has a lower indicative quantum of development requirement.

7.13 The question that needs to be answered is what is the need for this type of accommodation in Reading? The proposals would not provide standard residential units and would need to demonstrate that there is a demand for this type of accommodation in Reading, especially as it is coming forward on part of a site allocated for dwellings (notwithstanding the above comments that the remainder of the site would be likely to deliver the required indicative residential quantum). Officers' advice in summary is that a case can be made for the inclusion of this new use, but that it is not without its own adverse impacts, and these need to be carefully considered before concluding that the proposed use is positive.

7.14 Accordingly, the following section will discuss the various socio-economic impacts of co-living which need to be addressed.

**ii) The merits and impacts of this proposal for 'co-living'**

7.15 The applicant's submitted 'Co-Living Needs Assessment' document suggests rents in central Reading have increased steeply since the pandemic and the comparative availability of studio units means that these are expensive, especially when compared to the other benefits of co-living.

7.16 The report states that as of September 2024, there are five operational Build to Rent (BTR) sites in Reading, totalling 1,440 homes in the Local Area and a further 1,859 homes are coming forward in the planning pipeline. In terms of housing delivery, the annual target proposed in the Local Plan review is 877 per annum, which is an increase on historic delivery levels and the existing local plan target of 689 homes per year (2013-26). Reading needs to increase its housing delivery, and delivery of new homes. The proposal will partially assist in achieving this, which although not delivering C3 dwellings, would assist the housing market through expanding choice, through the provision of a type of cheaper accommodation option open to all adults (18+).

7.17 The applicant seeks to advance that there is a wide demand for this type of accommodation and that tenure of accommodation lies somewhere between serviced apartments and a Build To Rent (BTR) scheme and in terms of length of tenure and the range of support functions this may be true.

7.18 Co-living is undoubtedly partly marketed at those who currently have restricted choice in the housing market, having incomes too great for social housing and too small to enable them to get a mortgage. It would provide 'another option' to rent as opposed to the more traditional HMO house-share options or private rental, or the more modern BTR option (which is more likely to be most costly, unless specifically part of a controlled affordable product, but to access that, renters would need to be eligible).

7.19 In summary, this new tenure is available to a wide range of people. Some of these people may be key workers, who consistently struggle to find 'affordable' accommodation. It will provide a further accommodation option in an accessible location, however, it may not necessarily prove an attractive option to the full range of people discussed above, as perceived living densities – in this case at least – are very high (266 occupiers on 0.12ha site).

- 7.20 This tenure is not consistent with either the RBC definition of 'affordable housing' (meeting the needs of people on the Council's Housing Waiting List) nor is it specifically providing key worker accommodation. Therefore, there remains an impact on the housing market because, although this is providing residential accommodation, it is not helping to provide dwellinghouses, this is not a place for permanent living or bringing up children.
- 7.21 It is important to accurately quantify the level(s) of impact of this particular type of co-living development in socio-economic terms. In summary, those impacts to mitigate are advised to be as follows:
- a) Impact on the housing market
  - b) Additional impacts on medical facilities
  - c) Additional impacts on public realm and parks/leisure facilities
- a) Impact on the housing market
- 7.22 The Council's Planning Policy Manager advises that this co-living proposal would go some way to meeting general housing needs, and it is recognised (London Guidance) that co-living units would equate to C3 dwellings at a ratio of 1.8:1, and, therefore, would to a certain extent, produce a discounted impact on the annual dwelling requirement and also to a certain extent, have an impact on the delivery of dwellings within the allocation. However, it remains of concern in providing a 'product' that does not directly assist those on the Council's Waiting List. If proposed without any mitigation, the proposal would simply be providing a cheap form of accommodation, which is small and unsuitable.
- 7.23 In terms of an option to address this issue the applicant proposed an on-site affordable housing offer in the form of offering a proportion of the overall stock of co-living units provided at a discounted market rent, which would require very detailed controls to be in place through S106 obligations. Another option available is to not have any such controls, and the applicant simply pays a commuted sum towards affordable housing. Both options were reviewed, and the outcome of the reviews is as follows.
- 7.24 Local Plan Policy H3 requires all new residential development to make an appropriate contribution towards meeting the affordable housing needs of Reading. The Affordable Housing SPD requires other forms of residential development, which do not take the form of dwellinghouses, to contribute towards affordable housing, and identifies co-living as a use which does not lend itself to on-site provision, and therefore in most cases an off-site financial contribution is more appropriate. This position is carried forward into the emerging Policy H15.
- 7.25 As stated in the supporting text of the emerging Policy H15 (para 4.4.16) (referring to Co-living) *"In Reading, this form of accommodation is seen as diversifying the accommodation offer, rather than replacing the many traditional dwellings that are required. To that end, as for student accommodation, the policy prioritises housing [i.e. c3 dwellings] to meet general needs (including affordable housing)...".* Further the emerging policy supporting text states (Para 4.4.120), that *"4.120 Large-scale shared accommodation is not considered to be suitable as affordable housing. This is because this form of accommodation with high reliance on communal accommodation and often more temporary in nature is not suitable for most households in need of stable, long-term affordable accommodation, and should be a lifestyle that is chosen rather than enforced by circumstances."*

7.26 As on-site provision is not considered appropriate, for the reasons set out above, then the Affordable Housing SPD explains that a financial contribution should be calculated by converting the bedspaces to dwelling equivalents (four bedspaces = one dwelling unit unless there is an alternative methodology which is more appropriate) and applying the relevant percentage contribution as set out in Policy H3 on the basis of Gross Development Value.

7.27 The Council's valuers have worked with the applicant's representative to confirm an acceptable payment in lieu of £3.566 million as a commuted sum for provision of affordable housing by the Council elsewhere in the Borough, to be paid in instalments, which is considered policy compliant and would meet identified housing need, to be secured via a S106 obligation.

b) Additional impacts on medical facilities

7.28 The addition of 266 new residents will have an impact on medical facilities in the town centre area. The NHS Integrated Care Board sought a financial contribution to the provision of extra primary clinical capacity to mitigate the increased impact of the development on primary care function in local GP practices in Abbey ward and adjacent wards. The NHS ICB in consultation with your officers and the applicant has agreed a relevant contribution of £86,400, which would be secured through a S106 obligation.

7.29 This is considered to comply with Policy CC9 and the S106 SPD and emerging Policy H11 (Health Impact Assessments) to support the provision of health infrastructure.

c) Additional impacts on public realm and parks and leisure facilities

7.30 Policy EN9 requires all development to make provision for appropriate open space based on the needs of the development to be achieved through contributions towards improvement of existing leisure or recreational facilities.

7.31 Although there is amenity space on the site, it is clear that this would be insufficient to meet the needs of occupiers in terms of open space and sports provision. Impacts on such facilities would need to be mitigated.

7.32 It is considered that this development is likely to result in residents who may have an over-reliance on parks and leisure facilities in the borough. This is because the type of accommodation has no private community space or private balconies but does provide some limited external communal amenity space, but this could be very heavily used particularly during the summer. The gym and fitness studio could also be very busy at peak times.

7.33 The parks and leisure service have requested a contribution, which officers consider is justified and necessary to mitigate the impacts on open space and leisure facilities and would accord with Policy CC9 and the S106 SPD.

7.34 As described in the design section below, there is a shortfall of greening in the Greyfriars Road area and moreover the development will result in the loss of street greening through the removal of the planters. There is concern, therefore, for the overall setting of the development and its 'liveability'. Therefore, it is recommended that further mitigation is required to address the issue of street trees and greening the urban environment of Greyfriars Road.



- 7.35 Street trees will assist in greening the Greyfriars Road environs, provide increased amenity for the residents of the development and contribute to improving urban air quality and climate controls, as well as meeting various Local Plan policy aims in accordance with Policies, CC3, EN14, EN18, CR2, CR3 and the Council's adopted Tree Strategy. A S106 obligation is recommended to secure such.

(iii) **Amenity considerations**

Residents' amenity

- 7.36 The ground floor of the development would be given over to communal uses. The chamfered entrance underneath the colonnaded porch entrance leads to a lobby with a café, post room, a large Co working space, residents' lounge, laundry, games room, gym with fitness studio, and an external courtyard.
- 7.37 The vast majority of the co-living units would be single-aspect and served by a single window with rooms ranging from 18sqm up to 32sqm, but with the majority in the 18-21sqm range.
- 7.38 There is shared external amenity space at Level 7 on top of the lower element of the building and at Level 12, which would also include a large residents' kitchen/dining room, an amenity space/sitting room, a bookable private event room and a media room.
- 7.39 Policy H10, which relates to functional private or communal open space is not directly relevant because the proposal is not providing dwellings, however, as the proposed co-living units will provide residential accommodation it is important that there is sufficient communal space both internally and externally to provide a comfortable living environment.
- 7.40 The emerging RBC LP Policy H15m which in turn is based on based on the London Plan Guidance (referenced above), seeks a minimum of 3 sq m of internal amenity space per resident where there would be more than 100 residents and that units should be a minimum of 18sqm. The London Guidance advises that there should be 1sqm of external amenity space per resident. The level of communal amenity spaces proposed would meet these guideline requirements including the types of spaces and provision available.
- 7.41 The justification for providing smaller unit sizes in co-living is that such schemes offer good range and scale of high-quality amenity spaces. The communal accommodation is the only reason why these smaller spaces would be acceptable and such space is, therefore, critical to the appropriateness of a co-living proposal. The provision and retention of communal spaces as well as the overall management of the site, including the requirement for single occupancy, will be addressed through recommended conditions and obligations.
- 7.42 It should be noted that at pre-application stage issues were raised with the previous eleventh floor outdoor terrace and the bedrooms overlooking it. It was recommended that the terrace be moved to the top floor and this amendment is included within the proposed scheme with a terrace now at the twelfth floor.
- 7.43 With regard to internal amenity there was concern at pre-application stage that the privacy of the first-floor rooms would be heavily compromised by their proximity to street level.

The floor heights were adjusted so that the lowest point would be 2.58 above street level to avoid any overlooking.

- 7.44 Adjustments were also made to floor-to-floor heights at ground and top level to enable improved internal amenity spaces.

#### Residents' security

- 7.45 The future residents, are likely to include those who work shift patterns, such as key workers, and with possible short tenancies from 3 months duration upwards, there will be lots of comings and goings within the development, which although positive from an activity perspective would also pose security issues. This means it is, therefore, very important in the detailed design of the scheme, that personal security is taken very seriously from the outset and designed into the scheme. This will also apply to the overall management arrangements and the presence of a 24hr concierge/ security.
- 7.46 At present, there is no public CCTV camera coverage on Greyfriars Road, and this is a concern when the proposal is likely to generate pedestrians at all hours. Officers, therefore, advise that the security condition needs to include a minimum of two external cameras on the building, one on the entrance corner (with the ability to see down to Tudor Road, along Garrard Street and north along Greyfriars Road) and another on the southwest corner to cover all the way to Friar Street. S106 obligations are recommended to secure a CCTV system, which links to RBC/ TVP systems.
- 7.47 A detailed operational management plan is also required, and this is recommended as part of the conditions and obligations.

#### Noise environment

- 7.48 In the central Reading area, there are likely to be street disturbance noise issues, particularly at night, which is to be expected. However, in this instance, the proposal would be sited adjacent to the Sainsbury's supermarket service yard, where noise from lorry deliveries and plant will have the potential to be a disturbance to residents and again, the issue may be at night-time.
- 7.49 Although Policy CR6 is not strictly applicable, as it relates to proposals for residential development within the central area, its concern for the compatibility of neighbouring land uses as follows is notable, and this is also raised by Policies EN16 and CC8:

*Proposals for new residential development within the central area will be required to demonstrate how the issue of potential noise disturbance from neighbouring land uses and other sources, and air quality implications of residential development, have been considered and if necessary, mitigated. New residential development should not be located next to existing town centre uses where those uses would give rise to unacceptable levels of noise and disturbance to the occupiers of the new scheme, unless this can be mitigated.*

- 7.50 This is to a certain extent an 'agent of change' type issue. The supermarket has been on Friar Street since the 1960s and provides a valuable public service, being the biggest retail unit on this part of Friar Street. In summary, whilst a suitable amenity of residents can be adequately maintained through closed windows and the MVHR system, it is not going to be particularly pleasant, especially in a small unit. The nature of the proposed use is that tenancies would typically be short from 3 months upwards, and the units most affected, would likely dictate the attractiveness or length of stay. However, there is a

considered to be a reasonable level of overall compliance of this central urban scheme in terms of noise, and the implementation of the proposed mitigation measures, within the noise assessment, are recommended to be secured by condition.

#### Sunlight and Daylight

- 7.51 The submitted Daylight Sunlight & Overshadowing Report models the effect of the proposal on the windows of neighbouring buildings and includes a review of the daylight to the proposed co-living units. This assessment is based on the guidance within the BRE '*Site Layout Planning for Daylight and Sunlight: A guide to good practice*' (third edition, 2022), NPPF, and Climate Based Daylight Modelling (CBDMM) methods in accordance with BS EN17037.
- 7.52 An independent review of the Report was undertaken on behalf of the Council, and this concluded that the methodologies chosen were appropriate and in line with the latest guidance and standards.
- 7.53 The review identified that the level of daylight serving proposed co-living rooms would be lower than expected, although many would have access to reasonable levels of daylight. For sunlight to the new co-living units, the analysis shows that there are some units on the north elevation, facing towards Garrard Street that will receive comparatively low levels of natural light and little sunlight penetration during the day. All residents would have access to good levels of daylight within amenity spaces. One way to address the lower level of daylight than ideal would be the use of larger windows, but the applicant has identified that although the windows facing courtyard were made larger, because of the issues established during design development, there is limited scope for any further enlargement. This is because of other amenity considerations of overlooking and structural integrity.
- 7.54 This is an area where the proposal does not wholly meet an acceptable standard, and whilst this lower level of amenity is not ideal it is considered that overall, the resulting scheme would provide acceptable living standards. The levels are similar to other approved central schemes and the living areas of the units would be next to the windows to ensure these spaces would achieve the benefit of maximum daylight into the rooms. The lower level of amenity has been balanced with the efficient redevelopment of the site, achieving a well- balanced design, which also considers matters of overheating and overlooking and the nature of the proposal being one predicated on a large proportion of the time being spent within communal spaces and the accommodation being shorter term in nature than a standard C3 residential unit.
- 7.55 The proposed development will not cause undue harm on the daylight and sunlight to the neighbouring residential dwellings and in the context of an urban setting, can be considered acceptable in planning terms.
- 7.56 In summary, officers advise that given the relatively short occupation period and the fact that the co-living units are not permanent accommodation (C3 dwellings), the internal light levels are considered to be appropriate.

#### Privacy and overlooking

- 7.57 The eastern elevation would be set ca 30m from the west facing elevation of Station Hill and 18m to the properties on the opposite side of Greyfriars Road. East facing windows are proposed and would be angled slightly to avoid direct overlooking. The separation

distances are considered to be sufficient to avoid unacceptable loss of outlook or privacy. It, is therefore, considered to comply with the relevant part of Policy CC8.

Accessibility considerations for mobility-impaired people

- 7.58 The proposal includes 23 larger units which would be wheelchair accessible rooms. The Access officer raised a number of detailed comments, but raised no overall objection to the proposal. The applicant has confirmed that the scheme would be designed to ensure safe access for all. All thresholds would be level, including terraces, and kitchen, bathroom and furniture specification would be developed particularly in terms of the height of surface. As a staffed building 24/7 there would assistance available to any users.

**iv) Design considerations**

Design requirements

- 7.59 This part of the town centre is covered by a number of different designations and policy aims as follows.
- 7.60 The Station Hill South Planning and Urban Design Brief identifies the site as a vehicular street edge, a gateway building, strong entrance point, 8 floor shoulder height and area for improved streetscape.
- 7.61 The Reading Station Area Framework (RSF) identifies the site as part of the RC1b sub-area, which indicates that development should be of a mixed use with a focus on leisure, active frontage at ground floor and a mix of uses at upper floors. It identifies that the edge of the site, nearest the areas of traditional terracing west of Greyfriars Road, will require careful design treatment. The document also goes on to identify key views in and around the Station Area, which need to be taken into account in considering development proposals. For this site, the key local views are numbers 31, 32 and 33 (pg42) which are: Junction of Greyfriars Road and Friar Street; Junction of Vachel Road and Greyfriars Road and Vachel Road.
- 7.62 Policy CR2 requires development in the Central Area to demonstrate the following attributes:
- a. *Development will build on and respect the existing grid layout structure of the central area, providing continuity and enclosure through appropriate relationships between buildings and spaces, and frontages that engage with the street at lower levels, and contributing towards enhanced ease of movement through and around the central area;*
  - b. *Development will provide appropriate, well designed public spaces and other public realm, including squares, open spaces, streetscape, utilising high quality and well maintained hard and soft landscaped areas, and public art, that provide suitable functions and interest, sense of place and safe and convenient linkages to adjoining areas;*
  - c. *Development should consider and, where possible, include ways of providing green infrastructure designed into the development, for instance through roof gardens, green walls and green roofs, to enhance the otherwise very urban environment;*
  - d. *The architectural details and materials used in the central area should be high quality and respect the form and quality of the detailing and materials in areas local to the development site;*

- e. *Development and any associated public realm should contribute to the diversity of the central area, be capable of easy adaptation over time to meet changing circumstances, and be designed to enhance community safety; and*
- f. *Development should be designed with consideration of adjacent development sites, and should not prevent or cause unreasonable burdens on the future development of those sites.*

- 7.63 Policy CR10 of the Local Plan relates to tall buildings. The site is within the CR10a Station Area Cluster of tall buildings. In this area, tall buildings should follow a pattern of tallest buildings at the centre of the cluster, near to the station, and step down in height towards the lower buildings at the fringes, contribute to a coherent, attractive and sustainable cluster of buildings, ensure adequate spacing between buildings to avoid an overly dense townscape, and be designed to allow for separate parcels of land to come forward at different times.
- 7.64 Policy CC7 of the Local Plan seeks to ensure that all development is of a high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located.
- 7.65 Policy CR3 requires new development to make a positive contribution towards the quality of the public realm of the central area. Policy CR6 requires the scale and density of development to be related to its level of accessibility by walking, cycling and public transport to a range of services and facilities.

#### Streetscene Character of Greyfriars Road

- 7.66 This is a corner site which gently slopes on Greyfriars Road down from Friar Street where it meets Garrard Street, which despite its major reconfiguration as part of the Station Hill development, maintains its overall function as a mews/service street. This part of the town centre has a slightly quieter feel to it, although it is still very central and overall has a mix of commercial and residential uses, with the overall emphasis on the commercial, such as the 'Spaces' building opposite, which features office suite workspaces and co-working areas.
- 7.67 Greyfriars Road is a town centre urban street with a mix of building styles and buildings of predominantly commercial appearance (although they accommodate a range of uses, including residential). The buildings range from three storey Victorian style buildings at the southern end to the application site and the four storey brick and glazed contemporary building of 'Spaces' opposite.
- 7.68 The building on the corner of Garrard Street and Greyfriars Road, due to be demolished as part of the Station Hill redevelopment, is a 1960s brick and concrete building. The development parameters for this phase of Station Hill would allow for a group of tall buildings increasing in height towards the station.
- 7.69 On the corners of Stanshaw Road are a two storey pub The Gateway, and on the opposite corner the Brick Works, a remodelled 1980s office building which was redeveloped to 4.5 storeys in a London industrial warehouse style with characteristic Crittal-style windows and a sweeping curved corner.
- 7.70 To the north of that is Summit House, a brick-built, 3.5 storey 1980s/1990s office building with arched windows, which is now in residential use. At the end of the street, at its junction with Tudor Road is The Greyfriar pub, a Georgian-style public house which has

been sympathetically extended to four storeys. The end vista of Greyfriars Road is marked by the Phoenix/Pinnacle office complex, a modern, seven storey brick and stone-faced building in a mixed contemporary/civic style.

- 7.71 Greyfriars Road has experienced and will continue to experience a densification and redevelopment, which is considered to have resulted in better quality buildings and an increase in heights towards Station Hill.

Streetscene character of Garrard Street

- 7.72 The character of this street is going through significant change as the phases of Station Hill are built out. This will create a different urban environment context for the application site with large mass, tall buildings of a mix of uses. The following images show the emerging context.



*Looking east along Garrard Street*  
– Station Hill Phase 1 to the right                      Phase 2

Height, massing and design

- 7.73 The building's design massing and external appearance has benefited from a design review at pre application stage which was carried out by Frame Projects (see full comments at Appendix 2). The overall mass was simplified, whilst maintaining the stepping down of the building to the south. Frame sought further consideration to clearly defining the base, middle and top of the building. The design was amended to move the amenity space to the top floor (level 12), introduce a chamfered edge to the north-west corner, to create a more defined entrance, with a clear material change between the base and other levels of the building. There has also been a full review of the colour palette and brickwork detailing to change the brick colour from red to grey and black, with a range of shades of grey brick cladding finish next to textured brick cladding elements and bronze panels at ground floor. Further depth and articulation to the fenestration was introduced and materiality to more clearly define the base, middle and top of the building.
- 7.74 The proposed height of the building would be a maximum of 83.25m AOD (top of plant) and down to 62.475m with part 12 storeys and part 7 storeys. It would accord with the relevant policy requirements of CR10 with a staggered scale reducing to the south.

- 7.75 The overall impression would be of a building which would complement the Station Hill development whilst seeking to mesh in with the streetscape of Greyfriars Road. The design is considered to be contemporary, but classical, and simple in its execution. This would be evidenced by the main part of the building having traditional portrait style windows within a light colour brick render and then a slightly darker brick framing system to break out the mass of the building. At the base two levels there will be a framing appearance give the appearance of a colonnade, although the actual undercroft area will be limited to the entrance of the building under a triangular overhang and then chamfered entrance. The building would have a muted top but the stepped back terraces would provide a soft finish to the roof form. It is considered that the depth, texture and detailing of the brickwork would create an appropriate high quality design appearance.



*Corner of Greyfriars Road  
and Garrard Street*



*Greyfriars Road looking north*

#### Impact on Heritage and Views

- 7.76 Greyfriars Church to the south-west, is a Grade I Listed Building, and other Grade II Listed Buildings including the walls and railings at Greyfriars Vicarage, the former Mitre Inn on the corner of West Street and Friar Street ('Thai Corner') and 29-31 Caversham Road.
- 7.77 Despite its size and height, the positioning of the application site means that the proposal is considered to have a relatively minor impact on heritage assets at as confirmed by the Conservation Officer.
- 7.78 The textured nature of the proposed brick panelling system and the grey tones will complement the buildings in the Greyfriars Road area including Greyfriars church, but not compete with it.
- 7.79 Although significantly taller than the adjacent terraced streets of Sackville Street, Vachel Road and Stanshawe Road there would be no harmful impact on the character of the streets, which are already within a context of taller buildings, in accord with Policy CR9.
- 7.80 The location of the site in relation to conservation areas means that there would be no discernible conservation area impact.
- 7.81 With respect to views the submission includes a Built Heritage, Townscape & Visual Impact Assessment (BHTVIA) reviewing 12 verified views. The Conservation Officer provided some detailed comments with respect to the impact of the building on the views



as assessed and overall considered that the proposal scheme would have an improved appearance compared to the existing building.

- 7.82 The most significant impact would be with regard to the view 10 (image below). The Conservation Officer identified that the proposal would cause less than substantial harm at a low level to the setting of Greyfriars Church and Quadrant walls and railings to the former No 64 (Greyfriars Vicarage) group. Although the Officer identified some suggested changes including some partial reduction in height, enlargement of green terraces and green elements of the site, they confirmed that the impact of the additional massing would be reduced by the high-quality architectural design. They advised that such heritage impacts, whilst at the lowest end, were still important and would need to be considered within the planning balance.
- 7.83 Material to the consideration is that the proposed site is within the Central Area, within a Major Opportunity Area and within the Station Area tall Buildings cluster, which designates the site as within an area for tall buildings. The proposal also needs to be considered in the emerging context and scale of development of Station Hill, which will be of greater scale.



*View 10 – image from BHTVIA*

#### Active frontages

- 7.84 The existing building does not relate well to the street-level environment. A lot of the grounding and 'solidity' of this office building is provided at street level, but it is inactive, featuring grey porcelain blocks, grilles allowing glimpses to the underground car park and some narrow planting beds. Where there are window openings, these are smoked glass and do not offer interaction with the street.
- 7.85 The application scheme proposes to significantly improve the interaction with the street by provided a ground floor space which will fully activate the frontages and internal spaces.
- 7.86 No commercial use is proposed at the ground floor, nonetheless there is an active frontage proposed, resulting from a redesign following pre-application advice, to ensure the ground floor internal spaces increase the active frontage and improve the access to the building along Greyfriars Road and Garrard Street. This space incorporates gym, fitness studio, co-working space and lounge for residents' use, as well as a main entrance lounge which includes a cafe and managed reception. The chamfered edge at the north-western corner of the building, which now includes the main entrance, creates a more welcoming and generous arrival space. This would accord with the principles of Policy CR2 and the RSAF.



- 7.87 It is considered that the proposals would be acceptable in their scale, mass, appearance and overall design and would be in accordance with Policy CC7, CR2, CR10, RSAF and the principles of high-quality design set out in the NPPF.

Wind and microclimate

- 7.88 The introduction of a building of this height within the urban environment will have an impact on the local microclimate. The submitted Wind Microclimate Assessment has been independently reviewed on behalf of the Council.
- 7.89 The independent consultant confirmed that the conclusions of the report are robust. Wind mitigation measures proposed for the Level 7 and Level 12 terraces include:
- Proposed landscaping scheme
  - Solid 1.5m and 1.8m balustrading to the perimeter of the terraces.
  - >1.5m tall planters/shrubs and rearrangement of the seating to areas likely to benefit from calmer wind conditions.
- 7.90 However, although such measures would improve wind conditions, windier than desired conditions on the Level 7 and 12 rooftop terraces would still exist, necessitating the need for further mitigation measures. The submitted Assessment includes the suggestion of the implementation of further wind mitigation measures, due to the remaining exceedances present on the rooftop terraces. Any such measures would need to be reviewed by an experienced wind engineer to determine if suitable wind conditions could be achieved. The independent consultant, appointed by the Council, recommends that a condition be included requiring the final mitigated scheme to be assessed, using a methodology consistent with the rest of the study.
- 7.91 With the necessary condition in terms of providing safety and suitability to these areas, the proposal is considered to be suitable in terms of policy CC8.

**v) Environment, energy and sustainability**

Landscaping and urban greening

- 7.92 Policy EN14 states that Reading's vegetation cover will be extended. Policies CC7, and CR2 require the inclusion of appropriate landscaping and greening. Emerging Policy EN19: Urban Greening Factor requires proposals to demonstrate how an appropriate proportion of green cover will be delivered on site
- 7.93 The site is within Abbey ward, which has the lowest tree canopy cover in the Borough and within the AQMA, where tree retention and planting is a higher priority to mitigate air pollution. As such, proposals should aim to include the maximum greening (soft landscaping), within the confines of a town centre site.
- 7.94 Greyfriars Road is predominantly a hard surface, built environment. There are no street trees and the trees that do exist are in the narrow landscape beds attached to the current building and further north the trees in front of Xaffinity house (which is proposed to be demolished as part of the phase three Station Hill proposals) and some new trees which have been provided along the re-built Garrard Street.
- 7.95 The draft Town Centre Public Realm Strategy describes Greyfriars Rd as a primary Street. The proposed introduction of the cycle route on Greyfriars Road will support its function mainly as a route rather than as a dwell space. Notwithstanding this, it is a street

which is in need of softening and greening, particularly when introducing more residents, but also to improve the general streetscape for pedestrians.

- 7.96 The proposal includes paving material changes to indicate the main entrance, some small trees within moveable planters at the main entrance under the canopy entrance overhang, and one additional tree in front of the stepped back portion of the building on Greyfriars Road.
- 7.97 The proposed courtyard to the south of the building, accessed from the proposed café at ground floor, comprises moveable planters and furniture, trees and climbers to the site boundary, paving and integrated lighting. There is external roof top amenity space proposed at level 7 and level 12 with a landscaping scheme proposed for each. At Level 7 this would comprise moveable furniture, sensory planting with small trees and raised beds for community growing. At level 12 this would be accessed from the resident's lounge and communal kitchen and would include a terrace with a variety of seating and dining areas, perimeter planting and planters within seating areas.
- 7.98 The Natural Environment (Tree) Officer suggested that the roof terraces would need to be carefully handled in order to soften the building's appearance and provide some mitigation of the building's bulk and massing, but in reality, landscaping and small trees in planters at elevated heights would do little to offset the building mass. The other concern, as raised by Frame, is that the intensity of use and the amenity space as provided appears low. They are going to need to work very hard to provide a softened and attractive amenity space for the occupants. These external spaces are also likely to be the focus of ecological enhancements.
- 7.99 The proposals include limited measures to soften the building's appearance within the streetscene and it is notable that the present building does this to limited extent with the planting beds on Greyfriars Road. The location of the proposed street greening would provide little animation of the street and would not mitigate the bulk of the building in the streetscene. The Natural Environment (Tree) Officer also identified that opportunities should be explored for further greening at street level. As a result, it has been agreed with the applicant that there should be additional street trees to soften and green the appearance and these will be secured via S106 obligation (refer to paras. 7.39-7.40 above).
- 7.100 In addition it is recommended that any landscaping scheme, secured by condition, includes a green wall within the ground floor courtyard.
- 7.101 Subject to recommended conditions for the submission and approval of a landscaping scheme and a landscape management plan and S106 street tree obligations it is considered that the scheme would be acceptable and would accord with Policies EN14, CC7 and CR2.

#### Ecology

- 7.102 There is a statutory requirement for the scheme to provide a 10% biodiversity net gain. Local Policy EN12 also seeks that development should not result in a net loss of biodiversity and should provide for a net gain of biodiversity wherever possible.
- 7.103 The Ecologist advised that the current site has no ecological benefits and, therefore, the proposed scheme, which includes landscaping measures at the terraces and courtyard would enhance the biodiversity value of the site and achieve a Biodiversity Net Gain. Any

grant of permission is contingent on meeting the pre-commencement general Biodiversity Net Gain condition, which requires the submission and approval of a Biodiversity Gain Plan, demonstrating how a 10% increase in biodiversity value will be achieved for the development. This is included as an informative. Subject to this and conditions in relation no clearance during bird-nesting season, submission and approval of biodiversity enhancements and wildlife friendly lighting the scheme would accord with Policy EN14.

#### Energy and Sustainability

- 7.104 There are a number of relevant policies: Policy CC2, which requires new development to reduce the consumption of resources and materials, and that proposals for new non-residential development (which includes non-C3 use class residential schemes) should meet BREEAM Excellent standards. Policy CC3 requires developments to incorporate measures to adapt to climate change. Policy CC4 requires demonstration of how consideration has been given to securing energy for the development from decentralised sources. Policy CC5 requires minimisation of waste during construction and the life of the development.
- 7.105 Policy CC2 is proposed for amendment under the Local Plan Review, and this requires demolition of buildings to be justified and demonstrate how 95% of all construction waste would be diverted away from landfill. Demolition would only be acceptable where a building was in such a poor state that it would not be practical or viable to refurbish or re-use and would result in a similar amount or a greater amount of embodied carbon generation, or would result in a building with poor thermal efficiency resulting in a greater lifetime carbon emissions than would arise from a re-build.
- 7.106 As part of a pre-application in early 2024, for a proposal to convert the building to a mixed use, written officer advice set out that the design approach was not acceptable and “that simply re-cladding an unattractive building would not be sufficient to provide the high-quality design outcome for the local area.” The Planning Statement identifies that further analysis of the structure was undertaken. *“However, in order to accord with building and fire regulations.... it was identified that significant interventions would have to be undertaken which presented challenges in achieving a successful design outcome which responded to the first pre-application written advice. Therefore, subsequent pre-applications focused on proposals for the Site comprising the demolition of the existing building and erection of a new-build scheme with Officers setting out that the proposals were a marked improvement to the first proposals presented to the Council and that the principle of demolishing the building was accepted on the grounds of challenges with meeting building and fire regulations alongside delivering a higher-quality design solution for this site.”*
- 7.107 The proposed scheme was assessed under BREEAM multi-use residential category, which applies to co-living schemes. The submitted Energy and Overheating Assessment identifies that the proposal would achieve a 40.6% reduction over baseline carbon emissions and would include air source heat pumps, with the overall scheme targeted to achieve a BREEAM rating of excellent.
- 7.108 There is currently no heat network available which could be connected into for this development and, therefore, the proposal includes connection points ready for any future district heating system. It is proposed to serve the site’s heat network from an on-site storage tank which uses heat pumps as the primary energy source.

- 7.109 The submitted documents were reviewed by an independent consultant on behalf of the Council, who concluded that the overall scheme accords with relevant policy subject to appropriate BREEAM conditions.
- 7.110 It should be noted that the applicant offered a carbon offset payment, however as this specifically relates to standard C3 dwellings (as referenced under Policy H5: Standards for new housing) rather than a sui generis building comprising co-living units with communal amenity space it was considered that achieving zero carbon homes would not be applicable in this instance.

#### SuDS

- 7.111 Policy EN18 requires major development to incorporate SuDS. Policies CC2 and CC3 refer to water conservation and minimising run-off.
- 7.112 The redevelopment off sites in the town centre allows for improvements in sustainable drainage systems to minimise runoff to surface water systems. Thames Water also advises that there is a particular issue in this area as well.
- 7.113 The SuDS Officer confirmed that the principle of the proposed system, which would include an attenuation tank fed by a pipe network and an area of permeable paving with a flow control that limits the discharge from the site at 2l/s, would be acceptable. However, both the SuDs and Natural Environment (Tree) Officers raised issues that the proposed approach did not allow for routing of rainwater through planting before discharge into the proposed attenuation tank.
- 7.114 The applicant further confirmed that the SuDs scheme would be amended to include raingardens and bio-diverse retentive planters ahead of reaching the attenuation.
- 7.115 Subject to conditions for the pre-commencement submission of approval of a Sustainable Drainage Strategy and the pre-occupation implementation of the approved strategy the scheme is considered to accord with Policy EN18.

#### Air Quality and Land Contamination

- 7.116 Policy EN15 states that *“Development should have regard to the need to improve air quality and reduce the effects of poor air quality.”*
- 7.117 An Air Quality Assessment has been submitted, which concludes that the air quality is within the applicable air quality objectives and within the last three years there has been no trend of worsening air quality. The EPO raised no air quality objections.
- 7.118 Policy EN16 deals with contamination matters and the EPO confirmed that the submitted contaminated land assessment requires no further mitigation or assessment. Subject to a condition regarding unforeseen contamination the scheme accords with policy.

#### **vi) Transport, Waste and Servicing**

- 7.119 Policy TR1 requires new development to implement measures to promote and improve sustainable transport facilities, to encourage walking, cycling and the use of public transport. All development should ensure adequate levels of accessibility and safety. Policy TR3 requires development to not be detrimental to the safety of users of the transport network. Policy TR5 requires developments to provide adequate car and cycle parking.

- 7.120 The proposal will maximise the opportunities for the choice of means to travel, being situated in a highly accessible location, as supported by Policy CC6. In this central location, a car-free development is supported by the Highway Authority. However, given the nature of the use, provision of a car club should be considered as an important part of a co-living scheme in a central location such as this, providing future occupiers with the opportunity to use a vehicle as part of their tenancy. The opportunity for a car club is being secured through recommended S106 obligations.
- 7.121 The site is within an area where the Council's Residents Parking Permit Scheme operates. Future occupants of the proposed co-living units would not be issued with resident or visitor parking permits and conditions are included.
- 7.122 As well as providing accessible cycle storage from the southern end of the building, the applicant is also proposing the ability of residents to hire 22 folding bikes. Details are recommended to be secured via condition and as part of a management plan to be secured via S106 obligation.
- 7.123 It should be noted that additional cycle access has been secured as part of the Station Hill development, which would remove the parking on Greyfriars Road and introduce a two-way (n &s) cycle lane.
- 7.124 A S278 agreement would be secured via a S106 obligation to address the need to reinstate and realign the footway, resulting from the removal of the existing car park access on Garrard Street, and
- 7.125 The Transport Officer has confirmed that subject to conditions relating to cycle parking, car club bays, parking permits and accesses closure and reinstatement and a Construction method statement that the scheme would be acceptable and would accord with Policies TR1, TR3 and TR5.
- 7.126 A communal waste store is proposed at the southern end of the building and further to comments from the Waste Team an increase in bin storage was secured. In terms of waste collection arrangements, the development would not have space for on-site servicing and, therefore, waste collection would be from the kerbside on Greyfriars Road. The Waste Team has confirmed that the scheme would be acceptable subject to the requirement for a Waste Management Plan condition to ensure that details are secured, including that bins would need to be presented to the roadside and be rotated within the bin store by a management company. A condition is recommended which requires the submission an approval of such along with other servicing and delivery management details.

**vii) Other**

- 7.127 In addition to the mitigation measures identified above (paras. 7.22 – 7.40), in accordance with Policy CC9 obligations for an Employment Skills and Training Plan – construction, and monitoring and legal costs are recommended.
- 7.128 Policy CC9 includes a high priority for obligations which meet economic development services and infrastructure, including employment, skills and training development initiatives. As a major category development, and in line with the adopted Employment Skills and Training SPD (2013), the development is expected to provide a construction

phase employment and skills plan, working in conjunction with REDA, to demonstrate how it would benefit the local employment market, or an equivalent financial contribution towards local skills and training, which would equate to a total of £24,182.50 calculated as £2500 x GIA sqm (9,673Sq m in this case) /1000 (3% would be used to support the role of the Skills for Business Coordinator).

### **Equalities Impact**

- 7.129 When determining an application for planning permission the Council is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. There is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that the protected groups as identified by the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this planning application. Therefore, in terms of the key equalities protected characteristics it is considered there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the proposed development. Further, the proposals have been examined by the Council's Access Officer and her advice in relation to accessible units and facilities have been incorporated.

## **8 CONCLUSION**

- 8.1 Co-living is a new concept of accommodation, which would fulfil a further niche need in the Borough. There are currently no such schemes in Reading, although there are examples within London and other parts of the UK. It would provide a beneficial complementary new use of living accommodation within the town centre and would harmonise well with the prevailing uses surrounding it.
- 8.2 National Policy has a presumption in favour of sustainable development defined under the three dimensions of economic, social and environmental.
- 8.3 As set out within paragraph 7.87 above the proposals would result in a low level of 'less than substantial harm' to the setting of Greyfriars Church and Quadrant walls and railings to the former No 64 (Greyfriars Vicarage) group. Albeit material to the consideration is that the site is located within the Reading Central Area, the Station/River Major Opportunity Area and within the Station Area Tall Buildings cluster, which is designated to have "some townscape capacity for tall buildings". The proposed site would also be in the context of buildings of a much greater scale.
- 8.4 In accordance with paragraph 215 of the NPPF (December 2024), where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. If the public benefits outweigh such harm, then the scheme is acceptable.
- 8.5 Officers have also identified that the proposals are also likely to result in some harm to the residential amenity of some of the proposed occupiers from less-than-ideal daylight and sunlight provision. This has been balanced against the relatively short-term occupation nature of the units, the level of daylight and sunlight provision to the communal spaces internally and externally and the need to make effective use of this previously developed site.
- 8.6 Other harms identified are that some of the units, particularly those facing the existing Sainsbury's service yard, would need to keep their windows closed to produce a suitable

internal noise level. Subject to recommended conditions it is considered that such impacts could be managed to a low level.

- 8.7 There are considered to be a range of benefits as follows. With regard to economic benefits, it would contribute to enhancing local skills through the construction phase and provide construction jobs, and there would be operational on-site job creation. It would also support the local economy through the additional spend from occupiers. There would be the provision of additional home working space.
- 8.8 In terms of social benefits the proposal has a high-quality design, which would enhance the appearance of the site, and it would integrate well with the adjacent schemes. It would accord with relevant tall building policy and would pose no technical light and wind issues.
- 8.9 It would be positive in terms of contributing to the vitality and viability of the town centre.
- 8.10 It would be a high density, sustainable new build urban development, which would be good in terms of accessibility to high levels of public transport provision. It would be car free and would offer car club spaces within the vicinity of the site and it would provide on-site cycle storage and cycle hire opportunities.
- 8.11 Although it would not contribute to meeting the Local Plan aims of housing delivery (in terms of numbers of dwellings), it would widen accommodation choice through the provision of a high quality all-inclusive rental product with high quality communal internal and external amenity space, which would contribute to a degree to overall housing need and would provide the needs of disabled people through the inclusion of wheelchair accessible units and accessible communal spaces. It would contribute to affordable housing provision.
- 8.12 It is proposed to increase the engagement with the local community and improve social value and this will be secured through S106 obligation.
- 8.13 With regard to environmental benefits the proposal would be an effective use of a vacant brownfield land, and paragraph 124 of the NPPF states that planning decisions should give substantial weight to proposal for homes and other identified needs unless substantial harm would be caused.
- 8.14 It would enhance the sustainability of the site through being targeted to achieve BREEAM excellent. The introduction of soft landscaping within the courtyard and terraces and the on-street streets proposed and to be secured through S106 obligations, along with conditions for habitat enhancement, would result in biodiversity net gain.
- 8.15 The proposal would include greening of the site including some at street level and further street greening would be secured via S106 obligation.
- 8.16 The proposal would provide benefits contributing towards achieving the three dimensions of sustainable development. It is concluded that such benefits would outweigh the identified low level of 'less than substantial' to heritage assets and the other impacts identified.
- 8.17 Therefore, when applying a planning balance of all material considerations, it is considered that the proposed scheme complies with relevant policies of the Development

Plan and is recommended for approval, subject to the recommended conditions and the satisfactory completion of S106 legal agreement.

Case Officer: Alison Amoah



## APPENDIX 1: Application Submission Documents

*(Final existing and proposed plans only included below)*

*Received 11<sup>th</sup> November 2024:*

- Drawing no: GFR-DAA-XX-XX-DR-A-01000-P1 - Site Location Plan
- Drawing no: GFR-DAA-XX-XX-DR-A-01001-P1 - Existing Site Plan
- Drawing no: GFR-DAA-ZA-XX-DR-A-01002-P1 - Existing Topographical Survey
- Drawing no: GFR-DAA-ZA-B1-DR-A-01100B1-P1 - Existing Basement Plan
- Drawing no: GFR-DAA-ZA-00-DR-A-01100-P1 - Existing Ground Floor
- Drawing no: GFR-DAA-ZA-01-DR-A-01101-P1 - Existing First Floor
- Drawing no: GFR-DAA-ZA-02-DR-A-01102-P1 - Existing Second Floor
- Drawing no: GFR-DAA-ZA-03-DR-A-01103-P1 - Existing Third Floor
- Drawing no: GFR-DAA-ZA-04-DR-A-01104-P1 - Existing Fourth Floor
- Drawing no: GFR-DAA-ZA-05-DR-A-01105-P1 - Existing Fifth Floor
- Drawing no: GFR-DAA-ZA-06-DR-A-01106-P1 - Existing Sixth Floor
- Drawing no: GFR-DAA-ZA-07-DR-A-01107-P1 - Existing Roof Plan
- Drawing no: GFR-DAA-ZA-ZZ-DR-A-01301-P1 - Existing Cross Section
- Drawing no: GFR-DAA-ZA-ZZ-DR-A-01302-P1 - Existing Long Section
- Drawing no: GFR-DAA-ZA-ZZ-DR-A-01201-P1 - Existing South Elevation 1
- Drawing no: GFR-DAA-ZA-ZZ-DR-A-01202-P1 - Existing South Elevation 2
- Drawing no: GFR-DAA-ZA-ZZ-DR-A-01203-P1 - Existing East Elevation
- Drawing no: GFR-DAA-ZA-ZZ-DR-A-01204-P1 - Existing North Elevation
- Drawing no: GFR-DAA-ZA-ZZ-DR-A-01205-P1 - Existing West Elevation
- Drawing no: GFR-DAA-ZA-00-DR-A- 03000-P1 - Proposed Site Plan
- Drawing no: GFR-DAA-ZA-ZZ-DR-A- 03201-P1 - Proposed South Elevation
- Drawing no: GFR-DAA-ZA-ZZ-DR-A- 03202-P1 - Proposed East Elevation
- Drawing no: GFR-DAA-ZA-ZZ-DR-A- 03203-P1 - Proposed North Elevation
- Drawing no: GFR-DAA-ZA-ZZ-DR-A- 03204-P1 - Proposed West Elevation
- Drawing no: GFR-DAA-ZA-ZZ-DR-A- 03301-P1 - Proposed Section A-A
- Drawing no: GFR-DAA-ZA-ZZ-DR-A- 03302-P1 - Proposed Section B-B
- Drawing no: GFR-DAA-ZA-ZZ-DR-A- 03303-P1 - Proposed Section C-C
- Drawing no: GFR-DAA-XX-XX-DR-A- 21500-P1 - Façade Detail – Brick
- Drawing no: GFR-DAA-XX-XX-DR-A- 21502-P1 - GA Detail Elevations
- Drawing no: GFR-DAA-XX-XX-DR-A- 21503-P1 - Render Façade
- Drawing no: GFR-DAA-XX-XX-DR-A- 21504-P1 - Render Façade
- Drawing no: GFR-DAA-XX-XX-DR-A- 21505-P1 - Facade Axonometric
- Drawing no: 126-HGL-XX-00-DR-L-0001-P01 - Illustrative Landscaping Masterplan
- Drawing no: 126-HGL-XX-00-DR-L-0002-P02 - Ground Floor and First Floor Landscape General Arrangement
- Drawing no: 126-HGL-XX-00-DR-L-0003-P02 - Level 7 Landscape General Arrangement
- Drawing no: 126-HGL-XX-00-DR-L-0004-P02 - Level 12 Landscape General Arrangement

*Received 12<sup>th</sup> March 2025*

- Drawing no: GFR-DAA-ZA-00-DR-A- 03100-P3 - Proposed Ground Floor Plan

*Received 6<sup>th</sup> February 2025*

- Drawing no: GFR-DAA-ZA-01-DR-A- 03101-P2 - Proposed First Floor Plan

- Drawing no: GFR-DAA-ZA-02-DR-A- 03102-P2 - Proposed Second Floor Plan
- Drawing no: GFR-DAA-ZA-03-DR-A- 03103-P2 - Proposed Third Floor Plan
- Drawing no: GFR-DAA-ZA-04-DR-A- 03104-P2 - Proposed Fourth Floor Plan
- Drawing no: GFR-DAA-ZA-05-DR-A- 03105-P2 - Proposed Fifth Floor Plan
- Drawing no: GFR-DAA-ZA-06-DR-A- 03106-P2 - Proposed Sixth Floor Plan
- Drawing no: GFR-DAA-ZA-07-DR-A- 03107-P2 - Proposed Seventh Floor Plan
- Drawing no: GFR-DAA-ZA-08-DR-A- 03108-P2 - Proposed Eighth Floor Plan
- Drawing no: GFR-DAA-ZA-09-DR-A- 03109-P2 - Proposed Ninth Floor Plan
- Drawing no: GFR-DAA-ZA-10-DR-A- 03110-P2 - Proposed Tenth Floor Plan
- Drawing no: GFR-DAA-ZA-11-DR-A- 03111-P2 - Proposed Eleventh Floor Plan
- Drawing no: GFR-DAA-ZA-12-DR-A- 03112-P2 - Proposed Twelfth Floor Plan
- Drawing no: GFR-DAA-ZA-13-DR-A- 03113-P1 - Proposed Thirteenth Floor Plan [Roof Plan]

*Other Documents received 11<sup>th</sup> November 2024 (unless otherwise stated):*

- Affordable Housing Statement including Viability Appraisal, prepared by DS2
- Air Quality Statement, prepared by Savills
- Archaeological Assessment, prepared by RPS
- Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment, prepared by Greengage
- BREEAM Pre-Assessment Report, dated October 2024, prepared by Greengage, received 28<sup>th</sup> January 2025
- Co-living Need Assessment, prepared by Savills
- Community Infrastructure Levy Form, prepared by Savills
- Daylight & Sunlight Assessment, prepared by Point 2
- Design and Access Statement, prepared by Darling Associates
- Desktop Contaminated Land Assessment, prepared by Lustre
- Drainage Statement, prepared by Form Structures
- Ecological Survey and Appraisal, prepared by Greengage
- Energy and Overheating Assessment Report, dated 7<sup>th</sup> November 2024, prepared by Meinhardt
- Fire Safety Statement, prepared by Orion Fire
- Gateway One Fire Statement, ref: CF-0-1887-FSS-01 C, prepared by Orion Fire, received 31<sup>st</sup> January 2025
- Grid Feasibility Assessment, dated 1/4/24, prepared by Blake and Clough Consulting, received 11<sup>th</sup> December 2024
- Healthcare S106 Analysis, prepared by Savills [in response to NHS ICB comments], received 31<sup>st</sup> January 2025
- Heritage & Townscape Visual Impact Assessment, prepared by Montagu Evans
- Landscape Strategy, prepared by Henshall Green
- Noise Impact Assessment, prepared by Sol Acoustics
- Operational Site Management Plan, dated October 2024, prepared by VervLife
- Response to Design Out Crime Officer's Comments, prepared by Darling Architects, received 31<sup>st</sup> January 2025
- Social Value Statement, prepared by Savills Earth
- Social Value and Economic Benefits Summary Report, prepared by Savills Economics
- Statement of Community Involvement, prepared by Opus Works
- Sustainable Design Checklist, received 17<sup>th</sup> January 2025
- Transport Assessment, prepared by TTP

- Wind & Microclimate Assessment Rev C, prepared by RWDI, received 12<sup>th</sup> December 2024

## **APPENDIX 2: Frame comments – 14/8/24 (240375/PREAPP)**

*Officers have engaged in two pre-application meetings to date. While officers are broadly comfortable with the proposed use, the council would expect a financial contribution towards affordable housing as co-living would not meet the needs identified in the borough. The council is keen to ensure the proposals respond to the emerging context of the Station Hill development, and the smaller scale context to the west. The ground floor layout and the relationship with the street is very important, as is the quality of the internal spaces.*

*Officers would welcome the panel's views on design, scale, and massing, as well as layouts and the quality of the accommodation. In addition, comments are sought on landscaping, trees and ecology.*

*SUMMARY - The panel welcomes the opportunity to comment on the proposals for Greyfriars Road at an early stage. It broadly supports the overall approach, including the proposed co-living use and the scale of the building, but further work is needed to develop a more distinct and rigorous approach. The panel encourages the team to simplify the massing, and to identify opportunities to better respond to Greyfriars Road, the level change, and the emerging context. A thorough assessment of the needs and demands of internal spaces, including fire safety and servicing, will be essential to developing a more compelling and robust layout, and informing the architecture. Firmer commitments on sustainability are also important. The panel encourages the team to consider how the floor-to-floor levels could be adjusted to create better quality internal spaces and improve their relationship with the street. Further consideration should be given to developing a more distinct architectural approach, including a clearly defined base, middle and top, as well as the materiality, articulation and depth of elevations.*

*The quality of the external amenity spaces will be hugely important to the success of the scheme. Further assessment of their use is needed, to ensure they will work as intended. The eleventh-floor amenity space should be moved to the top floor, to remove the conflict with bedrooms and to help create more generous and useable space. Further thought is needed to ensure that the courtyard space contributes positively to the overall scheme, including the potential for a connection to the street.*

*The applicant should identify opportunities to improve the street environment through lighting, surface treatment and planting.*

### *Scale and massing*

- ☐ *The panel considers the co-living use to be appropriate and, given the scale of the Station Hill development, it also supports the overall scale of the scheme.*
- ☐ *However, the massing appears quite awkward in the view from Friar Street to the south. The panel suggests altering the orientation of the lower building to respond to the inflection in Greyfriars Road. This would help improve the massing in views from the south, without compromising the quantum of accommodation possible.*
- ☐ *Opportunities to simplify some of the massing should be explored. For example, the tenth floor includes a small step in the plan which adds limited value, either internally or in townscape terms, and this could be removed.*

### *Internal layout*

- ☐ *The panel appreciates that the applicant is at an early stage in developing and testing the internal layout. However, many of the outstanding assessments, including for fire safety, will have significant implications and urgently need to be understood to develop a more compelling and credible approach.*

- Careful consideration is needed of how each space will operate, including any requirements for servicing. For example, the co-working space, which will be publicly accessible, should have its own dedicated toilet facilities.
- Further thought should be given to the location and layout of the ground floor entrances. The panel welcomes the intention to create a more generous pavement area outside the entrance, but alternative approaches to achieving this should be considered, including the option to chamfer the corner of the building to help make the entrance more prominent.
- The panel encourages the team to provide windows at the end of corridors to provide natural light and views out.
- Further consideration of the floor-to-floor heights is needed to ensure spaces feel generous, particularly in the amenity areas, and can accommodate any necessary servicing.
- The panel is concerned by the liveability of the first-floor bedrooms. Their privacy is heavily compromised by their proximity to street level, particularly as you move up the hill towards Friar Street and in the colonnaded space along Garrard Street.
- If a more generous floor to floor height is accommodated on the ground floor and plant can be moved to the basement, it would allow the ground floor to have a clearer relationship with the street, create additional useable internal space, and allow the first-floor rooms to have a better relationship with the street. The panel encourages the team to explore this further.
- There is a conflict between the eleventh-floor outdoor terrace and the bedrooms which overlook it. The panel suggests re-organising the building to move the terrace and associated internal shared spaces to the top of the building to help avoid these conflicts and create a more generous terrace.
- Further consideration should be given to ensuring the proposals are inclusive and accessible. While the proposed wheelchair accessible rooms appear more generous than the other rooms, testing the useability of these rooms is important. In addition, there appears to be a split level on the ground floor, which should either be designed out or a lift accommodated to allow residents to move between levels.

#### User experience

- Further consideration should be given to the experience of using and moving through internal spaces. The panel highlights the importance providing a welcoming and generous sense of arrival.
- While the panel welcomes the idea of the co-working space being available to the public, the priority should be to ensure that this does not compromise the experience of residents.
- Further thought should also be given to how this can positively front onto Garrard Street, including the potential for its own entrance. The panel suggests exploring the opportunity to create a better relationship between the co-working space, the café and the bike storage. This would help improve the viability and experience of these spaces and better contribute to the street.
- Further thought should be given to the useability and viability of the café space. Its size seems very small and there are issues with how it relates to the street level which need to be considered further.

#### Public realm and landscape

- The site is in area with poor access to parks and open spaces. Therefore, the provision of external amenity space as part of the scheme will be key to the quality of life of residents. Robust evidence for the amount of amenity space proposed is important.
- Sections through the street, including the buildings both sides, are needed to help better understand the pedestrian experience.

- Greyfriars Road is currently quite a hard environment, and further consideration is needed of lighting, surface materials and planting to improve the quality of the street. Careful thought should be given to the space required for the proposed cycle route and any street tree planting.
- Arboriculture expertise is needed to test and inform the proposals, including the space required for trees, the types of species which will thrive, and any maintenance requirements.
- The amount of space available for planting is limited. The panel suggests exploring whether there is potential to introduce vertical greening, including within the courtyard, to help soften this environment.
- It is important that a robust management and maintenance strategy is developed to inform the design development. Careful thought should be given to how planting on the edge of the roof spaces is maintained, including how they are accessed and any requirements for balustrading or safety rails.
- The panel encourages the applicant to ensure there is sufficient build up in the floor levels to accommodate good quality and meaningful planting. It will be important to avoid compromising level access into these spaces, including at thresholds, and the floor-to-floor levels in the spaces below.
- The panel is concerned that there is insufficient amenity space for the level of use it will need to accommodate. Further testing is needed of movement flows, the volume of users at different times of day, and how it will be used. As noted earlier, the panel suggests that additional space would be better located at the top of the building.
- Consideration should be given to the potential to integrate a sustainable drainage system, including rainwater capture, to manage water before it connects into the wider network.
- The panel is concerned about the quality of the proposed courtyard space on the ground floor level. This space is unlikely to get much good quality daylight, particularly when the adjacent Sainsbury's site is developed, and further consideration should be given to developing a more robust and compelling approach to achieve a green oasis.
- The panel suggests exploring the potential to create a link between the street and the rear courtyard. This would help to activate the courtyard, allowing it to better connect to both the street and the building. It could also serve as an access point for maintenance, provide another means of escape, and allow for a relationship between the courtyard and the proposed coffee shop.

### Elevations and appearance

- The panel supports the intention to develop a distinct and contextually driven building. While it understands that the proposals are at a diagrammatic stage, the emerging approach appears quite generic. It is important that careful thought is given to developing a more crafted and responsive approach.
- There is a tremendous amount of architectural variety in Reading, and the panel encourages the team consider whether an element of this could help to influence a more distinctive approach.
- Further consideration should be given to more clearly defining the base, middle and top of the building. Moving the main amenity space to the top of the building could help in this, and a consistent ground floor treatment would also improve its legibility and the relationship with the street.
- Careful thought should be given to the relief and articulation of the elevations. This should include consideration of the façade depth, including full brick setbacks. How the elevations appear in oblique views, including from Friar Street, should also be tested.
- The panel highlights the need for a stronger rationale for the proposed materiality. It cautions against incorporating the materiality of Greyfriars Church, which should read separately, favouring instead a well-crafted and complimentary material palette.

### Sustainability

- *The panel welcomes the initial approach to sustainability, including the intention to deliver a BREAAAM Excellent building. However, further detail should be provided on the proposed sustainability targets, including clear commitments for construction and operation.*
- *It is important that BREEAM, Parts L and O of the building regulations, and LETI guidance is considered early so that they can inform the approach. For example, the elevational treatment of the northern and western façades is likely to change in response to solar gain and overheating considerations.*
- *Careful thought should be given to how the proposed air-source heats pumps, photovoltaics and other roof top servicing and plant is incorporated. This is important from a sustainability perspective but also because they will be visible in longer views and will affect the quality of the amenity space to be provided.*

## **APPENDIX 3: Emerging Local Plan Policy H15 (from Pre-Submission Draft, November 2024)**

### **H15: PURPOSE-BUILT SHARED LIVING ACCOMMODATION**

Development for purpose-built shared living accommodation will meet all of the following criteria:

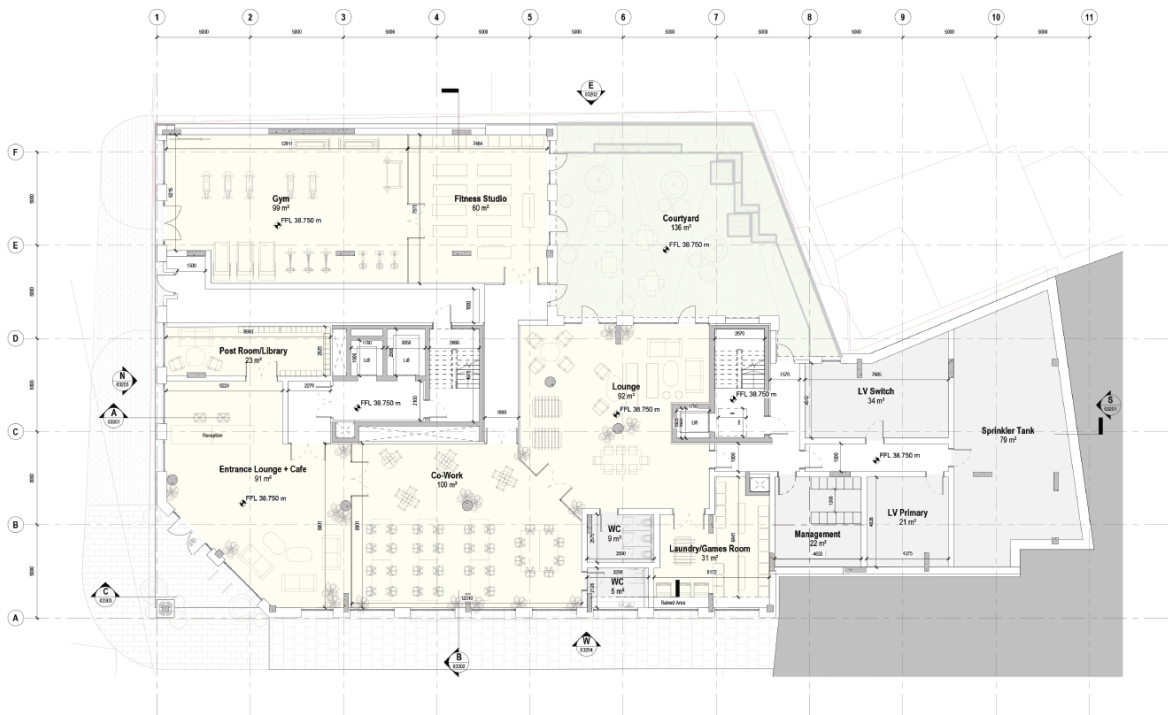
1. It is located on a site that has not been identified for general residential (as plan allocations or extant permissions), unless the purpose-built shared living accommodation element would be in addition to the planned residential;
2. It is located within the town centre or a 15-minute walk of the town centre, unless a clear justification for an alternative location is provided;
3. It provides units for rent with minimum tenancy lengths of no less than three months;
4. High quality, and well-placed on-site communal facilities and services are provided that are sufficient to meet the requirements of, and available to and easily accessible by, all residents of the proposal. At least 4 sq m of internal communal space will be provided per resident, decreasing to 3 sq m per resident where there would be more than 100 residents, which includes common work areas but excludes circulation space such as corridors and stairways. On-site communal facilities will offer at least:
  - Communal kitchen and dining facilities
  - Laundry and drying facilities
  - A concierge
  - Cleaning, maintenance and security services
5. The private units have an internal size of at least 18sqm, include a bathroom with shower, and are not capable of being used as self-contained dwellings;
6. It is under a single management regime;
7. The proposal is accompanied by a management plan, secured by Section 106 agreement, which demonstrates how the development, including the communal facilities, will be managed and maintained over its lifetime;
8. The proposal is accompanied by a security strategy, provided at planning application stage and secured by condition or Section 106 agreement, setting out how crime and anti-social behaviour will be mitigated through design and management measures; and
9. A contribution is made to provision of affordable housing at an equivalent level to policy H3. This will form an off-site financial contribution, unless on-site self-contained affordable dwellings can be provided that do not rely on, and operate independently from, the internal communal facilities.



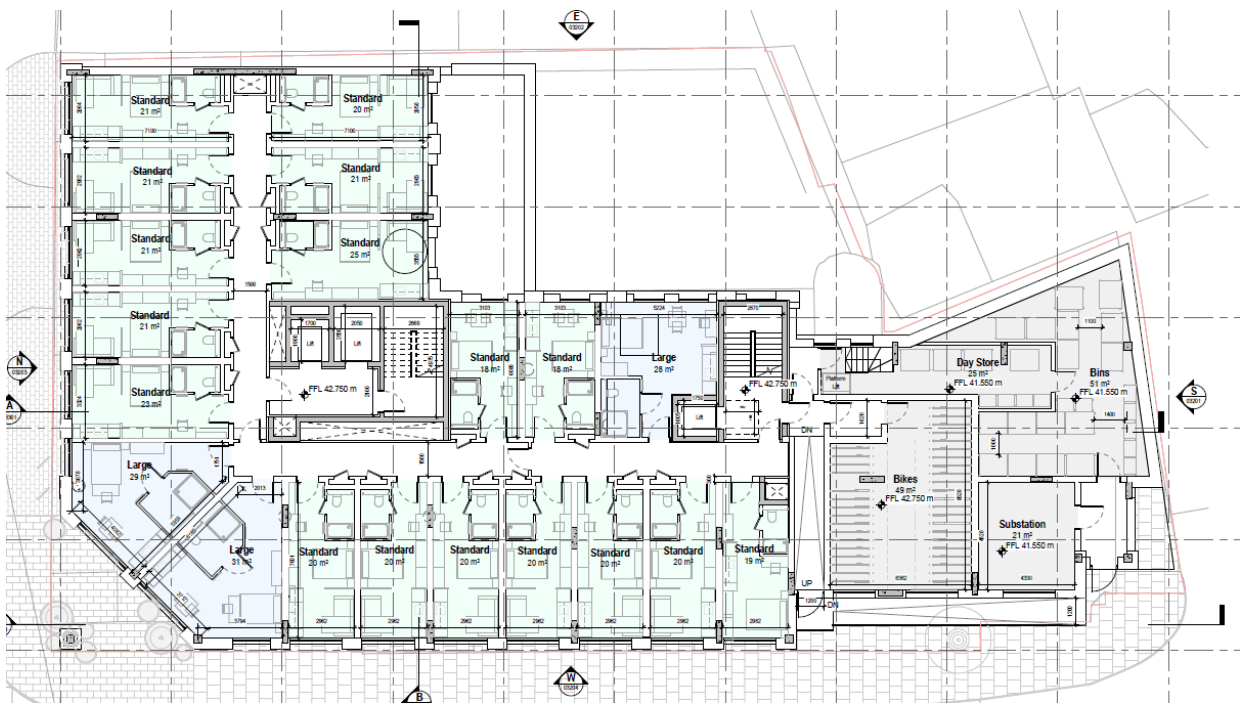
APPENDIX 4: Proposed Plans

Proposed Site Plan

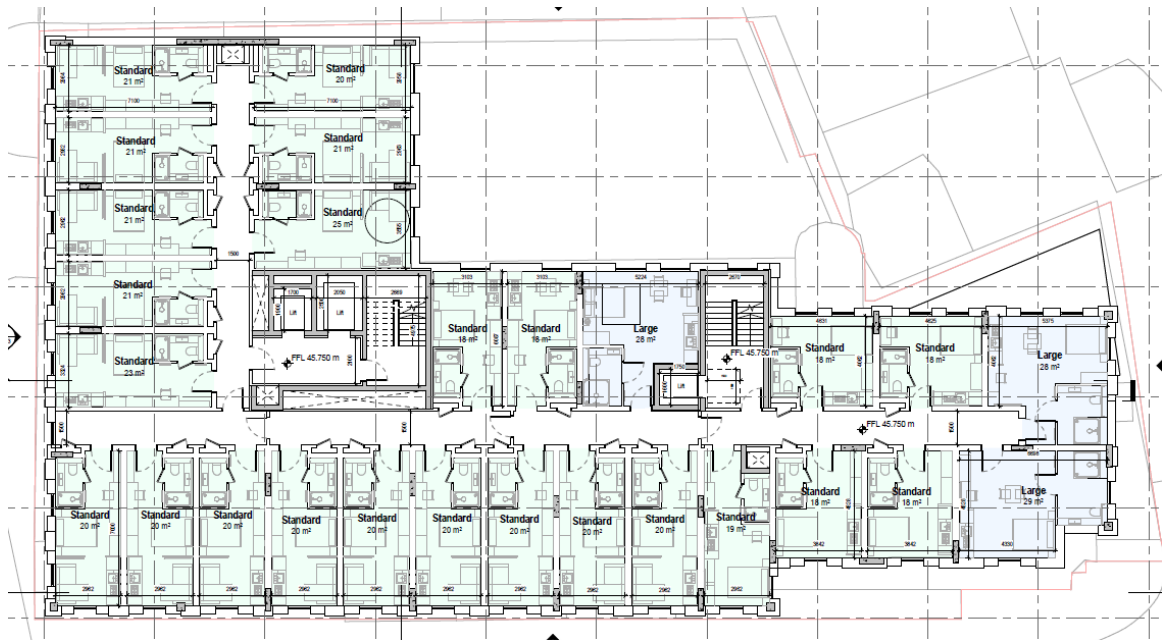
Proposed Floor Plans



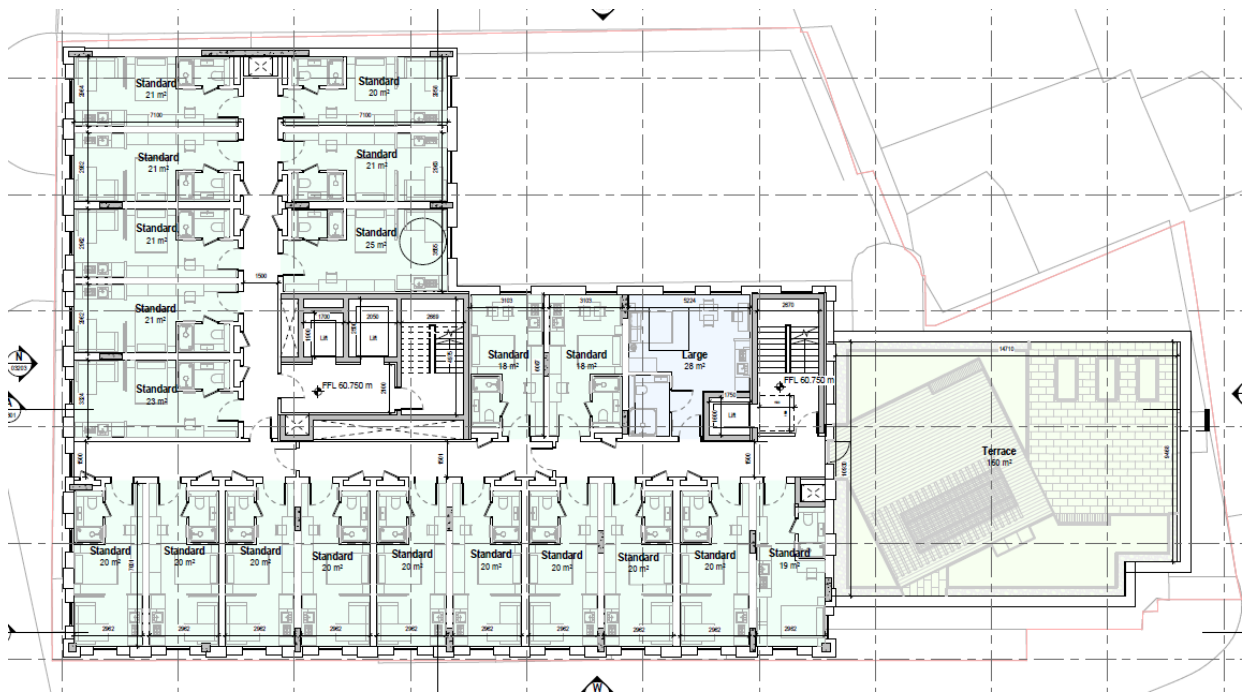
Proposed Ground Floor Plan



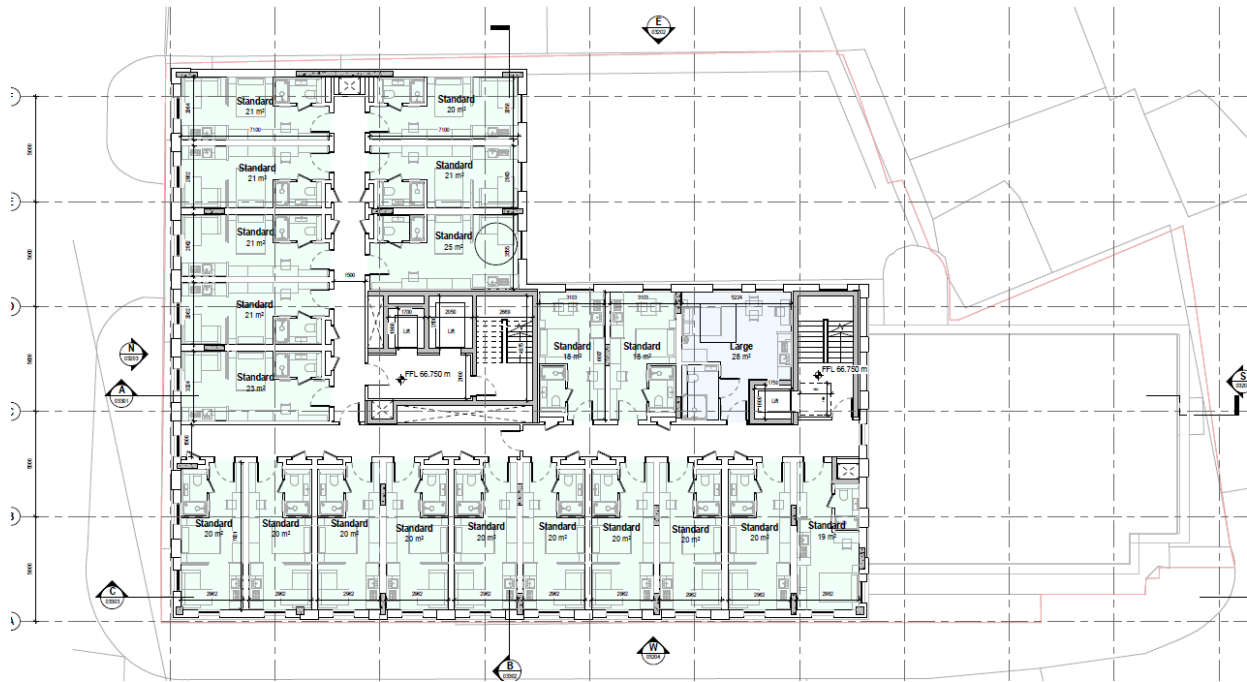
Proposed First Floor Plan



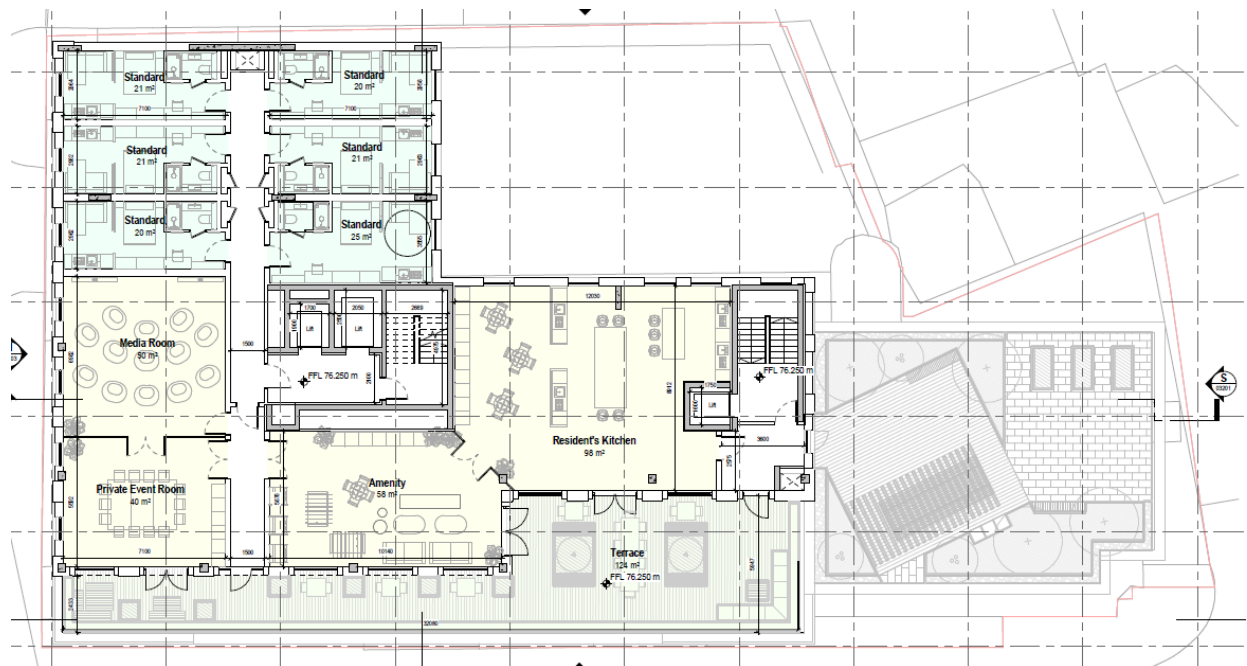
**Proposed Second up to Sixth Floor Plans**



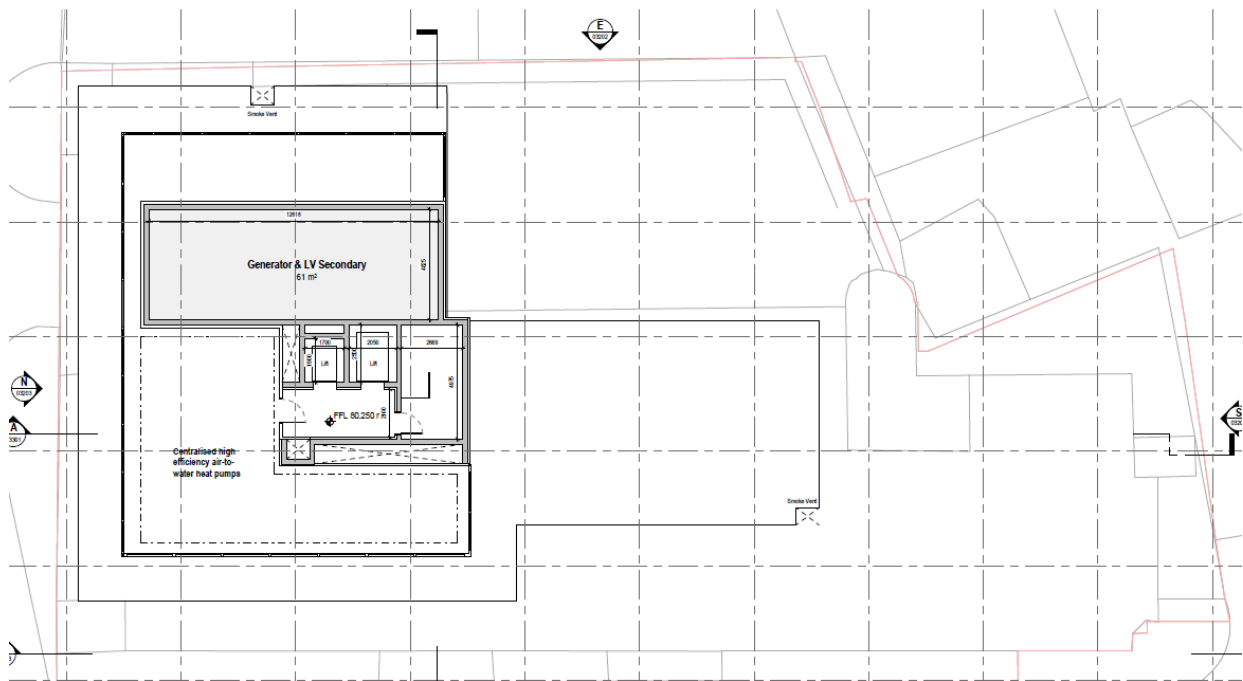
**Proposed Seventh Floor Plan (terrace level)**



**Proposed Eighth up to Eleventh Floor Plans**

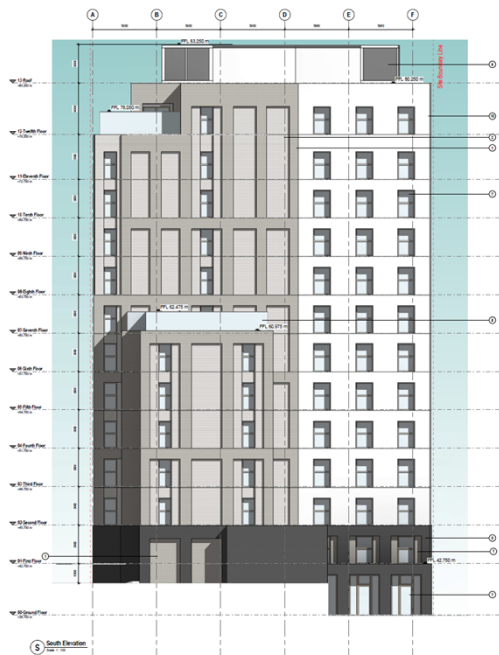


**Proposed Twelfth Floor Plan (upper terrace level)**



### Proposed Thirteenth Floor Plan (roof)

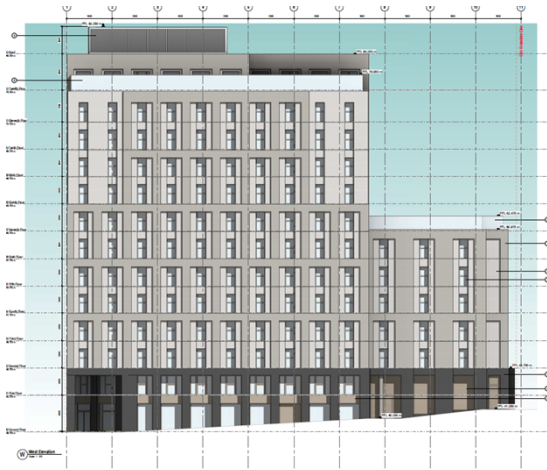
## Proposed Elevations



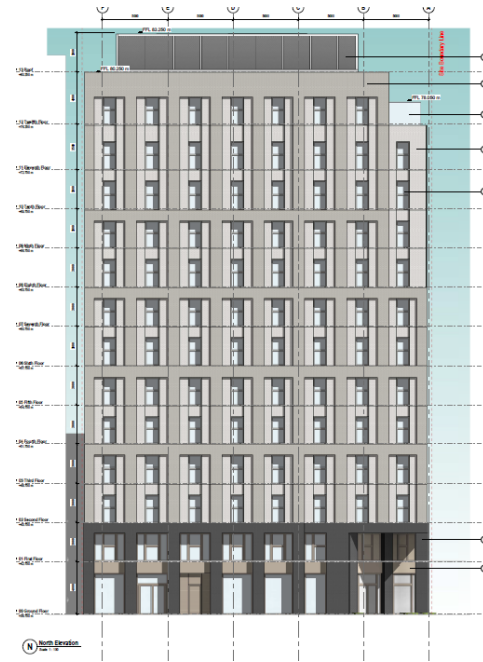
### ***Proposed South Elevation***



***Proposed East Elevation***

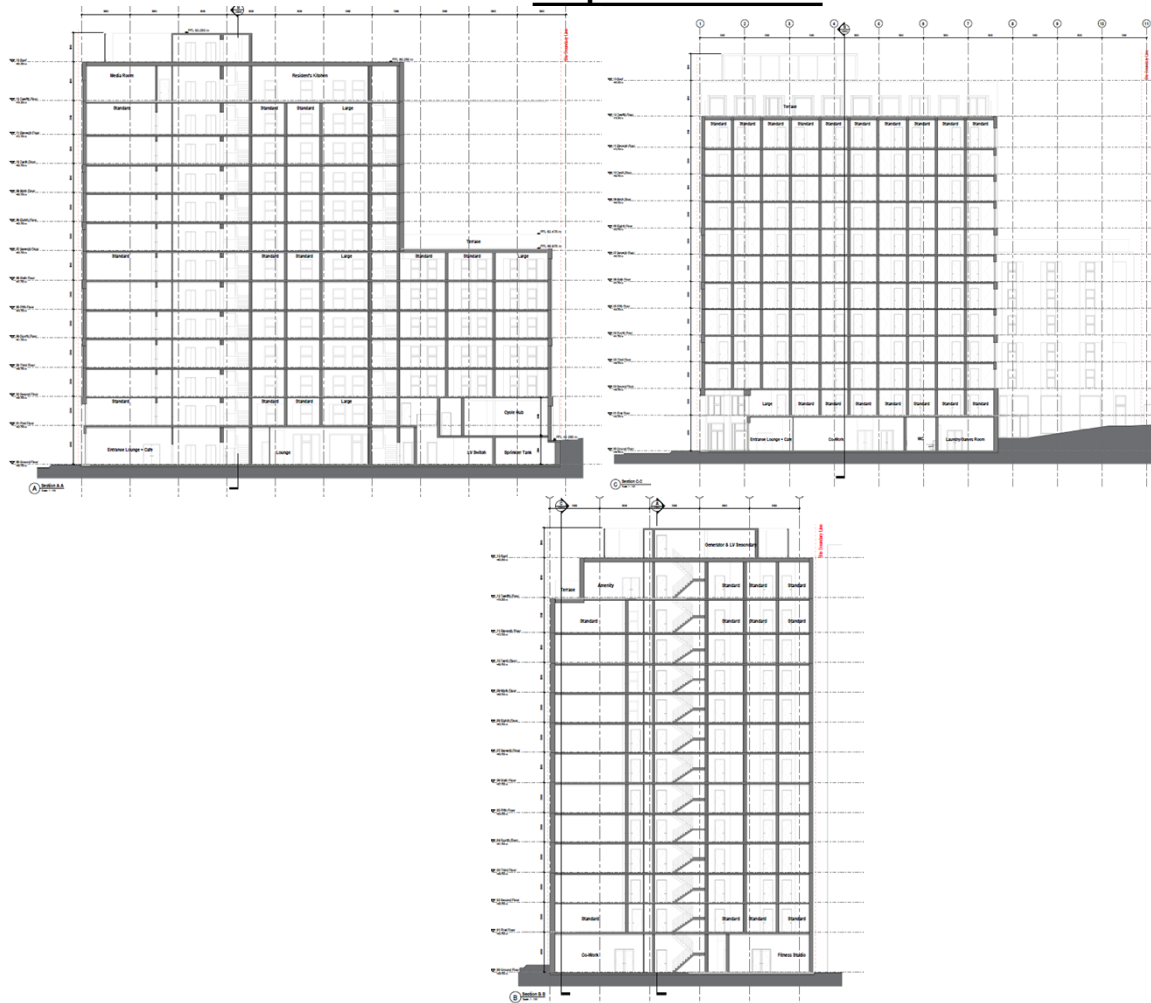


**Proposed West Elevation  
(From Greyfriars Road)**



**Proposed North Elevation  
(from Garrard Street)**

### **Proposed Sections**





***Illustrative Landscape Masterplan***



02 April 2025



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<b>Title</b>	<b>PLANNING APPLICATION REPORT</b>
<b>Ward</b>	Kentwood Ward
<b>Planning Application Reference:</b>	PL/25/0093
<b>Site Address:</b>	66 LYNDHURST ROAD, TILEHURST, READING, RG30 6UA
<b>Proposed Development</b>	Single storey rear extension and renovation of existing dwelling
<b>Report author</b>	Mishga Marshall
<b>Applicant</b>	Reading Borough Council Housing Property Services
<b>Deadline:</b>	03/04/2025
<b>Recommendations</b>	Grant planning permission, subject to conditions as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 3 year time limit</li> <li>- Matching materials</li> <li>- Approved plans</li> </ul>
<b>Conditions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 3 year time limit</li> <li>- Matching materials</li> <li>- Approved plans</li> </ul>
<b>Informatives</b>	– <i>Positive and Proactive</i>

## 1. Executive summary

- 1.1. The proposed development is considered to be policy compliant and is recommended for approval, subject to conditions.

## 2. Introduction and site description

- 2.1. This is a Householder Planning Application for a single storey rear extension and renovations of existing dwelling, the application site located at 66 Lyndhurst Road, RG30 6UA. This application is to be presented to PAC as the applicant is Reading Borough Council Housing Property Services.
- 2.2. The application site is 66 Lyndhurst Road and is part of a terraced block consisting of 4 dwellings. Located within a residential area, main consisting of small terraces and semi-detached dwellings.



Location plan

### 3. The proposal

- 3.1. The proposal is for the construction of a ~2.9m x ~3.3m rear extension, with a flat roof, walls finished in external insulation and silicone render.
- 3.2. No trees and hedges will be harmed as a result of the application.
- 3.3. The proposed rear extension would house the kitchen, converting the current kitchen space into utility space and a WC.
- 3.4. The application also includes works to the roof, as part of renovation efforts. No additional roof space will be created.

### 4. Planning history

- 4.1. PL/24/1257 Phase 4 of Estate Improvement Project (retrospective) - Approved 10 Jan 2025

### 5. Consultations

- 5.1. Statutory:
  - 5.1.1. N/A
 Non-Statutory
- 5.2. Public
  - 5.2.1. Site notices

### Legal context

- 5.3. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy framework (NPPF) - among them the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'. However, the NPPF does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making (NPPF paragraph 12).



- 5.4. In this regard, the NPPF states that due weight should be given to the adopted policies of the Local Plan 2019 according to their degree of consistency with the NPPF (the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the NPPF, the greater the weight that may be given). The Local Plan is being reviewed and Officers can confirm that the listed policies are still relevant.
- 5.5. Accordingly, the latest NPPF and the following development plan policies and supplementary planning guidance are:

National Policy

National Planning Policy Framework 2023

National Planning Practice Guidance 2014

Reading Borough Local Plan 2019

CC7 (Design and the Public Realm)

CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity)

H9 (House Extensions and Ancillary Accommodation)

H10 (Private and Communal Outdoor Space)

## 6. Appraisal

- The main considerations are:
- Design
- Residential Amenity

### *Design*

- 7.1 Policy H9 states that an extension to a house will be acceptable where it respects the character of the house in terms of scale, location, materials and design and respects the character and pattern of neighbouring properties and the street as a whole in terms of scale, location, materials and design, and any important existing building line. Policy CC7 also further sets out relevant considerations for design.
- 7.2 The proposed rear extension would have a depth of ~2.9m beyond the rear elevation wall and a height of ~3.2m with a flat roof. The extension would be situated to the rear and would not appear as an obtrusive feature within the street scene. The proposed materials, such as bricks, windows and doors are intended to match the existing where possible, thus respecting the character of the host dwelling. The design is considered to be subservient and sympathetic to the existing dwelling and surrounding area and its character and is not believed to detract from it. The proposed renovations to the dwelling are not considered to be obtrusive in design and material usage and are considered to be appropriate and acceptable under policies guidelines. As such, the development is considered visually acceptable, in compliance with Policy H9 and CC7.

### *Residential Amenity*

- 7.3 Policy H9 states an extension will be acceptable where it does not result in an overbearing impact on neighbours. Policy H10 seeks to ensure that the amenity of gardens and other outdoor areas are not compromised. Policy CC8 states an extension to a house will be acceptable where it will not cause a significant detrimental impact to the living environment of existing or new residential properties.
- 7.4 The neighbouring properties potentially most affected by the proposals are No's 64 and 68 Lyndhurst Road to the north-west and south-east of the proposal site respectively. It is not considered that the proposed rear extension and renovation works would result in

undue loss of daylight and sunlight or be overbearing to either neighbouring property. It is not considered the development would have undue harm on the neighbouring amenities of adjoining dwellings and complies with the relevant considerations of Policies CC8, H9, and H10 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

## **7. Equality implications**

7.1. Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to—

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

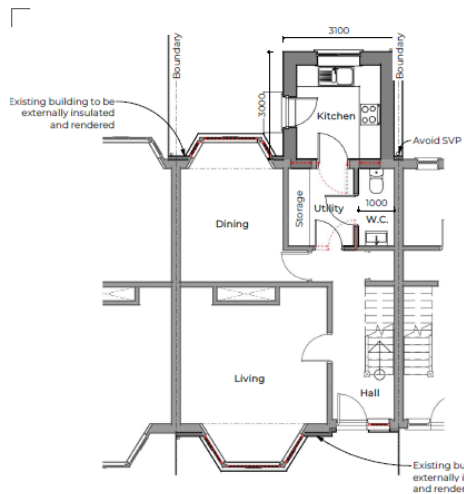
7.2. The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation. It is considered that there is no indication or evidence that the protected groups have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular application

## **8. Conclusion & Planning Balance**

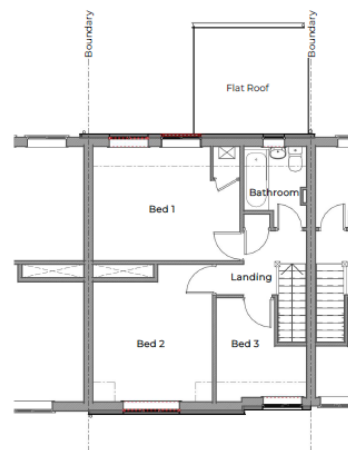
9.1 As with all applications considered by the Local Planning Authority, the application is required to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise, as per Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

9.2 The proposed extension and renovation works would preserve the character and appearance of the area and would not result in harm to neighbouring amenity. The proposals are recommended for approval as set out in the recommendation above.

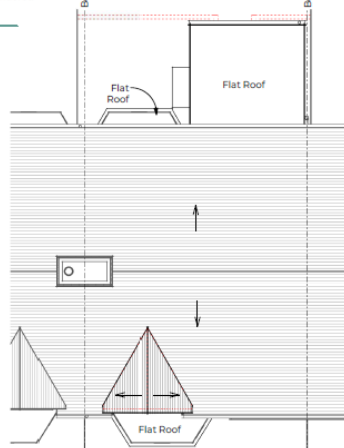
Proposed Floorplans



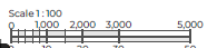
Proposed Ground Level Plan  
General Arrangement | 00-FFL | Scale 1 : 100



Proposed First Level Plan  
General Arrangement | 01-FFL | Scale 1 : 100



Proposed Roof Level Plan  
General Arrangement | RF-RDG | Scale 1 : 100

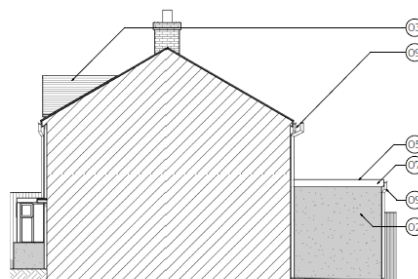


#### Finishes & Materials

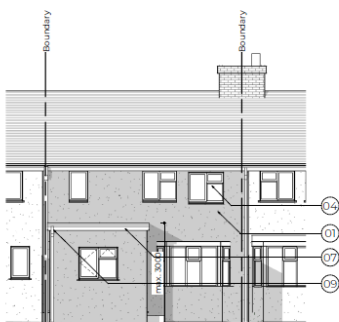
Ref.	Description
01	walls - external insulation & silicone render
02	walls - external silicone render to match house
03	pitched roofs - red plain tiles to match existing style & colour
04	external windows - PVC, double glazed with style to match existing & anthracite colour
05	flat roofs - single ply membrane
06	external doors - white PVC double glazed to match existing
07	fascias/soffits - white PVC to match existing style & colour
09	rainwater goods - black PVC, size & style to match existing



Proposed Elevation  
General Arrangement | Scale 1 : 100



Proposed Elevation - South-East  
General Arrangement | Scale 1 : 100



Proposed Elevation  
General Arrangement | Scale 1 : 100



Proposed Elevation - North-West  
General Arrangement | Scale 1 : 100

## Elevations

Proposed



Lyndhurst Road

Proposed Block Plan

02 April 2025



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<b>Title</b>	<b>PLANNING APPLICATION REPORT</b>
<b>Ward</b>	Adjacent authority consultation
<b>Planning Application Reference:</b>	PL/25/0314/ADJ
<b>Site Address:</b>	Shinfield Park, Reading
<b>Proposed Development</b>	Full application for the proposed redevelopment of site for flexible employment use (Use Class E(g)(ii)-(iii)/B2/B8) together with servicing areas, parking, landscaping and other associated works, including demolition
<b>Report author</b>	Richard Eatough
<b>Applicant</b>	Wrenbridge (FRELD Reading) LLP
<b>Deadline:</b>	N/A
<b>Recommendations</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. That Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) be advised that this Council raises no objections in planning terms to application 250415;</li> <li>2. That WBC be advised to look carefully at accident data at the junctions onto the B3270;</li> <li>3. To request that RBC is consulted on the Construction Method Statement (CMS) in order to minimise/avoid transport routes including central Reading; and</li> <li>4. Delegate to officers to provide any final comments, as necessary.</li> </ol>

## 1. Executive summary

- 1.1 This is an adjacent authority consultation from Wokingham Borough Council, concerning a planning application for demolition and redevelopment of the former Shire Hall site into a warehousing and general industry business park featuring large warehousing buildings. The report explains that in terms of impacts on Reading Borough, these are considered to be limited and minor and accordingly the recommendation is to raise no objections to the planning application.

## 2. Introduction and site description

- 2.1. The site is 5.5 hectares in area and lies near to the borough boundary. This application is being reported to Planning Applications Committee as it is in the Major

category near to the Borough boundary. Wokingham Borough Council have consulted RBC on the application and the timescales for Wokingham's planning committee allow reporting to this meeting of the Planning Applications Committee.

### 3. The Proposal

- 3.1. The proposal, submitted to Wokingham Borough Council, is to demolish all buildings and to erect five large modern warehouse-style buildings for either business (Class E) use, B2 industrial, or B8 storage and distribution. The report explains that the majority of the existing trees around the site will be retained.



Layout plan, highlighting general access arrangements



View west from Whitley Wood Lane

- 3.2 The application is currently due to be reported to WBC's next available planning committee, which is expected to be in mid-April.

#### **4. Planning History**

- 4.1 The present buildings on the site were built for the former Berkshire County Council in 1981 and served as the home of the County Council until its abolition in 1998. It was subsequently occupied by Foster Wheeler Engineering Ltd. From 2000 and latterly by Wood Group.
- 4.2 The supporting documentation for the planning application indicates that the applicant undertook pre-application discussions with Wokingham Planning before the application's submission.

#### **5. Consultations**

- 5.1. The following have consulted the following on this out of Borough application:

##### **RBC Transport Strategy**

- 5.1 The site currently comprises of an established, albeit now vacant, office complex providing 4-storeys of office floorspace plus basement parking, on the southern outskirts of Reading, north of the M4 motorway and accessed off the B3270. The existing traffic conditions at Junction 11 and on the surrounding road network including the Black Boy signalised junction and Whitley Wood Lane/B3270 junction are extremely busy and experience congestion during peak periods.
- 5.2 The existing site provides 1,025 car parking spaces so there will be significantly fewer vehicles accessing the site as a result of the proposal, albeit that there will be an increase in HGV movements given the nature of the development. It is noted that the proposed flexible employment use is likely to operate a number of different shift patterns and have operating hours that do not tie in with traditional office working hours, given the potential 24 hour use of the buildings.
- 5.3 In order to estimate the number of vehicle trips associated with the proposed use, trip rates have been calculated based on similar sites available on the TRICS database. This assessment has demonstrated that the proposed development would have the potential to generate up to 131 two-way trips in the AM peak and 112 two-way trips in the PM peak, an overall reduction in the number of vehicle movements when compared with the extant trips for the AM peak and PM peak. As a result, no junction capacity assessments have been submitted on the basis that the proposed peak hour trips are lower than what could be generated by the existing development (if fully occupied).
- 5.4 However, it is noted that the applicant's Transport Statement has not assessed the accident records within the vicinity of the site which would be standard practice for a development of this size. Historically, there has been a number of accidents along the B3270 including a cluster of accidents at the Whitley Wood Lane/B3270 junction and a serious accident at the site access. Given that these junctions are wholly within Wokingham Borough Council's administrative area, the onus is on the applicant to provide sufficient information to WBC to appropriately assess the highway safety

implications of the development on these junctions and the surrounding highway network.

- 5.5 If this application is approved by WBC then it requested that officers at Reading Borough Council are consulted on the Construction Method Statement to ensure that construction traffic is not routed through Reading town centre.

**RBC Planning Natural Environment Team (Tree Officer)**

- 5.6 Has been coordinating with Tree Officer at WBC and any outcome of these discussions will be reported to your meeting.

**REDA (Reading's Economic and Destination Agency)**

- 5.7 No response at the time of writing, but any response received will be reported to your meeting

**6. Legal context**

- 6.1. This is not an application for determination by RBC, but in considering the planning considerations in terms of the Borough, consideration has been given to the following:

NPPF (December 2024) – sections on Economy, Transport and conserving the Natural Environment

Reading Borough Local Plan policies relevant to this authority's consideration include: CC6, EN12, EN14, TR1, TR5, EM1

Other relevant documents taken into consideration:

Reading Tree Strategy  
Reading Biodiversity Action Plan  
Reading Local Transport Plan

**7. Appraisal**

- 7.1 This planning application is considered to raise 3 main issues for Reading Borough: impact employment opportunities, transport impacts on Reading Borough and effects on the environment including trees.

**Impact of employment opportunities**

- 7.2 Officers firstly advise that the loss of the office accommodation is a matter for Wokingham to consider within their planning appraisal. At the time of its construction, the location of what was the then Shire Hall for the County Council offices was not a particularly sustainable location and was considered in an era that was much more pro-car.
- 7.3 The proposal will produce modern employment opportunities within the manufacturing and/or distribution sectors. In terms of the greater Reading area and Reading Borough, these are the sorts of jobs that are needed and often difficult for the employment market to provide in any significant number. The applicant's



economic statement advises that the proposal could produce some 270 jobs at the site.

- 7.4 Officers therefore advise that there are no obvious conflicts with employment policy and the proposal of itself would be acceptable and welcome in this regard, but any further comments from REDA will be reported to you.

### **Transport impacts on Reading Borough**

- 7.5 The applicant's Transport Assessment statement indicates that the number of trips associated with the last office use and all previous local authority use would have been much greater than the proposed use for industrial purposes, although it is recognised the nature of the trips will be somewhat different. Consequently, RBC Transport Strategy as the Highway Authority advises that there are no negative effects on Reading Borough. This means also that there is no opportunity for contributions and improvements to any roads or other transport infrastructure as there is no detriment as a direct result of this development. The comments on accident data and the CMS are noted and officers suggest that these should be forwarded to WBC.

### **Effects on the environment including trees**

- 7.6 The present buildings are in a Brutalist architectural style which was used widely in public buildings at the time. The loss of the buildings remains a matter for Wokingham BC to consider as part of their assessment of the planning application.
- 7.7 The proposal involves placing some very large buildings within the approximate footprint and parking areas was taking up by the current office complex. Officers have considered to what extent this would affect Reading Borough and have been in contact with counterparts working in WBC and have concluded that the impacts on protected trees including ancient woodland, whilst important, are sufficiently distant from this borough so as to not have an impact and instead expect these matters to be addressed by WBC in assessing the planning application and this also includes any related ecological concerns.

## **8. Equality implications**

- 8.1. Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to—
- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
  - advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
  - foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 8.2. The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation. It is considered that there is no indication or evidence that the protected groups have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular application

## **9. Conclusion**

- 9.1 On the basis of the discussion above there would be a significant change to the landscape and local environment of the Shinfield Park area, but this would be sufficiently distant from Reading Borough and the expectation is that WBC would ensure the protection of important features as local planning authority. The absence of any wider environmental, traffic, or employment policy concerns means that the proposal is considered to be suitable in terms of its impact on this borough and it is recommended that WBC should be advised accordingly.