

COMMITTEE REPORT

BY THE DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC GROWTH & NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES
READING BOROUGH COUNCIL
PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE: 23rd June 2021

Ward: Abbey

App No's: 210223FUL & 210224LBC

Address: 1-15 Queen Victoria Street and 147-148 Friar Street

Proposal: Part demolition of rear of site. Repair and refurbishment of listed building. Change of use of upper floors from office (Use Class E(g)) to apart hotel (Use Class C1). Erection of a three - storey rear extension with mansard. Erection of a part-single, part-two storey rear addition (Use Class E(a) or (b)). Alterations to ground floor principle façade. Creation of public square, and associated works

13 Week Target Date: 20th May 2021 Extension of Time Date: 30th July 2021

RECOMMENDATION:

210223FUL

Delegate to the Head of Planning, Development and Regulatory Services (HPDRS) to i) **GRANT** full planning permission, subject to conditions and satisfactory completion of a section 106 legal agreement or ii) Refuse full planning permission if the legal agreement is not completed by 30st July 2021 (unless officers on behalf of the Head of Planning, Development and Regulatory Services agree to a later date for completion of the legal agreement)

S106 legal agreement to include the following heads of terms:

1. Provision and implementation of both a construction and end user phase Employment Skills and Training Plan or equivalent financial contributions, as calculate by the levels as set out in the adopted Employment and Skills SPD (all financial contributions index-linked from the date of permission)
2. Provision and implementation of a refuse disposal management plan for collection of waste by private contractor
3. C1 apart-hotel use only:
 - no apartment shall be used for any use other than as a C1 Use
 - no apartment shall be used or occupied as a residential dwelling or dwelling-house (C3 Use)
 - not to let or licence for occupation or permit or suffer occupation of any of the apartments for a continuous period of more than 3 months to the same occupier or occupiers
 - other than those customers staying in accordance with the above, not to let or licence for occupation or permit or suffer occupation of any apartment for a continuous period for more than 3 months to the same customer or customers

- not to require customers of any apartment to agree to any minimum period of occupation (of whatever duration)
- to provide to the Council within 14 days of written request evidence regarding the use or occupation of the apartments or any of them

Conditions:

1. Time Limit - standard 3 years
2. Approved Plans
3. Pre-commencement submission and approval of material samples
4. Pre-commencement submission and approval of a construction method statement
5. Standard hours of construction: 0800 to 1800hrs Monday to Friday, 0800 to 1300hrs Saturdays and no working on Sundays and Bank Holidays
6. No bonfires
7. Pre-commencement submission and approval of cycle parking details
8. Pre-occupation submission and approval of refuse collection details
9. Pre-commencement submission and approval of bin store details (vermin control)
10. Pre-occupation submission and approval of servicing and delivery details
11. Pre-occupation provision approved glazing and ventilation details (noise mitigation)
12. Adherence to maximum noise level of any plant equipment installed
13. Pre-occupation submission and approval of an odour management plan
14. Pre-commencement submission and approval of an air quality mitigation scheme
15. Pre-occupation submission and approval of management and maintenance plan for operation of the public square and events within
16. Pre-occupation submission and approval of plan showing extent of public square to be used for seating associated with surrounding E a) and E b) units
17. Pre-commencement submission and approval of access control strategy
18. Pre-commencement submission and approval of a CCTV strategy
19. Pre-commencement submission and approval of hard and soft landscaping scheme (to include details of green roof)
20. Pre-commencement submission and approval of a scheme of archaeological investigation
21. Pre-commencement submission and approval of details of the solar panels
22. Pre-commencement submission and approval of details of air source heat pump
23. Pre-commencement submission and approval of BREEAM pre estimator (Very Good Standard) for new build element
24. Pre-occupation submission and approval of BREEAM as built certification for new build element
25. Implementation of other sustainability measures for conversion works to listed building
26. Adherence to approved hours of use
27. Pre-commencement submission and approval of an external lighting scheme
28. Provision/retention of lift(s)
29. Pre-commencement submission and approval of full details of gates
30. Gates to open inwards only
31. Gates to be locked and square closed to public access outside of the permitted hours of use of the retail units

32. Pre-commencement submission and approval of plant screen materials/specification
33. Pre-occupation obscure glazing of 1st and 2nd floor rear windows to 146 Friar Street
34. Pre-occupation submission and approval of screening to north elevation of stairs up to courtyard terrace
35. Pre-commencement submission and approval of scheme of repair for roof gables including timetable for reinstatement
36. Retail units to Queen Victoria Street frontage and rear square to have flexible E a) shop/ E b) sale of food and drink) use
37. Retail units to Friar Street frontage to be occupied as E a) shop units only
38. Pre-commencement submission and approval of SuDS Strategy
39. Adherence to approved SuDs Strategy
40. Pre-occupation submission and approval of a litter management strategy
41. All shop fronts fronting Queen Victoria Street and Friar Street to retain glazed active frontages

Informatives

1. Positive and Proactive Working - approval
2. Pre-commencement conditions
3. Highways
4. S106
5. Terms and Conditions
6. Building Control
7. Complaints about construction
8. Encroachment
9. Noise between residential properties - sound insulation of any building
10. Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)
11. Thames Water
12. Associated listed building consent

210224LBC

Delegate to the Head of Planning, Development and Regulatory Services (HPDRS) to **GRANT** listed building consent, subject to conditions:

Conditions

1. Time limit Listed Building Consent - standard 3 years
2. Pre-commencement submission and approval of a window repair/replacement scheme
3. Pre-commencement submission and approval of a detailed scheme of internal works and finishes (to include partition walls, cornices and skirting boards, etc.)
4. Pre-commencement submission and approval of detailed plans/sections of windows and doors
5. Pre-commencement submission and approval of detailed plans/sections of secondary glazing

6. Pre-commencement submission and approval of methodology for installation of insulation between ground and first floor level of the building
7. Pre-commencement submission and approval of external plant and services
8. Pre-commencement submission and approval of materials
9. Pre-commencement submission and approval of scheme for repair of roof gables including timetable for reinstatement.
10. Pre-commencement submission and approval of the source and moulded units for the replacement terracotta for roof gable repairs
11. Retention of all other features of historic and architectural interest unless referred to on approved plans

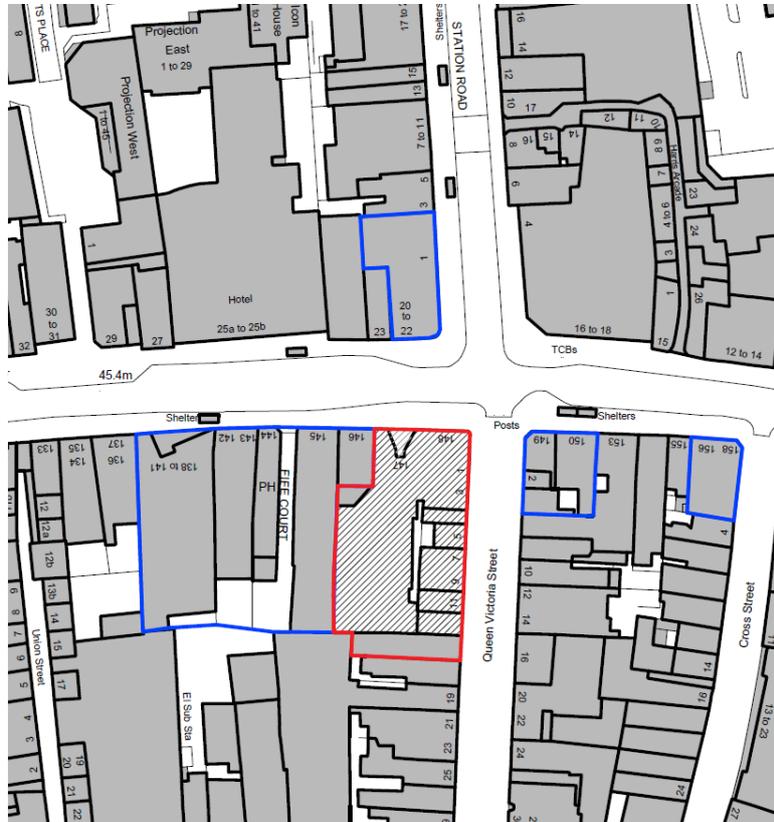
Informatives

1. Positive and Proactive Working - approval
2. Pre-commencement conditions
3. Terms and Conditions
4. Building Control
5. Complaints about construction
6. Associated planning permission and s106 agreement

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The application site consists of a four-storey terrace of buildings located on the west side of Queen Victoria Street and north western corner of Queen Victoria Street and Friar Street within the town centre.
- 1.2 No.s 1-15 Queen Victoria Street, and the corner building no. 148 Friar Street, form part of a larger Grade II listed terrace of buildings which span the length of both sides of Queen Victoria Street. The buildings comprise a number of retail units at ground and basement floors with largely vacant office accommodation to the upper floors. The buildings were constructed around 1900-1903 as a commercial terrace with a red brick and terracotta frontage with Dutch and Flemish style gables.
- 1.3 No. 147 Friar Street is also a Grade II listed building but of different appearance and designation to the other buildings within the application site. The building dates from the early 1880s and features a double-height cast iron colonnade shopfront which is the principal reason for the building's listing. This building also comprises of retail units at ground floor and vacant office accommodation above.
- 1.4 The space to the rear of the properties is filled with a crowded mix of more modern extensions and additions.
- 1.5 The application site is:
 - Within the boundary of the defined Reading Central Area: Policies CR1 to CR10 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019
 - Within a designated primary frontage within the defined Central Area: Policy CR7
 - Within the central core, primary shopping area and office core of the defined central area: Policy: CR1

- Within an area of archaeological potential: Policy EN2
- Within an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA): Policy EN15
- Adjacent to a Classified Road (Friar Street) and identified Cycle Route (QVS and Friar Street): Policies TR1 to TR5



Location Plan - showing application site (red line) and other land nearby under the ownership of the Applicant



Photograph of application site from junction of Friar Street and Queen Victoria Street

Queen Victoria Street. No. 147 Friar Street is the white building, no. 148 is the red brick/terracotta corner building with the remainder of the terrace (no.s 1-15 Queen Victoria) Street beyond

2. PROPOSAL

2.1 The application seeks full permission (and listed building consent for relevant works) for:

- Demolition of more modern extensions to the rear of the buildings and formation of a new public square
- Creation of two ground floor passageways, one from Queen Victoria Street and one from Friar Street to provide pedestrian access to the public square
- Removal of modern shopfronts and signage and reinstatement with uniform shopfront reflecting the historic shop front layout and rhythm
- Part one and part two storey rear extensions to wrap around the south and western sides of the public squares to create 5 additional retail units (E (a) or E (b) use class - shop or sale of food and drink) opening out on to the square.
- Opening up of the rear of the existing retail units to Queen Victoria Street to the public square
- Three and a half storey rear extension to no.s 1-15 Queen Victoria Street and no. 148 Friar Street and conversion of upper floors from offices (E (g) use class) to provide 41 serviced apartments (C1 use class)
- Repair and refurbishment to external facades and roofs of all buildings

2.2 The proposals have been subject to detailed pre-application discussions between the Applicant and Officers, including the Council's Conservation and Urban Design Officer.

2.3 Plans Considered:

Proposed Courtyard Elevations

Proposed Sections AA & BB

Proposed Sections CC & DD

Proposed Queen Victoria Street & Friar Street Elevations

Proposed Rear Elevations

Proposed First Floor Plan

Proposed Second Floor Plan

Proposed Third Floor Plan

Proposed Roof Plan

Existing & Proposed Building Dates, Heritage Significance & Proposed Demolition - Third Floor Plan

Existing & Proposed Building Dates, Heritage Significance & Proposed Demolition - Roof Plan

Proposed Basement Plan

Proposed Ground Floor Plan

Proposed Landscape Plan

Existing & Proposed Building Dates, Heritage Significance & Proposed Demolition - Ground Floor Plan

Existing & Proposed Building Dates, Heritage Significance & Proposed Demolition - First Floor Plan

Existing & Proposed Building Dates, Heritage Significance & Proposed Demolition - Second Floor Plan

Existing Buildings Heritage Significance - Third Floor Plan

Existing Buildings Heritage Significance - Roof Plan

Existing Buildings Heritage Significance - Ground Floor Plan

Existing Buildings Heritage Significance - First Floor Plan

Existing Buildings Heritage Significance - Second Floor Plan

Existing Building Dates - Third Floor Plan

Existing Building Dates - Roof Plan

Existing Building Dates - Ground Floor Plan

Existing Building Dates - First Floor Plan

Existing Building Dates - Second Floor Plan

Existing Sections AA & BB

Existing Sections CC & DD

Existing Building Dates - Basement Plan

Proposed Demolition Plan - Basement

Proposed Demolition Plan - Ground Floor

Proposed Demolition Plan - First Floor

Proposed Demolition Plan - Second Floor

Proposed Demolition Plan - Third Floor

Proposed Demolition Plan - Roof

Existing Queen Victoria Street & Friar Street Elevations

Existing Rear Elevations

Existing Ground Floor Plan

Existing Roof Plan

Existing Second Floor Plan

Existing Third Floor Plan

Existing First Floor Plan

Existing Basement Plan

Proposed Queen Victoria Street Shopfront Design

Proposed Replacement Window Detail (No. 148 Friar Street)

Design and Access Statement

Schedule of Works

3. PLANNING HISTORY

3.1 *Application Site*

5 Queen Victoria Street

930720 Change of use from financial and professional services (A2) to offices(B1). Approved 16/09/1993

901065 Change of use of first and second floor to A2 (employment agency) Approved 23/08/1990

891119 Change of use of ground floor from retail shop (A1) to employment agency (A2). Refused 02/11/1989

7 Queen Victoria Street

020616 (Amended description) Change of use from class A3 (tea shop, bakery) to class A2 (job shop.) Approved 17/09/2002

940142 Change of use from estate agents to bakery/tea rooms. Approved 17/11/1994

11 Queen Victoria Street

960303 Conversion to form a single unit at ground floor level by removal of part of internal wall. Approved 14/11/1996

960869 Change of use of ground floor and basement to A2 use forming extension to existing premises at 13 Queen Victoria Street. Approved 28/08/1996

13-15 Queen Victoria Street

890382 Change of use from Class A1 (retail-hairdressers) to Class A2 (employment bureau). Approved 14/06/1989
147 Friar Street

880153 Conversion of first floor into restaurant with 120 seats, formation of staircase and disabled WC to ground floor. Approved. 23/11/1988

148 Friar Street

130576 Change of use of the public highway to a street café area. Approved. 19/09/2013

3.2 *17-27 Queen Victoria Street*

170650FUL & 170651LBC - Proposed change of use of first, second and third floor from office to residential use comprising 15 x 1 bed flats and 4 x 2 bed flats and associated internal alterations - Withdrawn

181296FUL & 181297LBC - Proposed change of use of first, second and third floor from office use (B1a) to serviced apartment use (use class C1)

comprising 15 x 1 bed units and 4 x 2 bed units with associated internal and external alterations - Granted (S106 linked)

4. CONSULTATIONS

4.1 RBC Transport

No objection subject to conditions to secure submission and approval of a construction method statement, servicing strategy, cycle parking details and refuse store details as detailed with the appraisal section of this report.

4.2 RBC Environmental Protection

No objection subject to conditions to secure implementation of glazing and insulation specifications and a maximum noise level of any plant equipment, submission and approval of an operational management plan for the proposed square and events within, odour management plan, air quality mitigation plan, details of bin stores and a construction method statement together with compliance to Councils standard construction working hours as detailed within the appraisal section of this report.

4.3 Ecology Consultant

No objection subject to a condition to secure submission and approval of details of the proposed green roof, as detailed within the appraisal section of this report.

4.4 RBC Natural Environment

No objection, subject to a condition to secure submission and approval of a scheme of hard and soft landscaping, as detailed within the appraisal section of this report.

4.5 RBC Conservation and Urban Design

No objection subject to conditions to secure submission and approval of materials samples for all external works, scheme of window repair/replacement, scheme of internal works (partition walls, cornices, fireplaces etc), plans/sections of all windows and doors, details of secondary glazing, installation methodology for insulation between ground and first floors, details of internal and external plant and services, methodology for repair of roof gables including timetable for reinstatement, approval of source and moulding for terracotta roof repairs and retention of all other historic features unless referred to within the approved plans and documents. As detailed within the appraisal section of this report.

4.6 Thames Valley Crime Prevention Design Advisor

No objection subject to conditions to secure submission and approval of security and CCTV strategies, as detailed within the appraisal section of this report.

4.7 Berkshire Archaeology

No objection subject to a condition to secure submission and approval of a scheme of archaeological investigation, as detailed within the appraisal section of this report.

4.8 Thames Water

No objection subject to informatives.

4.9 **Public representations**

Letters were sent to various properties in the area on Queen Victoria Street, Friar Street, Broad Street and Station Road and site notices were displayed at the site.

Two letters of support have been received stating that the proposals make good use of the site in sympathetic manner and design.

The Applicant has also carried out their own public consultation and engagement exercises at both pre-application and application stage and a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) has been submitted with the application. This includes engagement with local community groups, leaflet drop to nearby properties, poster details of the development displayed at the application site and creation of a website containing details of the proposed developments. Comments collected as part of this exercise indicate a significant level of support for the proposals.

5. **RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY AND GUIDANCE**

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

5.2 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 also states at Paragraph 11 “Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development”.

5.3 The following relevant planning policy and guidance is applicable to the assessment of this application.

5.4 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (Feb 2019)

CHAPTER 1 - ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
CHAPTER 6 - BUILDING A STRONG AND COMPETITIVE ECONOMY
CHAPTER 7 - ENSURING THE VITALITY OF TOWN CENTRES
CHAPTER 8 - PROMOTING HEALTHY AND SAFE COMMUNITIES
CHAPTER 9 - PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT
CHAPTER 10 - MAKING EFFECTIVE USE OF LAND
CHAPTER 12 - WELL DESIGN PLACES
CHAPTER 15 - CONSERVING AND ENHANCING THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT
CHAPTER 16 - CONSERVING AND ENHANCING THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

5.5 Reading Borough Local Plan 2019

CC1: PRESUMPTION IN FAVOUR OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
CC2: SUSTAINABLE DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION
CC3: ADAPTATION TO CLIMATE CHANGE
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
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

EM3: LOSS OF EMPLOYMENT LAND

H1: PROVISION OF HOUSING
H2: DENSITY AND MIX

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

OU5: SHOPFRONTS AND CASH MACHINES

CR1: DEFINITION OF CENTRAL READING

CR2: DESIGN IN CENTRAL READING

CR3: PUBLIC REALM IN CENTRAL READING

CR4: LEISURE, CULTURE AND TOURISM IN CENTRAL READING

CR5: DRINKING ESTABLISHMENTS IN CENTRAL READING

CR6: LIVING IN CENTRAL READING

CR7: PRIMARY FRONTAGES IN CENTRAL READING

CR8: SMALL SHOP UNITS IN CENTRAL READING

5.6 Supplementary Planning Documents

Sustainable Design and Construction (2019)

Planning Obligations under Section 106 SPD (2015)

Employment, Skills and Training SPD (2013)

Revised Parking Standards and Design (2011)

6. APPRAISAL

The main matters to be considered are:

- Land Use principles
- Layout, Character and Heritage
- Amenity
- Natural Environment
- Transport
- Sustainability

Introduction

- 6.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, requires that planning applications shall be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In this case the development plan for the area is the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019). At a national level, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) constitutes guidance which the Local Planning Authority (LPA) must have regard to. The NPPF does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making but constitutes a material consideration in any subsequent determination.
- 6.2 The NPPF sets out a presumption in favour of sustainable development running through both plan-making and decision-taking. The three dimensions to achieving sustainable development are defined in the NPPF as: economic, social and environmental. Paragraph 11 of the Framework indicates that, for decision taking, where Local Plan policies are up to date: development proposals that accord with the Development Plan should be approved without delay. Both the adopted Local Plan and the NPPF require a positive approach to decision-taking to foster the delivery of sustainable development. These

three dimensions of sustainable development are also central to the Council's Local Plan core Policy CC1. This repeats the aims of the NPPF in approving development proposals that accord with the Development Plan. How this proposal meets the three dimensions to achieving sustainable development will be concluded at the end of this report weighed against the level of Local Plan compliance.

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

Land use principles

- 6.4 The application site is located within the central core and primary shopping area of the town centre, on a prominent corner plot and a location that is highly accessible and positioned close to the station. The proposals seek to provide a mixed-use development based around a new public square being opened up to the rear. The proposals would increase retail provision across the site through both refurbishment of existing retail units and addition of new units, whilst existing vacant office space to the upper floors of the building is proposed to be converted into apart-hotel use.
- 6.5 In general terms the proposals are considered to accord with the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 in terms of development within the town centre which it seeks should facilitate the growth and diversification of the town centre and enhance its role as a regional centre. Specifically, the nature of uses proposed are considered to align with Policy RL1 (Network and Hierarchy of Centres) which seeks the vitality and viability of Reading as a Regional Centre should be maintained and enhanced and Policy RL2 (Scale and Location of Retail, Leisure and Culture Development) which states that the town centre and primary shopping area shall be the focus for new retail investment.
- 6.6 Furthermore, the proposals are considered to reflect the requirements of Policy CR1 (Definition of Central Reading) which sets out that retail development will take place within the designated Primary Shopping Area of the Town Centre and other main town centre uses should be located within the Central Core area. Policy CR4 (Leisure, Culture and Tourism in Central Reading) requires that the Central Core of the town centre will be the prime focus for major leisure, cultural and tourism development. The policy goes on to state that uses that would attract a wide range of people into the centre will be encouraged together with innovative solutions to leisure provision which make best use of available (often limited) site area.
- 6.7 Notwithstanding the above, the Local Plan contains a number of more detailed policies in terms of the appropriate locations and function of particular land uses within the town centre which must also be considered.

Retail Uses

- 6.8 The existing application site contains nine retail units (E(a) shop use class), consisting of six units fronting Queen Victoria Street, a single larger unit on corner of Queen Victoria Street and Friar Street and two units fronting Friar Street. The proposals seek to refurbish the existing frontage units and add new retail units to the rear of the site to increase the overall number of units within the site to sixteen in a mix of E(a) shop use and E(b) sale of food and drink use. The final occupiers of each of the units is not yet known so the applicant is seeking a flexible use between the two use types.
- 6.9 Both Queen Victoria Street and Friar Street form part of 'Primary Frontages in Central Reading'. In such locations Policy CR7 (Primary Frontages in Central Reading) require that uses on the ground floor along the designated primary frontages should be within town centre use classes unless it would be an entrance to upper floors. Both the proposed E(a) shop and E(b) sale of food and drink are town centre uses. The policy also requires that developments to active frontages should also provide an active building frontage with a display window or glazed frontage at ground floor level to contribute to the vibrancy of the town centre and provide visual interest. The proposals would accord with this requirement with active shopfronts to be retained to all frontage units and this is to be secured by way of condition.
- 6.10 However, Policy CR7 also goes on to state that proposals that would result in the loss of A1 (now use class E a - shop) or A2 (now E c - financial and professional services) uses such that the proportion of the length of frontage within the street under these uses falls below 50% will not be permitted unless the proposals introduce a use that makes a positive contribution to the overall diversity of the centre. This is to maintain the retail character of the town centre. As referred to above a mix of E(a) shop and E(b) sale of food and drink uses is proposed but the final occupiers of the units within the site are not yet known and as such the Applicant is seeking a flexible use between the two. Therefore, in accordance with Policy CR7 and in order to ensure the retail character of the centre is maintained, it is important to ensure that the proposed flexible use would not result in a situation where the number of E a) shop and E c) units with the frontage falling below the policy requirement.
- 6.11 The percentage of units within a frontage relates to the length of the frontage within the street as whole and not just within the application site. In terms of Queen Victoria Street, the frontage length covers both sides of Queen Victoria Street and currently 77.6% of the frontage is within an A1/A2 use which is in excess of the minimum 50% required by Policy CR7. Officers have calculated that even if all the units to Queen Victoria Street within the development were to be brought forward as class E (b) (sale of food and drink), then the length of frontage within use class E (a) (shop) and E (c) (professional and financial services) would be 53% and therefore still exceed the policy requirement. In the unlikely event that this scenario came forward, it is acknowledged that this would limit flexibility for the rest of

the street in terms of change of use; however, the application can only be considered based upon the current situation and its individual planning merits, where there would be no policy conflict. Therefore, the principle of the proposed flexible use E (a) and E (b) use is considered acceptable for the Queen Victoria Street frontage and there would be no policy justification to limit the number of E (b) units within this frontage.

- 6.12 The development includes two units within the Friar Street 'Primary Frontage'. This frontage, as a whole, is already below the required level of provision of E (a) and E (c) uses required by Policy CR7 at 34%. Therefore, occupation of these two units for sale of food and drink (Class E b) would result in further detriment to the retail character of the town centre and it is considered reasonable and necessary to secure that these two units are occupied in an E (a) shop use only by way of condition.
- 6.13 Five new retail units are proposed to the rear of the site within the public square. These units do not form part of an active frontage and therefore there is no policy objection to the principle of a flexible E a) (shop) and E b) (sale of food and drink use) in this location.
- 6.14 Policy CR8 (Small Shop Units in Central Reading) sets out that small shop units (less than 75m²) make an important contribution to the diversity of the centre such as those found to Queen Victoria Street and that amalgamation of individual shop fronts will not be permitted. The application sets out that the retail units are to be targeted at small businesses, boutiques and independent retailers and fifteen of the sixteen proposed retail units would be less than 75m² in size. The single unit that exceeds 75m² (proposed unit 11 at no. 15 Queen Victoria Street) is an existing unit which exceeds this size parameter due its significant depth compared to the other units, however its frontage when viewed from the street is reflective of the appearance of the other small shop units.
- 6.15 It is proposed to subdivide an existing large unit on the corner of Queen Victoria Street and Friar Street (no.1-3 Queen Victoria Street and 148 Friar Street) to create three units of less than 75m². The retention of existing small shop units and addition of new small shop units is considered to enhance the diversity of the town centre as a whole and the distinctive character of Queen Victoria Street in accordance with Policy CR8 and is considered a welcome benefit of the scheme.

Public Square

- 6.16 The proposed development is centred around provision of a 184sqm open air public square to the rear of the site. It is proposed that the square would be accessed via two passageways that would be formed through the existing terrace of buildings, one from Queen Victoria Street and one from Friar Street. The Queen Victoria Street passageway is located in the position of an existing double door width access to a stairway leading to the upper floors of the building whilst the passageway from Friar Street would be positioned

between the two existing retail units. As such the creation of the passageways would not result in loss of retail units of shop frontage to either street in accordance with Policy CR7.



Proposed ground floor layout

- 6.17 It is proposed that the rear of the existing retail units to both Queen Victoria Street and Friar Street would open out on to the square, whilst the five new units proposed to the south and west edges of the square would also front on to the square. The application sets out that the square is proposed to be a multi-functional public space incorporating landscaping that will operate as outdoor seating space associated with the retail units and for general public rest and relaxation. It is proposed that the space will be adaptable for multiple public events and uses, such as hosting outdoor markets, screening of sports events, music, entertainment and other cultural events.



Proposed visual from within square

- 6.18 The principle of the creation of the public square in a currently inaccessible and therefore underutilised part of the town centre is considered to align with the intentions of Policy CR2 (Design in Central Reading) and Policy CR3 (Public Realm in Central Reading) which states that new development should make a positive contribution towards the quality of the public realm of the central area. In particular the policy seeks to encourage ‘imaginative uses of open space and the public realm which contribute to the offer of the centre’ and that ‘new open spaces should be of a size and shape to be flexible enough to accommodate such uses with the provision of planting and landscaping expected to create high quality spaces’. The policy also goes on to state that public realm areas should ‘conserve and enhance the historic environment and the significance of heritage assets and their setting and that opportunities for areas of public realm to provided improved access to a visibility for heritage assets’. The proposals would also comply with Policy EN9 (Provision of Open Space) which seeks that all new development should make provision for appropriate open space based upon the needs of the development.
- 6.19 More detailed matters in terms of the management of the square and its acceptability in terms of heritage matters will be assessed below.

Apart-Hotel Use

- 6.20 The proposals include creation of 41 apart-hotel units (C1 use class) by way of conversion of the existing office space (E g i use class) to the upper floors of both the Queen Victoria Street and Friar Street buildings and a three-storey rear extension.

- 6.21 The proposed loss of office accommodation must be considered against Policy EM3 (Loss of Employment Land) which states that in locations such as the application site which are outside of the Core Employment Areas, loss of employment land will be assessed against a range of criteria including accessibility (including access to the strategic road network), viability of continued use as employment and impact on character and amenity of the area, surplus of similar accommodation elsewhere, need for other uses and whether or not the proposals would result in a piecemeal loss of employment land where there is scope for a more comprehensive approach.
- 6.22 Whilst the site is located conveniently for access to public transport, it is clear that other purpose-built office sites outside of the town centre benefit from more convenient access to the strategic road network.
- 6.23 Supporting information submitted with the application sets out that the Applicant has owned the site for five years and that attempts to let the accommodation for continued use of the site for employment uses has been unsuccessful. Reasons given for this are there is a better-quality purpose-built accommodation available within the Borough, including within the town centre, poor access within the buildings (not DDA compliant), and the convoluted layout of the buildings which is not conducive to providing a modern open plan office environment.
- 6.24 The proposals provide for a comprehensive approach to redevelopment of significant site of heritage importance within the town centre and therefore there is no objection to the loss of employment land in this location which is considered acceptable in the context of Policy EM3.
- 6.25 In terms of the proposed apart-hotel use (C1 use class), the principle of this type of accommodation would align with Policy CR6 (Living in the Centre) which encourages new residential accommodation in the town centre. The policy also requires that for proposals for serviced apartments or apart-hotels which fall outside of the C3 (dwellinghouse) use class, they will be located within the central core area and occupation restricted to ensure they are used on a short-stay basis only.
- 6.26 As with similar proposals, occupation of the apart hotel units on a short stay basis only would be secured by way of a section 106 legal agreement to secure the following terms:
- no Apartment shall be used for any use other than as a C1 Use
 - no Apartment shall be used or occupied as a residential dwelling or dwelling-house (C3 Use)
 - not to let or licence for occupation or permit or suffer occupation of any of the Apartments for a continuous period of more than 3 months to the same occupier or occupiers
 - other than those Customers staying in accordance with the above, not to let or licence for occupation or permit or suffer occupation of any

Apartment for a continuous period for more than 3 months to the same Customer or Customers

- not to require Customers of any Apartment to agree to any minimum period of occupation (of whatever duration)
- to provide to the Council within 14 days of written request evidence regarding the use or occupation of the Apartments or any of them

6.27 Overall, the principle of the development and combination of uses proposed is considered to be acceptable but this is subject to more detailed assessment of the development and proposed functions against other relevant planning policies and materials considerations below.

Layout, Character and Heritage

6.28 This report covers both the planning application (ref. 210223FUL) for the proposed development but also the listed building consent application (210224LBC) for the associated works to the listed buildings.

6.29 Policy EN1 (Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment) states that heritage assets, including their settings will be protected and where possible enhanced. The policy goes on to state that proposals should seek to avoid harm to heritage assets in the first instance but that any harm identified would require clear and convincing justification, usually in the form of public benefits. The policy also states that in respect of listed buildings development proposals should not have an adverse impact on those elements which contribute to their special character or historical interest. Policy EN6 (New Development in a Historic Context) seeks that in areas characterised by heritage assets the historic environment will inform and shape new development.

6.30 In terms of general design approach, Policies CC7 (Design and the Public Realm) and CR2 (Design in Central Reading) seek that all development must be of high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area within which it is located. Both Policies CR2 and also CR3 (Public Realm in Central Reading) encourage provision of public spaces, use of high-quality materials, provision of soft landscaping and green roofs and that development should also conserve and enhance the historic environment.

Historic Context

6.31 No.s 1-15 Queen Victoria Street, and the corner building no. 148 Friar Street, form part of a larger Grade II listed terrace of buildings which span the length of both sides of Queen Victoria Street. The buildings were constructed around 1900-1903 as a single commercial terrace and are of significant architectural merit and incorporate a red brick and terracotta frontage, Dutch and Flemish style gables, granite pilasters and original windows. Queen Victoria Street forms a grand and prominent entrance way to the town centre for residents and visitors arriving into town from the train station.

- 6.32 The applications are accompanied by a detailed heritage statement which notes that although the frontages of the buildings are generally complete, above ground floor they are in of poor structural condition with key architectural detailing such as the 12 roof gables and brick terracotta dressing in need of significant repair. The ground floor shopfronts, signs and lights are predominantly modern and detract from the significance of the terrace.
- 6.33 No. 148 Friar Street incorporates a double-height shopfront which whilst evident in historic photographs dating back to 1908, the current double height shopfront is in fact in modern timber infilling from the 1950s-60s and lacks the detailing of the original shopfront. The current modern addition is considered to detract from the architectural interest of the frontage.



No.s 1-15 Queen Victoria Street and 148 Friar Street

- 6.34 The heritage statement notes that rear elevations of the listed buildings within the site have been heavily altered and now demonstrate a more basic design of limited architectural merit with blank brick elevations, modern windows and a utilitarian fire escape walkway. Original rear chimneystacks have been removed and the roofs altered with new skylights and vents following the removal of the dormer windows. Nonetheless, the rear of the elevation retains some heritage value, albeit to a significantly lesser degree than the front. The rear elevation of no.15 Queen Victoria Street retains more of its original rear composition, with attractive brick-faced dormer windows.
- 6.35 Internally, nos. 1-3 Queen Victoria Street and 148 Friar Street have been heavily altered with all partitions being late 20th Century associated with the office use of the buildings. The heritage assessment asserts that the interiors of this part of the terrace are of no particular heritage value.
- 6.36 Elsewhere within the terrace the basement and ground floors of no.s 5-15 Queen Victoria Street are also heavily altered albeit some elements of the original interiors survive to the upper floors. This is typically reflected in the identification of original room proportions and circulation with party walls, original staircases (present within no. 5 and 9), chimney breasts and some original partitions.

- 6.37 No. 147 Friar Street also forms part of the application site. This building is Grade II listed as well but is of different, white rendered, appearance and designation to the other buildings within the application site. The building dates from the early 1880s and features a double height cast iron colonnade shopfront which is specifically mentioned in the buildings listing description. However, modern elements of the frontage now detract from the significance of the building including the 20th Century shopfront with splayed frontage which divides the shopfront into two units and boarding over the fascia's which obscures the full height character and the original grandeur of the building.



No. 147 Friar Street

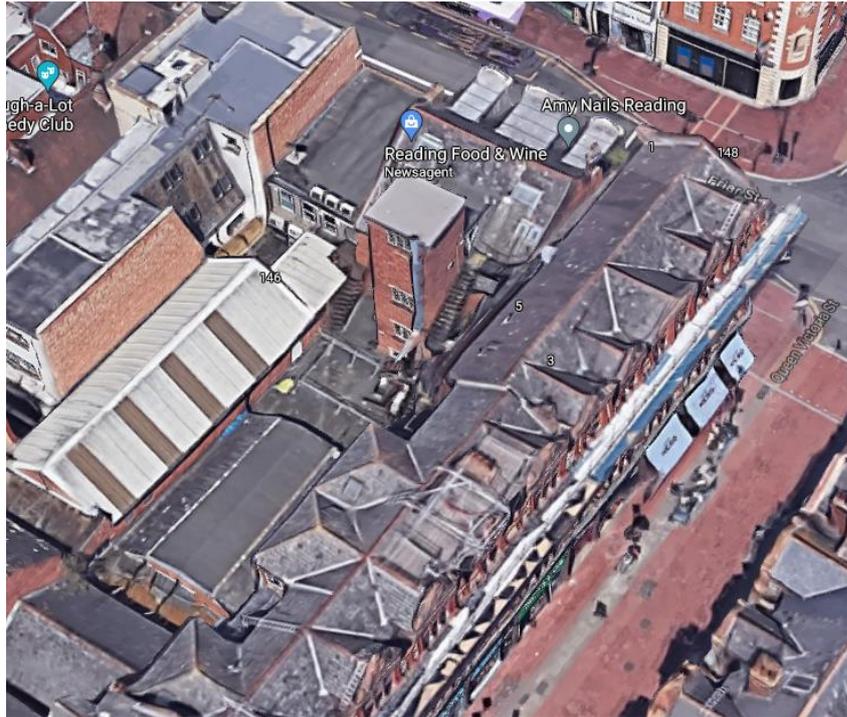
- 6.38 No. 147 has also been heavily altered to the rear with the most notable change being the addition of a rear stair and lift core dating from the 1930s. The interior of no. 147 has been heavily altered and is now in a deteriorating condition but nonetheless, some late 19th Century elements of the interior survive, including chimney breasts still visible on flank walls and a small number of partitions which retain portions of lath and plaster.
- 6.39 There is also further built form to the rear of both Queen Victoria Street and Friar Street within the application site in the form of a variety of extensions and outbuildings, either by virtue of attachment (i.e. they are connected to the listed buildings) or curtilage location are considered to form part of the listed buildings.
- 6.40 The heritage statement notes that review of historic plans from 1895 indicates that most of these structures have historic links to 147 Friar Street from this building's former use as a furniture store. To the southern end of

the site is a three-storey building formerly in use as a store and a two-storey building formerly in use as a cabinet factory. While contributing to the significance of 147 Friar Street as former ancillary buildings and being broadly contributory to the setting of the Queen Victoria Street terrace, the heritage statement concludes that the outbuildings are not of any special interest in their own right. Other built form to the rear of the site is more modern, heavily altered and is considered to possess either a neutral or negative role in the heritage values of the listed buildings. The interiors of the outbuilding are limited and also not considered to be of historic value.

- 6.41 Officers and the Council's Conservation and Urban Design Officer concur with the overall findings of the heritage statement in terms of the assessment of the heritage significance of the existing buildings.

Demolition and Internal Alterations

- 6.42 To facilitate the proposed development, both internal and external demolition works to the listed buildings are proposed. It is sought to demolish the outbuildings and extensions to the rear of the site in order to open up the space to provide the proposed public square, whilst internal alterations to the ground and upper floors of the buildings are proposed in the refurbishment of the retail units and to convert the upper floor accommodation to the new apart-hotel use.
- 6.43 The proposed demolition works to the rear include two outbuildings dating from the 19th Century which were former store and cabinet factory buildings. Whilst not considered to be of any specialist interest in their own right, these buildings do contribute, to a limited extent, to the significance of no. 147 as former ancillary structures. The submitted heritage statement concludes that the loss of these structures, due to their limited contribution to the significance of the listed terraces of buildings, would not result in any material harm, noting that the significance of the buildings comes largely from the street frontage elevations and not the rear. Officers' opinion is that the loss of the outbuilding would result in some, albeit minor, harm to the significance of the listed building. The extent of any harm to the listed buildings will be concluded at the end of this section of the report.



Aerial view of existing site showing outbuildings and extensions to rear to be demolished (above) and existing and proposed site plan layouts (below)



6.44 Various internal alterations to the buildings are proposed. These have been covered in detail within the submitted heritage statement and a schedule of works. The interiors of the listed buildings are considered to be of varying levels of heritage significance. The works proposed to the different parts of the buildings is assessed below

No. 147 Friar Street:

6.45 The internal layout of no. 147 Friar Street, which is the building of contrasting appearance to the rest of the application buildings, has been heavily altered internally to all floors and is now predominantly open plan and where there are partitions, these are modern additions. The main change proposed is removal of a lift and staircase core which projects from the rear of the building which are non-original features, and 1930s additions to the

building. Removal of this core would facilitate reinstatement of a flush rear building line as per the original layout.

- 6.46 At basement level existing modern partitions would be replaced with new partitions to provide ancillary facilities for the retail units above. At ground floor level it is proposed to remove the modern splayed shopfront layout to the two existing retail units and replace this with two rectangular commercial shaped commercial units. These changes would not result in any loss of original fabric and would not affect the significance of the building. The wider external works proposed to the shopfronts are discussed later in this report.
- 6.47 No. 147 incorporates a double height shop front unit which whilst heavily altered in appearance is an original layout. The proposals would retain this with one of the retail units to the ground floor having stair access to the first floor. The rest of the upper floors would form part of the apart-hotel and it is proposed to remove the modern open plan layout and reinstate a compartmentalised arrangement to facilitate this which would have been the original layout of the building. Although limited to this building, where present and possible, original historic fabric is retained such chimney breasts to flank walls to all floors and exposed roof trusses and timbers to the third floor.
- 6.48 Whilst the loss of the 1930s lift and stair core would result in some limited impact on the significance of the Grade II listed building, this is a non-original addition and any harm to significance is considered to be minor. In terms of the listed building this includes a number of enhancements with reinstatement of an appropriate rear elevation, and the introduction of a compartmentalised internal arrangement which is more appropriate in comparison to the existing open plan layout.

No.s 1-3 Queen Victoria Street and 148 Friar Street:

- 6.49 These buildings form the corner units within the site and similar to no. 147, this part of the listed terrace has been almost entirely stripped of partitions, providing an open plan layout. Original party walls have been removed and only one staircase (within no.3) survives. This staircase has been replaced at lower floors but retains some elements of early 20th Century fabric to the upper floors.
- 6.50 Proposals to these buildings involve the removal of existing modern partitions and provision of 3 retail units to ground floor and apart-hotel units to the upper floors. While the removal of the staircase would result in the loss of some historic fabric, given the extent of internal changes to this part of the building and to the staircase itself, any effect on the building's plan form, legibility and significance would be limited and would not adversely affect the heritage significance of the listed building.

5-15 Queen Victoria Street:

- 6.51 The basement and ground floor to the six retail units have been subject to significant alteration including loss of party walls, new partition walls and replacement of staircases which have eroded much of the historic legibility. To these floors, the applications propose removal of modern shop fittings and partitions, retention of staircases and where present, retention of existing party and spine walls. The proposals are considered to preserve key elements of the plan form and character of the building to these floors.
- 6.52 The upper floors to this part of the terrace retain more of its original compartmentation by way of party walls, original room proportions, staircases and plan form which contribute to the significance of the listed building and these features are sought to be retained where possible. However, some loss of original fabric is proposed in order to facilitate a functional layout for the apart-hotel use. The changes proposed to the upper floors includes:
- There are two original staircases present to this part of the building within no.s 5 and 9. Whilst the proposals retain the staircase to no.5, that to no. 9 is to be removed to facilitate a functional layout to the apart-hotel units. Whilst staircases are also to be removed within no.s 7 and 13 these are either modern additions or heavily altered.
 - The proposals would retain the existing party walls between the formerly separate 6 units, thus preserving historic fabric and plan form and legibility. Where there are some existing openings present within the party walls at it proposed to infill reinstating and reinforcing the building's lost element of plan form and circulation.
 - Where present, original historic spine walls that divide the front and rear rooms on upper levels are retained. Some new door openings are proposed within the spine walls resulting in minor loss of associated historic fabric. This impact is considered to be minimal and would not be sufficient to result in harm to the significance of the building and would retain the key elements of plan form and preserve a sense of historic legibility within the spaces.
 - All internal projecting chimney breasts are to be retained
- 6.53 The works proposed above mainly seek to retain, and in some instances enhance, the original fabric of the listed building. Where loss of fabric is proposed, Officers conclude this would result in minor harm to the significance of the Grade II listed building, mainly as a result of changes to plan form and the loss of an original staircase.
- 6.54 Conditions are recommended to secure a detailed schedule of all internal finishes and treatments, details of secondary glazing, internal partitions and positions of flues, vents and internal services.

Rear Extensions and Provision of Public Square

- 6.55 The demolition of structures to the rear of the site discussed above would facilitate the proposed addition of a three-storey rear extension to the Queen Victoria Street buildings and creation of the open-air space to form the proposed public square. Further part two / part single storey rear extensions are proposed around the south and west edges of the square.
- 6.56 The proposed three-storey extension would be 5m in depth and span the rear elevations of no.s 1 to 13 Queen Victoria Street and incorporate a 'mansard' roof containing roof space accommodation. The extension would not adjoin the rear of no. 15 which retains much more of its original rear composition and form to the rear elevation than the other parts of the terrace. The scale of the extension would be subservient and set below the ridge height of the host terrace. Proposed materials and design would reflect a simplified version of the principle frontages of the host listed building utilising red brick façade, slate roof, stone window surrounds and string course and use of white painted timber sash windows. A series of modest rear flat roof lead dormers are also proposed to the extension. The north end of the extension to the rear of no.s 1-3 when the site connects with no.148 Friar Street would take the form of a three-storey glazed link element providing a neutral and subservient link as the building turns the corner and new lift/stair core for access to the apart-hotel. The rear elevation of no. 147 would be restored with a similar red brick façade brick work and timber sash windows with stone detailing following the proposed removal of the 1930s rear stair/lift core extension. Two similar modest lead dormers are also proposed to the rear roof space of no. 147.



Proposed visual of square and rear extensions

- 6.57 At ground floor level the proposed rear addition would form small extensions to the existing retail units and create secondary shop fronts facing onto the rear square. The ground floor façade of the rear extension would project only 3.1m creating a 1.9m deep covered area to the rear of the shopfronts supported by square stone-faced columns creating a small colonnade. The proposed rear shop fronts would relate - in terms of proportions and materiality - to the original shopfront forms found on the Queen Victoria Street frontage. This is discussed in more detail later in this report when assessing the proposed changes to primary shopfronts to Queen Victoria Street which reflect those also proposed to the rear.
- 6.58 The part two, part single storey extension that would wrap around the south and west side of the square incorporates five additional retail units, three at ground floor and two at first floor level. The extension would be sympathetic in design and materiality incorporating flat and pitched roof elements with materials to reflect that to the larger three storey part the extension. The first-floor units would be served by first floor terrace area overlooking the square with black metal rail balustrade to edges and stair access leading up from the north west corner of the square. A green roof is proposed to the flat roof part of the part two / part single storey extensions. This is proposed as a biodiversity enhancement and would not be publicly accessible. Materials samples for the proposed extensions would be secured by way of condition.



Proposed visual of square and rear extensions

- 6.59 The subservient nature of the extensions and proposed sympathetic use of materials are considered to integrate satisfactorily with the host terrace. Whilst acknowledged to be of rudimentary design and limited heritage

significance, the existing main rear elevation of Queen Victoria Street will be retained and integrated into the interior of the development providing the main circulation corridor within the apart-hotel with window openings converted to door openings. The extensions do not alter the rear of no.15 which is the primary element of heritage significance to the rear of the site. Whilst the proposals would obstruct some view of the rear of the rear of no.15, the extensions are considered to result in an enhancement to the character and appearance of the rear of the site.

- 6.60 The proposed public square to the rear would provide an exciting new, intimate area of open-air public realm in the town centre with additional covered space under the first-floor element of the proposed rear extension. The square paving and hard landscaping will be stone setts that are durable and hard wearing and will also complement the brick construction of the main building and reflect the stone detailing in the facades, as well as reflecting that found on Queen Victoria Street, so there would be a continuity of paving into this new public space. Soft landscaping will be provided within the square in the form of a series of timber framed planters, whilst informal and movable benches and bistro-style seating and tables would serve the surrounding retail units. Detailed hard and soft landscaping details would be secured by way of condition.
- 6.61 Pedestrian access to the square will be gained from new gated passageways to be created from both Queen Victoria Street. The proposed passageways and creation of open-air square would create permeability through the site where this does not currently exist and is considered positive benefit of the development which adheres to the requirements of Policy CR3 (Public Realm in Central Reading) in terms of imaginative creation of open space which improves access to and visibility of a significant heritage asset within the town centre.

Alterations to shop fronts and works to upper façade of the Queen Victoria Street and Friar Street Frontages

- 6.62 As referred to above, the principle source of significance to the listed building relates to the decorative frontages of the upper floor parts of the buildings, which whilst largely complete in form are in poor condition and currently secured by scaffolding on site. The ground floor shopfronts have all been significantly altered and consist of a wide variety of modern additions which detract from the building's significance.
- 6.63. The applications propose to carry out significant restoration work to all the ground floor shop fronts within the site. It is proposed to reinstate the original shopfront layouts and rhythm utilising the shopfront spacing created by the existing granite pilasters that divide the shopfronts with the intention to create a uniform appearance to the shopfronts across the site and provide a template approach for the rest of Queen Victoria Street and the wider area.

6.64 The Applicant's proposed design for the new shopfronts has been informed by historical photographs dating back to 1939 which are considered to show the shopfronts that would generally have been installed from when the building was originally built. The photos evidence that the shops were generally a single bay, with the larger units being on either end of the terrace where the corners may have incorporated multiple bays. The shopfronts generally had a single entrance door, and this was positioned to one side of the repeated bay, doors were set back from the pavement, creating a recessed entrance whilst glazing was mainly one large panel with decoration internally depending on the shop. The shopfronts were all framed by a black tiled plinth/stall riser and fascia board signage above the shop front positioned below the decorative moulding and 1st floor level terracotta plinth. Whilst difficult to evidence the original colouring of the shopfront materials, this appears to be dark and consistent across the terrace.

6.65 The proposed shopfronts would largely seek to reinstate this design incorporating a single large glazing panel with slim black painted timber frame, solid black timber panel above, black hardwood sill and single side entrance door with smaller glazing panel above. A black tiled plinth/stall riser is proposed with fascia signage below the existing first floor level terracotta plinth. The main element not proposed to be replicated within the proposed design is the recessed doorway due to security reasons, given this would create a hidden recess that cannot be so easily monitored by CCTV. The proposed shopfront design would be applied to the six existing shop fronts to Queen Victoria Street whilst an adapted version would be applied to accommodate the larger units on the corner with Friar Street (no.s 1-3 Queen Victoria Street and 148 Friar Street). Each unit would display street numbering above the door in a consistent font. The proposed restoration of the shop fronts back to close to their original appearance and application of this in a uniform manner to all the units within the application site, is considered to be an enhancement to the listed building and street-scene and significant benefit of the proposed development.



Proposed Queen Victoria Street shop front design and entrance gates to rear square



Proposed Queen Victoria Street long elevation showing uniform shopfronts

- 6.66 The double door width passageway entrance to the rear square from Queen Victoria Street would be created at the point of an existing entrance to the upper floors of the building between nos 3 and 5. Decorative black metal full height and inward opening gates would sit flush with the ground floor frontage and would reflect the shopfronts either side with solid black timber panel above and a fascia board for signage for the apart-hotel above this.



Proposed visual looking west from Friar Street

- 6.67 Historic photographs from 1939 have also been used for the shop front design for nos 147 and 148 Friar Street which differ in appearance to those to Queen Victoria Street. No. 148 Friar Street forms part of the corner unit of the Queen Victoria Street terrace and has a different shopfront arrangement with double height glazing present. The heritage statement concludes that this is the original arrangement with double height glazing also present to the southern corner unit of the terrace, however the current existing timber

panel shop front design at first floor is a modern addition and of poor quality which is considered to detract from character and significance of the listed building. In this instance, provision of a first-floor shop front here would not work with the proposed apart-hotel use of the building. Instead it is proposed to alter the first floor of façade of no. 148 to reflect the second floor above and rest of the Queen Victoria Street terrace with two new timber windows surrounded by terracotta detailing. This is considered to be a significant improvement over the existing timber panel finish at first floor level and will result in an enhancement to this part of the listed building.

- 6.68 No. 147 Friar Street also incorporates a double height shopfront which it is proposed to retain. However, at ground floor level it is proposed to remove the existing modern symmetrical splayed shop front (focused around a central access point to two retail units) and reinstate an off-centre shopfront arrangement with shop fronts sitting flush to the street, as shown on the 1939 photographs, with two new entrance doors to the retail units from Friar Street. The shopfronts would incorporate traditional features such as that to Queen Victoria Street with slim timber framing, stall risers, timber doors and uniform numbering. The principal source of significance of the shop front are three original double height cast iron columns dating from the 1880s which would be retained in full. Set off-centre between the two shop fronts would be the Friar Street gated access point to the rear square incorporating similar full height black metal rail gates to those proposed to the Queen Victoria Street entrance. Officers are satisfied that the shopfront alterations to no. 147, in particular retention of the iron columns, would preserve the character of the listed buildings and enhance the character of the street-scene.



Proposed visual looking south from Friar Street showing frontage of no. 147 Friar Street

- 6.69 Extensive repair and restoration works are also proposed to the upper facades of the application buildings which whilst largely complete are in poor structural condition. This includes taking down and rebuilding each of the terracotta roof gables. A review of the structural condition of the gables has been submitted as part of the application, this concludes that the terracotta and supporting brickwork has failed in several locations partly due to previous in-situ repairs using inappropriate materials such as cement. The structural report and recommends that the gables are taken down and then put back and re-built.
- 6.70 A methodology for carrying out this repair and re-building works has been submitted. In short this would involve:
- Full photographic and dimensional survey of a gable and record all its details.
 - Demolish the gable by hand, brick by brick and store all the components in bags within the building to prevent loading out the scaffold.
 - Take down the gable to window or parapet level to try to expose all likely internal structural items such as lintels and timber joists. All demolishing works will be photographically recorded and logged.
 - Any damaged terracotta items that are salvageable will be carefully removed and repaired using reconstituted terracotta mortar with stainless steel wire reinforcing resin fixed in position.
 - Any terracotta units that are beyond repair will be carefully recorded prior to removal and then we will manufacture a mould and re-cast a new unit. A sample of the replacement units will be presented for approval prior to manufacture.
 - Once the rebuilding starts all bedding and pointing mortar will be natural hydraulic lime. Test a sample of the original mortar and endeavour to match this as closely as possible.
 - All re-building works will be photographically recorded.
- 6.71 Officers are satisfied with the proposed methodology for repair/replacement of the gables, subject to a number of detailed conditions to secure approval by the Local Planning Authority prior to starting works of the proposed mortar, samples of the replacement clay and slate tiles, details of the proposed replacement terracotta and a construction method statement including a timetable of works specifically for this aspect of the proposed development.



Terracotta roof gables

- 6.72 The existing gables are displaying signs of structural deterioration which are negatively affecting the appearance and special historic significance of the listed buildings. It is considered that the application demonstrates a satisfactory methodology for carrying out the proposed repair and restoration works in a manner which would preserve and enhance the historic character of the listed buildings and ensure they continue to contribute positively to the visual amenity of the surrounding area and the setting of the other buildings within the listed terraces along Queen Victoria Street.
- 6.73 The proposed façade works also include review and repair/replacement of all timber sash windows to the principal façade. A condition is recommended to secure a schedule of works in this respect to include details and materials specifications for all repair and replacement works.
- 6.74 The proposed repair and restoration works to the upper facades of the building are considered to contribute to the preservation and enhancement of the listed buildings and their significance and to be a further significant benefit of the proposed development.
- 6.75 In overall terms the proposed works to the listed buildings, including demolition of modern elements to the rear, restoration of uniform shop fronts, repair and restoration of the upper facades of the building frontages, reinstatement of internal compartmentalised layouts, re-use of and improving public access and visibility of the listed buildings are considered to represent works which would both preserve and enhance the significance of the listed buildings and the character of the surrounding area. Officers consider that these works would outweigh the few identified instances of minor harm to the significance of the listed buildings, including demolition of former store and factory outbuildings associated with no. 147 Friar Street and rear stair/lift core to the same building as well as loss of an original internal stair to no. 9 Queen Victoria Street. The minor harm identified is considered to amount to less than substantial harm in accordance with paragraph 196 of the NPPF which requires such harm to be balanced against public benefits of the scheme. The proposals are considered to result in a

significant positive benefit to the listed buildings and no net heritage harm is identified.

- 6.76 The proposals are considered to comply with Policies CC7, CR2, CR3, EN1 and EN6 and proposals are considered to achieve the statutory requirement to preserve the setting of the of the listed buildings in accordance with paragraph 200 of the NPPF.

Amenity

- 6.77 Policy CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity) seeks to protect the amenity of existing and future occupiers whilst Policy EN16 (Pollution and Water Resources) seeks to ensure development is not damaging to the environment and sensitive receptors by way of pollution. Policy EN15 (Air Quality) specifically seeks to protect existing occupiers from poor quality and EN17 (Noise Generating Equipment) from noise associated with plant equipment. Policy CR6 (Living in Central Reading) requires new residential type development within the defined Reading Central Area to demonstrate how issue of noise and other disturbance from town centre uses have been considered and where necessary mitigated.

Privacy, Daylight and Standard of Accommodation

- 6.78 The closest existing residential occupiers to the site and those most likely to be impacted by the development are the upper floors of no. 146 Friar Street (office use), the serviced apartments found to the upper floors of no. 17-27 Queen Victoria Street and flats found to the upper floor of the terrace of building on the opposite side of Queen Victoria Street. The scale and siting of the of the proposed rear extensions are such that there is not considered to be any adverse impact on these existing surrounding occupiers in terms of light or overbearing impacts. The position of windows to the proposed rear extension and existing building is also such that there would be no overlooking or loss of privacy to these surrounding occupiers from the proposed apart-hotel units.
- 6.78 Users of the proposed first floor level terrace/balcony proposed within the rear square would obtain some views of the rear of the serviced apartments to the upper floors of no. 17-27 Queen Victoria Street to the south, but this would be at a distance of 15m and at an oblique angle such that no adverse overlooking or loss of privacy is considered to result.
- 6.79 The proposed terrace area would be located much closer (2.8m) to the rear first and second floor windows of no. 146 Friar Street to the north (and 1m from the edge of the proposed stair up to the terrace) which are outside the application site and would face into the proposed square area. No. 146 is within the ownership of the applicant and whilst the upper floors have had historic planning permission for conversion from office to residential uses these have not been implemented. Nonetheless, given the close relationship conditions are recommended to require obscure glazing of the rear first and

second floor windows to no. 146 (both floors are dual aspect and well-lit from the front) and also to submit for approval and install a screen along the north edge of the stair up to the terrace prior to first occupation of the terrace area, to prevent any perception of overlooking and loss of privacy.

- 6.80 Second and third floor windows face into the courtyard from the west from the office accommodation found to the upper floors of no. 145 Friar Street, a building which is also under the ownership of the Applicant. Given the height of these windows and their use as office accommodation it is not considered that there would be any adverse overlooking or privacy impacts.
- 6.81 Users of the terrace would also obtain direct views of the rear windows of the apart-hotel units within the proposed development itself to the upper floors at a distance of 8m. Given the nature of the apart-hotel used proposed which would not be used for long term permanent accommodation, officers are satisfied that this would be an acceptable relationship in terms of privacy and overlooking matters.
- 6.82 The apart-hotel units proposed would be of a wide mixture of sizes ranging from 20sqm to 70sqm and providing a mix of studio, one- and two-bedroom units. There is no policy specification for mix of size of apart-hotel units but those proposed are considered to provide an acceptable range and standard of accommodation for apart-hotel style development. All units would be served by suitable outlook and daylighting. In terms of sun lighting to the square, the site is constrained by surrounding established built form with the majority of it being of historic significance. Officers acknowledge that sunlight penetration to the square will not be optimum. However, massing surrounding the site is generally lower to the south where the rear extensions and outbuildings to the rest of Queen Victoria Street are located. This orientation of the square is beneficial in terms of limiting the level of overshadowing into the site. The creation of a small public square in this location is a unique opportunity and officers consider that square would provide for a usable and attractive outdoor space.

Air Quality

- 6.83 The site is located within a busy part of the town centre and within a designated air quality management area (AQMA). A detailed air quality assessment and mitigation scheme has been submitted in support of the application. This has been reviewed by the Council's Environment Protection Officer, who is satisfied that the proposed use of mechanical ventilation would ensure that future occupiers of the apart-hotel units would not be subject to unacceptable air quality. The ventilation system would draw air in from the rear of the site reducing intrusions into the front façades of the listed buildings. A condition is recommended to secure submission and approval by the LPA of a detailed ventilation and filtration scheme to include future management and cleaning arrangements prior to commencement of the development.

- 6.84 In terms of air quality impacts as a result of the proposed development, this would primarily relate to potential increased emissions. However, the development is proposed as car free and given its sustainable location within the town centre, close to bus routes and the station, together with the limited additional taxi trips associated with an apart-hotel use (which would likely have longer occupancy period per room than a standard hotel) Environmental Protection Officers are satisfied that the proposals would not materially increase emissions and that no further air quality mitigation would be justified in this instance.

Odour

- 6.85 A flexible E a) shop and E b) sale of food and drink use is proposed to the proposed retail units and at this stage the future occupiers of the units are not known. The Applicant states that given the modest size of the retail units full cooking facilities are unlikely to be feasible with retail or modest café style uses most likely. However, units occupied under either use class could potentially involve the sale of food and drink to differing extents and therefore all units could have potential odour impacts. On this basis a condition is recommended to require that prior to occupation of any unit which would that involve food preparation or cooking an odour assessment and detailed odour management plan shall be submitted to and approved by the LPA and thereafter implemented in order to ensure that existing and future surrounding occupiers are not adversely impacted by kitchen odours.

Noise, Disturbance, Access and Security

- 6.86 The application site is located within a busy town centre location where noise and disturbance from surrounding activities has the potential to adversely affect the amenity of future occupiers of the proposed apart-hotel. Uses within the proposed development including the proposed retail units both under proposed use class E a) shop (potentially including premises that just heat up food and serve drink to take away) and E b) sale of food and drink together with use of the proposed public square also have potential to result in noise and disturbance to both existing surrounding occupiers and future occupiers of the proposed apart-hotel.
- 6.87 A detailed noise assessment and mitigation scheme has been submitted as part of the application which has assessed the noise impact of both existing surrounding uses on the proposed apart-hotel units but also the impact of the proposed development including plant equipment use of the proposed outdoor square.
- 6.88 Environmental Protection Officers have reviewed the submitted noise assessment and mitigation scheme and conclude that the mitigation measures proposed would ensure that future occupiers of the apart-hotel are not subject to unacceptable internal noise levels and that implementation of these measures should be secured prior to occupation of the development. The proposed mitigation measures include secondary glazing and installation

of new sound insulation between the ground floor retail and first floor apart-hotel units of the development, as well as installation of louvre panels to the plant enclosure surrounds to mitigate plant noise at source. Details and installation methodologies for all mitigation measures are to be secured by condition. A further condition is also recommended to secure that the noise level of all plant equipment is a least 10db below the background noise level for the site.

6.89 The application is accompanied by a draft management plan which outlines how the proposed retail units, courtyard square and apart-hotel would be operated. This sets out that the Applicant (Thackeray Estates, or indeed any successor company) would be responsible for the management of the buildings and square and an on-site management and security office is to be provided within the development. A 24/7 phone line will also be available to occupiers and users of the development so that any issues of concern can be raised quickly and addressed.

6.90 The following hours of use are sought for the retail units within the development occupied in either the proposed an E a) shop or E b) sale of food and drink uses:

Retail Use Class E(a) (shop):

- 07.00 - 23.00 Monday to Saturday
- 07.00 - 18.00 Sunday/Bank Holidays

Retail Use Class E(b) (Sale of food and drink):

- 07.00 - 23.30 Monday to Wednesday
- 07.00 - 00.30 Thursday to Saturday
- 10.00 - 22.30 Sunday/Bank Holiday

6.91 Environmental Protection Officers are satisfied that the proposed hours of use proposed are appropriate for town centre uses and in combination with the noise mitigation measures set out above, these are considered to suitably control the impact of the development in the context of the proposed occupiers of the apart-hotel and existing surrounding residential and other apart-hotel occupiers. Hours of use are to be controlled by condition. Conditions are proposed to secure use of the all the retail units within the development as either E a) shop or E b) sale of food and drink use only. It should be noted that the retail units are not proposed as pub/drinking establishment uses (Sui Generis use class) and that whilst the application indicates that a license for alcohol sales would be applied for (sought separately from RBC Licensing under standard licensing application procedures) this in the context of the proposed dining uses as is common for many E b) sale of food and drink (restaurant) uses within the town centre.

6.92 The draft management plan sets out that the square would be publicly accessible during daytime hours but that the two gated access passageways

would be locked at night time. A condition is recommended to ensure that the gates are locked and public access to the square is restricted in line with the proposed hours of use set out above (in line with those proposed for the E b) sale of food and drink use class). This would assist with noise mitigation in preventing the square from being accessed during late night time hours and also reduce security risks by preventing access to the enclosed square when the surrounding retail units are closed.

- 6.93 The courtyard square is proposed as a privately-owned extension to the public realm on Queen Victoria Street and Friar Street. It is proposed that it would primarily be used for passive enjoyment of the open space (general passing through, sitting/relaxation) and for outdoor dining incidental to the surrounding retail units. Conditions are recommended to secure submission and approval of plans confirming the extent of outdoor dining areas within the square that would be associated with the proposed E a) and E b) uses. However, the application also proposes that the square would be used for a variety of other uses and one-off events such as screening of sporting events, markets, music/drama performances, exhibitions and cultural activities. Environment Protection Officers recommend that a full operational management and maintenance plan for the square and events within it is secured by way of condition.
- 6.94 In terms of security matters the square would benefit from a good degree of natural surveillance with the apart hotel and retail units looking over the square whilst external lighting and CCTV surveillance within the square is also proposed. The gates to both passageway entrances from Queen Victoria Street and Friar Street would sit flush to the street so as to not create any hidden areas which could facilitate crime.
- 6.95 The apart-hotel would be accessed from a single-entry point at ground floor level from within the rear courtyard square by a dedicated stair and lift core. A reception would be located at first floor level within the apart-hotel. Entry to via the two gated passageways to the square would be controlled from the reception to allow residents access to the apart-hotel when the square is closed. Entry to the stair/lift core within the square would be via audio/visual link with the reception and then via electronic key fob once residents are 'checked in'.
- 6.96 Thames Valley Police's Crime Prevention Design Advisor (CPDA) is satisfied with the security and access control measures proposed for the development and raise no objection to the application subject to conditions to secure submission and approval of full access control strategy and CCTV strategy.
- 6.97 As described above the proposed apart-hotel entrance would be fully accessible to wheelchair users with level thresholds, automatic doors, lift access and the two new passageways through to the square providing level access. Internally level access is provided around the much of the apart-hotel however there are certain areas of each floor where this is not possible due to the historic internal layout, however the majority of rooms would be fully

accessible. Doors to the new shopfronts would comply with Part M of Buildings Regulations in terms of width for access by wheelchair users.

Other

- 6.98 Conditions are also recommended to secure detailed of noise and dust control during construction and vermin control measure for bin stores.
- 6.99 Officers are satisfied that the proposed development subject to the recommended conditions the proposed development would be able to operate in an acceptable manner in respect of access, security, odour, air quality and noise and disturbance matters. The proposals would accord with Policies CC8, EN15, EN16, EN17 and CR6.

Natural Environment

- 6.100 Policies CC7 (Design and the Public Realm) and CR2 (Design in Central Reading) seeks to ensure that development is of high design quality and includes landscaping, whilst Policy EN12 (Biodiversity and the Green Network) seeks that all development should provide a net gain for biodiversity.
- 6.101 The application site is currently entirely covered in built form and does not contain any vegetation, landscaping or biodiversity value. The proposed demolition of the outbuildings to the rear of the site and creation of courtyard square provides an opportunity to add greening to the site.
- 6.102 An indicative scheme of hard and soft landscaping principles has been submitted with the application which incorporates creation of a small 33sqm area of green roof to part of the proposed two storey rear extension along the southern boundary of the proposed square. Within the square itself it is proposed to provide stone setts paving, with large and moveable timber planters and areas of informal planting set around picnic style benches and bistro style tables. Screen planting is also proposed to the perimeter of the rear terrace area.
- 6.103 Whilst the proposed landscaping is relatively limited this is, as per the existing situation, restricted by the constraints of the site and level of built form. Whilst, the proposed green roof would be located to part of the new rear extensions, additions such as this and green walls to the exterior of the original parts of the listed buildings are not considered to be appropriate to their historic character of significance. Notwithstanding this, the proposed landscaping is a significant enhancement over the existing situation and considered to be a positive benefit of the development. The Natural Environment (Tree) Officer is satisfied with the landscaping principles that have been submitted and these are considered appropriate for the site.
- 6.104 The Council's Ecological Adviser has advised that the application buildings, given their location, are very unlikely to host bats and that in their opinion

the proposals would not adversely impact on protected species. The proposed green roof and landscape planting would provide for a net gain of biodiversity on the site.

- 6.105 Conditions are recommended to secure submission, approval and implementation of detailed plans, specifications and management arrangements for the proposed landscaping works including details of the proposed green roof. In respect of natural environment matters the proposals are considered to accord with Policies CC7, CR2 and EN12.

Transport

- 6.106 Policies TR3 (Access, Traffic and Highway related matters), TR1 (Achieving the Transport Strategy) and TR5 (Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging) seek to address access, traffic, highway and parking relates matters relating to development.
- 6.107 The site is in a central location in close proximity to Reading station to the north. This area is well served by rail and buses and is accessible on foot from a public of nearby public car parks.
- 6.108 Both Queen Victoria and Friar Street are heavily restricted with regards to access and parking. Queen Victoria Street is pedestrianised between 10am and 6pm, with loading permitted outside these hours. Friar Street is used by buses and has access restrictions in place during certain times of the day. There is a 24 hours restriction in place for Friar Street West Bound (except for buses and taxis) and time restricted access Friar Street Eastbound between 7am - 11am and 4pm - 7pm. All other vehicles are not permitted within these hours. A new section of a 'no stopping' red route has recently been introduced east along Friar Street. The new restriction mean vehicles will not be allowed to stop unless they are within a dedicated loading bay.
- 6.109 The existing site does not incorporate any on-site car parking provision, and none is proposed as part of the proposed development. In this location within the heart of the town centre, a car free development is considered to be acceptable and is not uncommon. However, the scheme must adequately consider how deliveries including waste collections, commercial deliveries are made to the site without on-site facilities.
- 6.110 A Delivery and Servicing plan has been submitted with the application which has been reviewed by the Council's Transport Officers (the Highway Authority). It is proposed that deliveries to the site for the new retail units will take place as per existing arrangements for the retained retail uses during the permitted loading hours of 6pm and 10am from Queen Victoria Street. Similar arrangements are proposed for the proposed apart-hotel will be limited daily laundry and weekly dry good deliveries. The plan also sets out that delivery and servicing can also take place safely from Friar Street and transport officers are satisfied that either arrangement is acceptable. However, the submitted Delivery and Servicing Plan does state that loading

is permitted on some sections of the double yellow lines, which is no longer the case with the restriction now having been replaced by a red route meaning loading/unloading is only permitted with the designated loading bays to Friar Street. Nonetheless a condition recommended to secure submission and approval of a final servicing and management plan and this matter can be addressed at this stage.

- 6.111 A secure bin store is located on the ground floor of the development with level access from the rear square. Refuse collection is proposed via private collector to take place from Queen Victoria Street within the specified times. The proposed private refuse collection arrangements are welcomed to avoid stationing of waste outside of the listed buildings. Details of this are to be secured by way of suitable obligations within a section 106 legal agreement.
- 6.112 Officers are satisfied that delivery/servicing activity associated with the proposed development can be undertaken in a safe, efficient and sustainable manner.
- 6.113 Cycle parking within the site will be provided for the apart-hotel element in accordance with the local standards of 1 space per 6 staff. A designated cycle store will be located in the basement for staff use which will be accessible by lift. Cycle parking is not currently indicated for retail staff which is required but there is considered to be sufficient capacity within the development to provide the required amount of cycle parking and the arrangements proposed are considered to be acceptable in principle. A condition is recommended, to secure submission and approval of detailed plans to confirm that the specification of the stands would meet the Council's adopted standards.
- 6.114 Given the busy and central location of the site there would be significant transport implications related to the construction of the proposed development. A detailed condition is recommended to secure submission, approval and implementation of the development in accordance with a Construction Method Statement. As well as demonstrating a commitment to ensuring the number of HGV movements are managed and controlled, the CMS must demonstrate that appropriate measures will be implemented to ensure the safety of pedestrians and cyclists around the construction site.
- 6.115 Transport Officers raise no objection to the proposed development and subject to the recommended planning conditions and section 106 obligations the proposals are considered to be acceptable in terms of transport related matters and to accord with Policies TR1, TR3 and TR5.

Sustainability

- 6.116 In accordance with Policy CC2 (Sustainable Design and Construction) the proposed development would be required to meet a BREEAM Excellent standard. Policy CC3 (Adaption to Climate Change) requires that all development incorporates measures to adapt to climate change and

commentary on this should also be provided. Policy CC4 (Decentralised Energy) seeks that all major developments consider the inclusion of decentralised energy provision unless it can be demonstrated that the scheme is not suitable, feasible or viable for this form of energy provision. Policy EN18 (Flood and Sustainable Drainage Systems) requires that all major category developments incorporate sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) and that surface run off should be no greater than the existing conditions on site.

- 6.117 The application is accompanied by a detailed sustainability assessment. In terms of BREEAM this sets out that given the application consists of a mixture of conversion and new build works as well as mix of use types it makes application of a BREEAM standard across the development has a whole impractical. Furthermore, the fact that the application buildings are Grade II listed further complicates matters given it is essential that works and intrusions to original fabric are kept to a minimum. The Council's Sustainable Design and Construction SPD (2019) reflects these findings noting that for mixed use developments a mix of standards may be appropriate and that applications affecting heritage assets may struggle to meet the policy standards. In this respect the application proposes that the new build extension element of the works could achieve a BREEAM standard of Very Good, whilst the work to convert the existing listed buildings would instead include a range of energy efficiency and sustainable design measures rather than seek a formal BREEAM certification. These matters are to be secured by conditions.
- 6.118 Whilst the above is a shortfall from the Policy/SPD target level, officers consider that the proposed development strikes an appropriate balance between preserving and enhancing the significance of the listed building and provision of sustainability measures. In this respect, the proposals incorporate two forms of decentralised energy provision in the form of an air source heat pump (ASHP) and photovoltaic panels which would be located to the roof space of the proposed new build rear extension. Details of these additions are to be secured by way of conditions and would comply with the requirements of Policy CC4.
- 6.119 The application also incorporates a range of other sustainability measures and measures help the development adapt to climate change which are considered to align with the intentions of Policy CC3. Proposed measures as follows:
- Reuse and refurbishment of existing buildings;
 - Reduction in CO2 emissions associated with the existing site by 79.5% through reduced energy demand and energy efficient building materials;
 - Energy efficient light fittings and daylight cut-offs;
 - Water efficient fixtures and fittings to achieve over 40% reduction over industry baseline;
 - Responsible sourcing of construction materials;

- Construction Waste Management Plan to minimise waste and recycle where possible;
- Operational waste management strategy;
- Minimisation of overheating through adequate insulation, efficient lighting, appropriate glazing materials and blinds and through thermal mass absorption; and
- Provision of a green roof within the development and soft landscaping for the public square.

6.120 In terms of sustainable drainage systems (SuDS), the application demonstrates that through the proposed addition of a green roof, the development would reduce the overall level of impermeable surfacing and therefore reduce the amount of surface run-off across the site relative to the existing situation. This is considered to be acceptable and would accord with the requirements of Policy EN18. Conditions are recommended to secure submission, approval and implementation of drainage strategy. Officers are satisfied that the proposed development is acceptable in terms of sustainability matters.

Other Matters

Archaeology

- 6.121 Policy EN2 (Areas of Archaeological Significance) seeks that developments proposals should identify and evaluate sites of archaeological significance and remains should be either preserved in situ or if not possible, excavated, investigated and recorded.
- 6.122 An archaeological assessment has been submitted with the application which has been reviewed by Berkshire Archaeology who are satisfied that this has been carried out to an appropriate standard. The assessment identifies that the site has potential to contain evidence for its occupation from the Medieval period as well as earlier Saxon remains which are of higher significance and suggests there is high potential for pockets of archaeological deposits to survive between the various later intrusions and works that have occurred on the site.
- 6.123 Berkshire Archaeology agree with the findings of the report which are that a programme of archaeological works will be required to investigate and inform appropriate mitigation for any archaeology identified. The investigation is likely to comprise a multi-phase programme of evaluation and further detailed excavation and must make allowances for post-excavation assessment, specialist analysis, publication and archiving, as well as public engagement if appropriate to the findings. There is also potential for unexpected finds on the site and this should be factored into construction timetabling. Appropriate mitigation and schedule of works is to be secured by way of a suitably worded condition to be submitted and agreed by the LPA in consultation with Berkshire Archaeology prior to commencement of development.

Community Infrastructure Levy

- 6.124 The Council's adopted Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule sets out that residential/hotel uses are liable for the levy but that the retail related uses are not. The proposed apart hotel accommodation consists of approximately 2000sqm of floor space in a mixture of conversion and new build development which would equate to a potential chargeable levy of £310,000. However, the documentation submitted with the application indicates that some of the existing floorspace within the building proposed to be converted as well as that to be demolished has been in use for a minimum period of 6 months within the last 3 years and as such this floor space could be used to off-set the new floor space in terms of what is chargeable. If this can be evidenced by the Applicant (as part of the post application CIL procedure) then the chargeable levy could be reduced accordingly.

Employment Skills and Training

- 6.125 Policy CC9 (Securing Infrastructure) seeks that development that would result in employment should provide mitigation in line with its impacts on labour and skills. As a major mixed-use proposal and in line with the adopted Employment Skills and Training SPD, the development would be expected to provide both a construction and end user phase employment and skills plan to demonstrate how it would benefit the local employment market. This would be secured by way of a section 106 legal agreement and would include provision for an alternate financial contribution towards local skills and training in the event that plans are not to be provided by the applicant/developer.

Equalities Impact

- 6.126 In determining this application 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 in the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to the particular 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 development.

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The proposed development is considered to be acceptable in the context of national and local planning policy and other material considerations as set out in this report, subject to the recommended conditions and section 106 obligations.
- 7.2 The development is considered to make imaginative and creative use of a currently underused and largely inaccessible part of the town centre. The

proposed mix of uses is considered to contribute positively to the interest and vitality of the town centre in a manner which would result in a number of significant enhancements to the character and significance of the host grade II listed buildings and improve accessibility and visibility of the heritage assets to the public. The application is considered to demonstrate that it could function safely, and, in a manner, which would not adversely impact on both existing and future occupiers within and surrounding the site and would not be detrimental in terms of transport impacts. The proposals would result in a net gain in terms of landscaping and biodiversity and incorporate a provision of decentralised energy provision.

7.3 Officers conclude that the proposals would result in an overall enhancement to the character and significance of the host listed buildings and a net gain in terms of heritage matters. Furthermore, even if the alterations proposed to the listed buildings to facilitate the development were found to result in any overall harm to the significance of the listed buildings this would amount to no more than less than substantial harm in accordance with paragraph 196 of the NPPF and it is considered that the public benefits of the development would significantly outweigh this harm.

7.4 The public benefits of the scheme are considered to include:

- Repair and reinstatement of the original historic frontages of the listed buildings and the architectural detailing that contributes to their significance;
- Visual improvements to the street-scene with uniform shop frontages, signage and lighting, respectful to the original historic frontages;
- Creation of publicly accessible square improving visibility and accessibility of the heritage assets
- Landscaping and biodiversity enhancements to a part of the town centre where there are currently none
- Provision of additional floorspace for retail and appropriate town centre uses in an accessible and sustainable location,
- Provision for small businesses and shops with appropriate-sized retail units
- Introduction of apart-hotel use, providing short-term let accommodation
- Additional employment opportunities both at construction and end user phase
- Provision of an enhanced public realm, providing opportunities for respite, relaxation and play, as well as community and public events;
- Provision of a town centre development that as a whole will attract visitors, shoppers and workers to this part of the town centre and contribute positively to the economy in the post-Covid19 recovery of the town centre.

RECOMMENDATION

201223FUL - GRANT full planning permission, subject to conditions and section 106 obligations set out in the recommendation box at the beginning of this report.

201224LBC - GRANT listed building consent, subject to the conditions set out in the recommendation box at the beginning of this report.

Case Officer: Matt Burns

8. Plans



Existing Basement Floor Plan (showing proposed demolition)



Existing Ground Floor Plan (showing proposed demolition)



Existing First Floor Plan (showing proposed demolition)



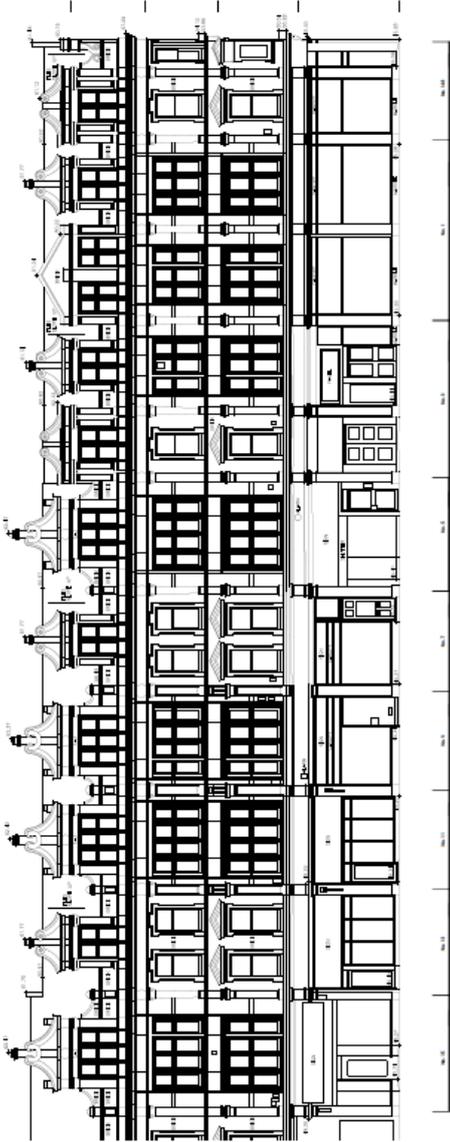
Existing Second Floor Plan (showing proposed demolition)



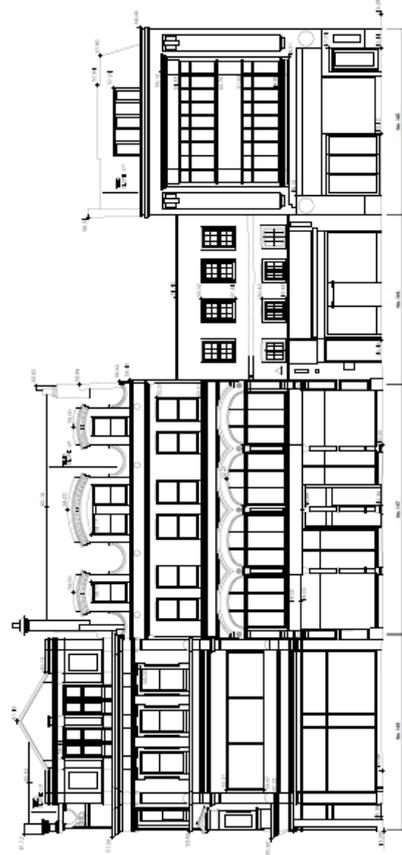
Existing Third Floor Plan (showing proposed demolition)



Existing Roof Plan (showing proposed demolition)

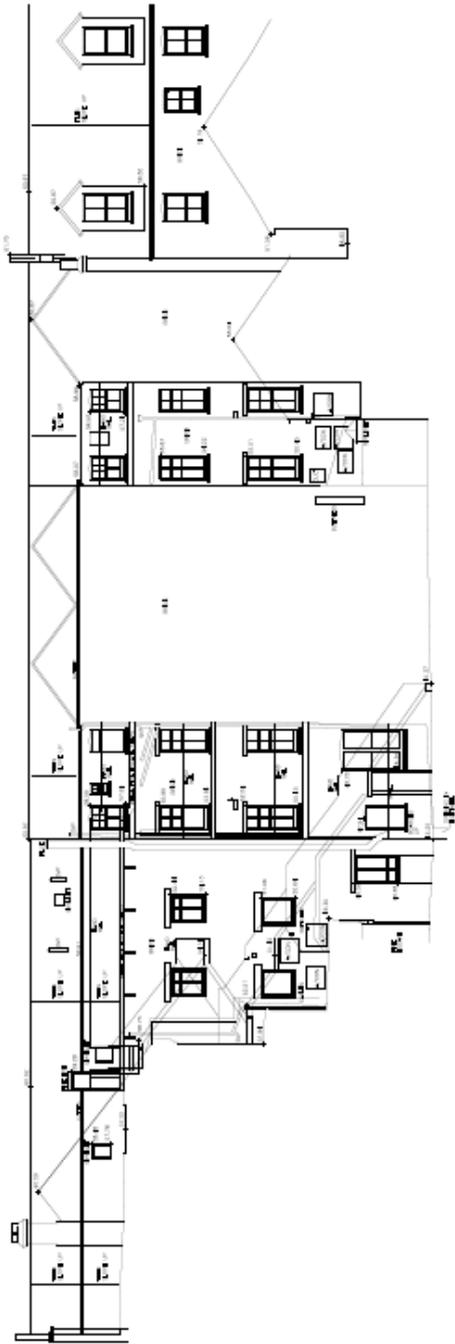


Queen Victoria Street Elevation - Ref. A

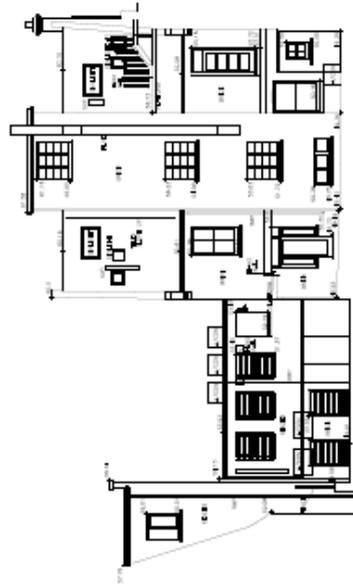


Friar Street Elevation - Ref. B

Existing Frontage Elevations



Rear Elevation - Ref: C



Rear Elevation - Ref: D

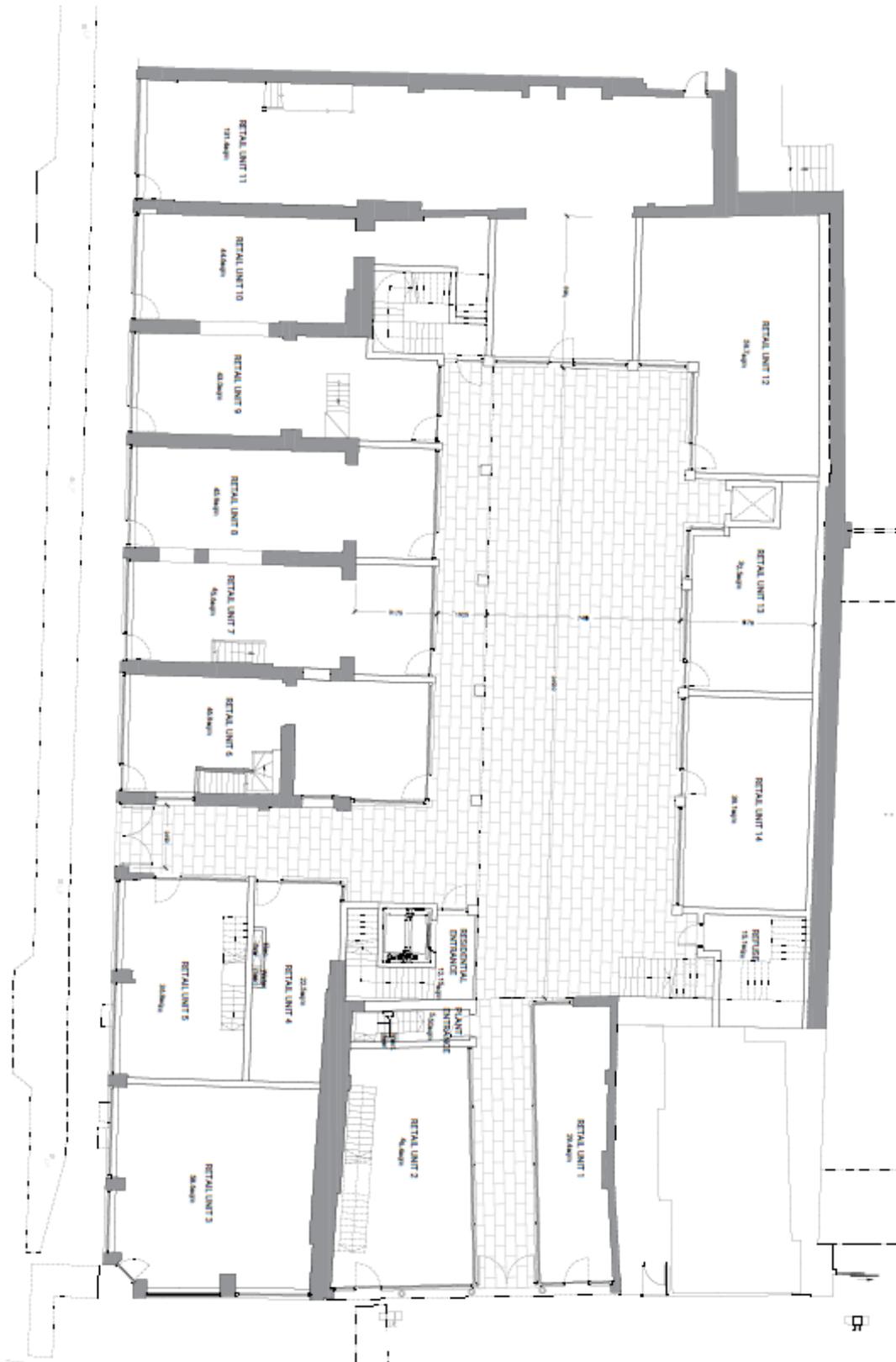
Existing Rear Elevations



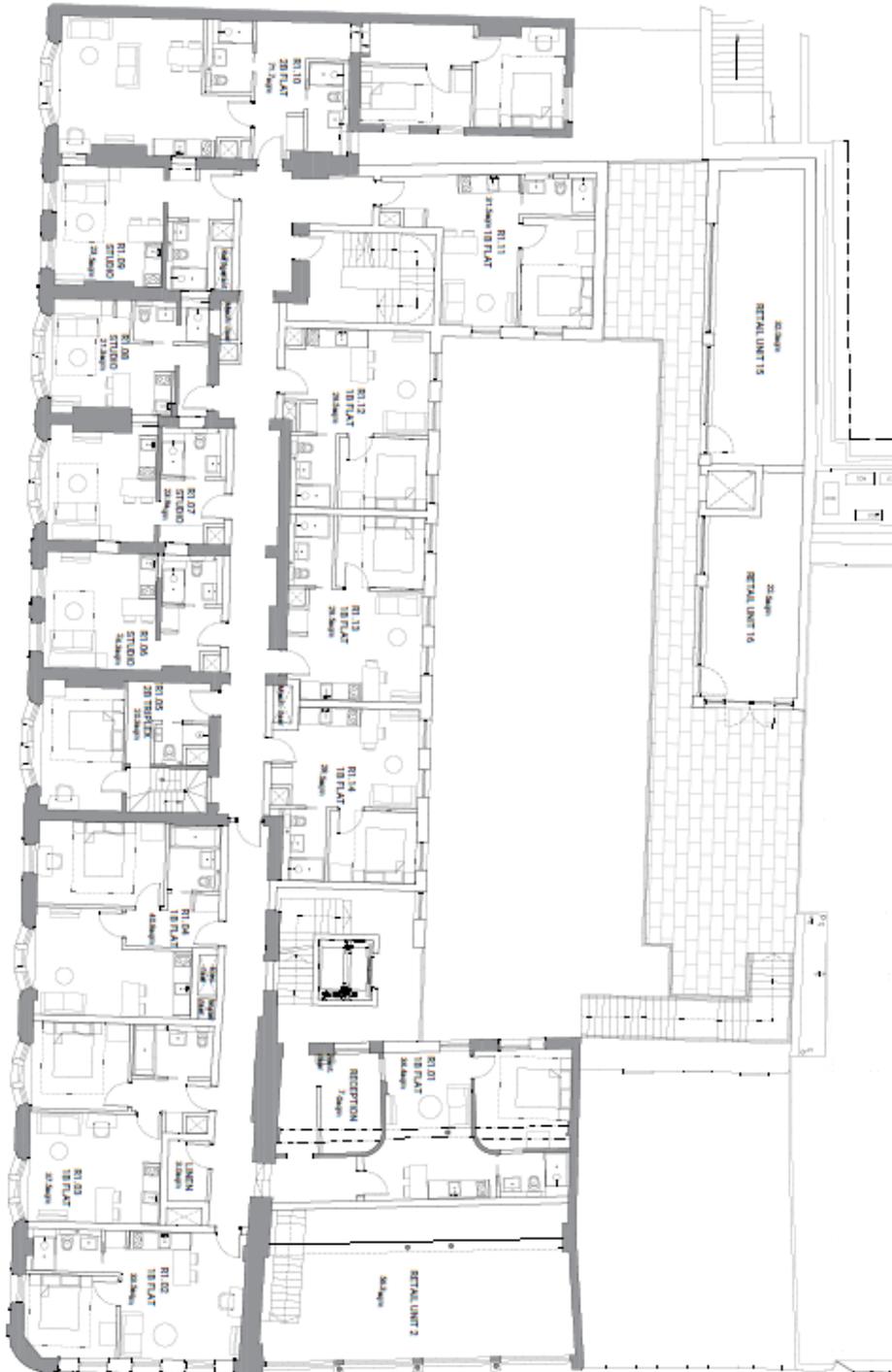
Proposed Block Plan



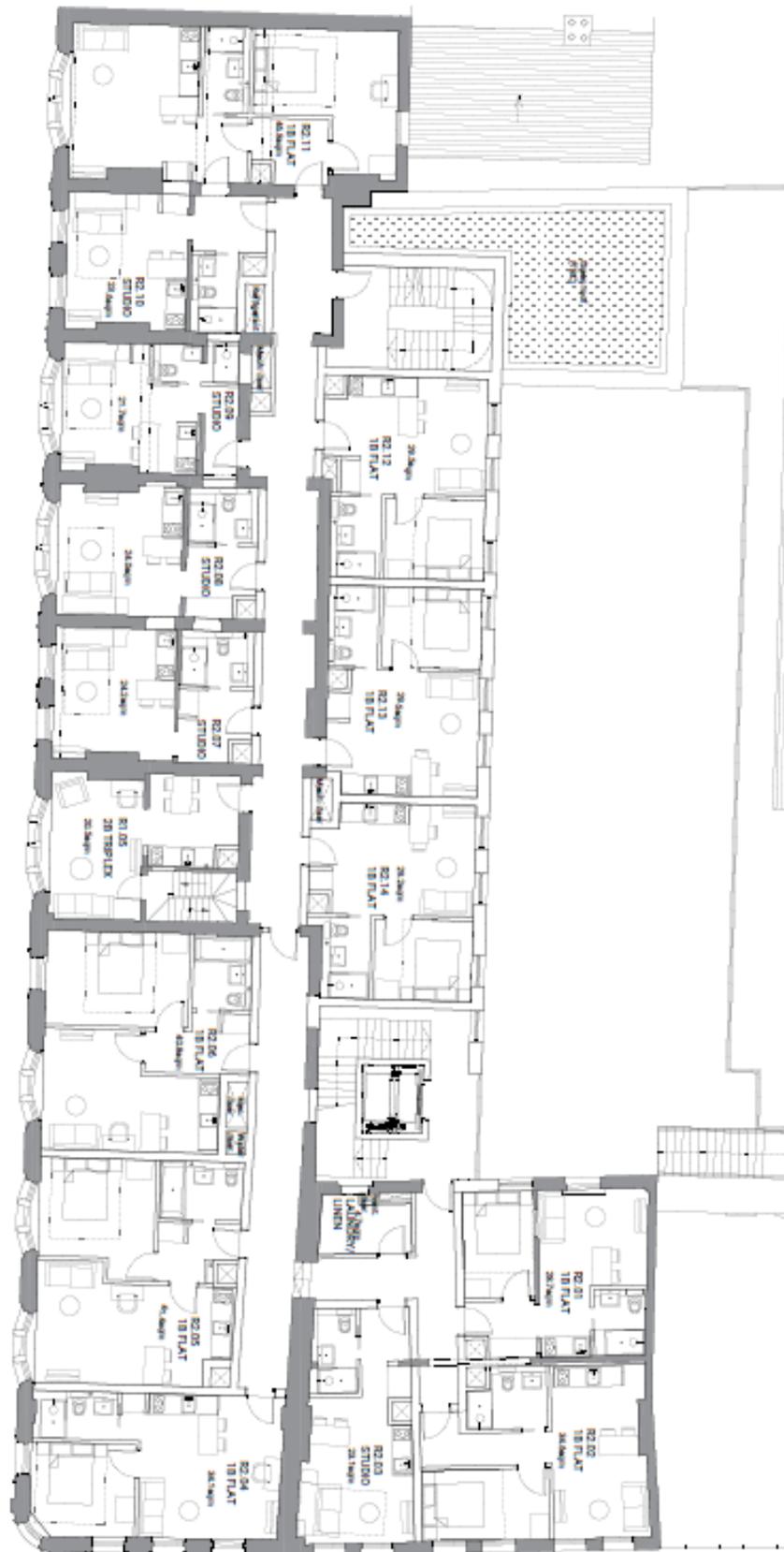
Proposed Basement Floor Plan



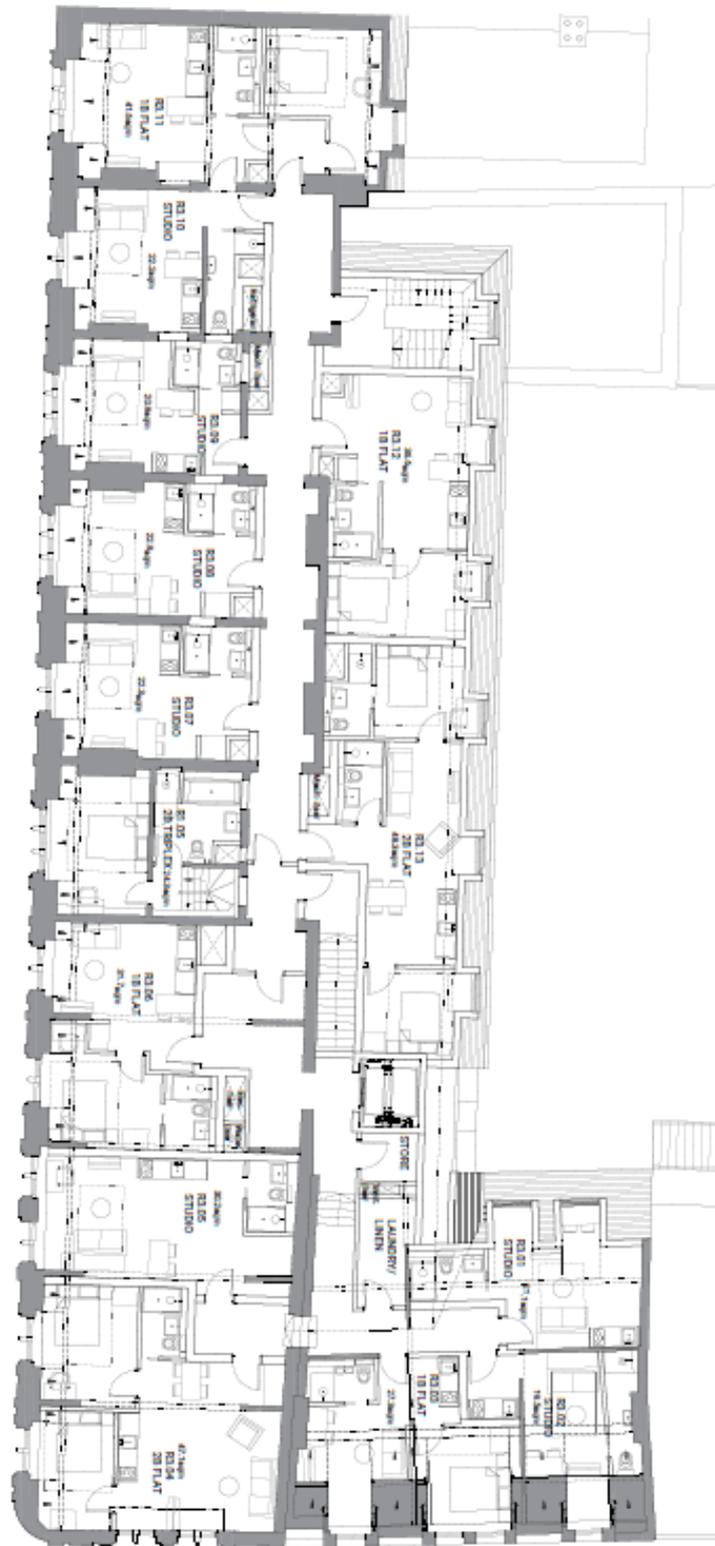
Proposed Ground Floor Plan



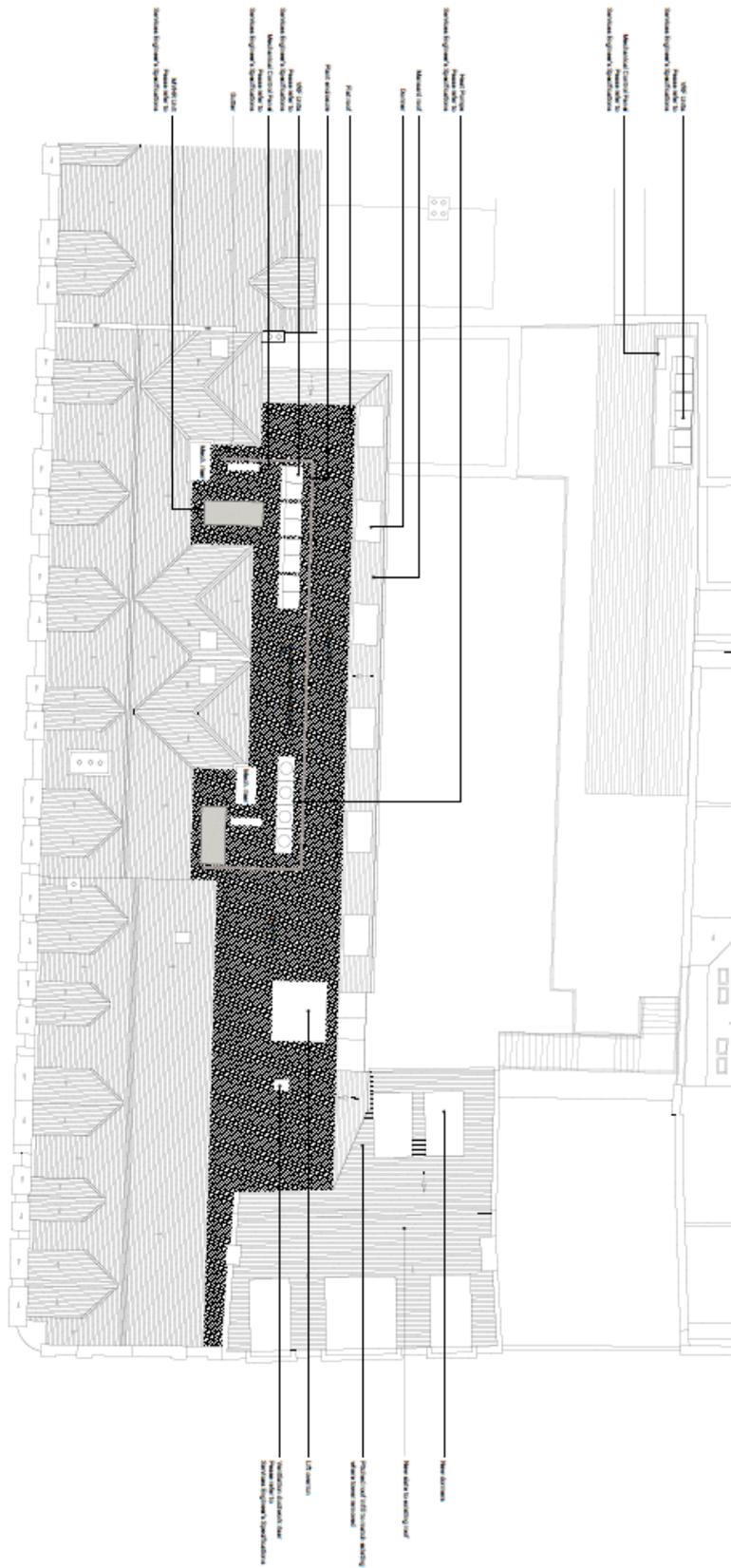
Proposed First Floor Plan



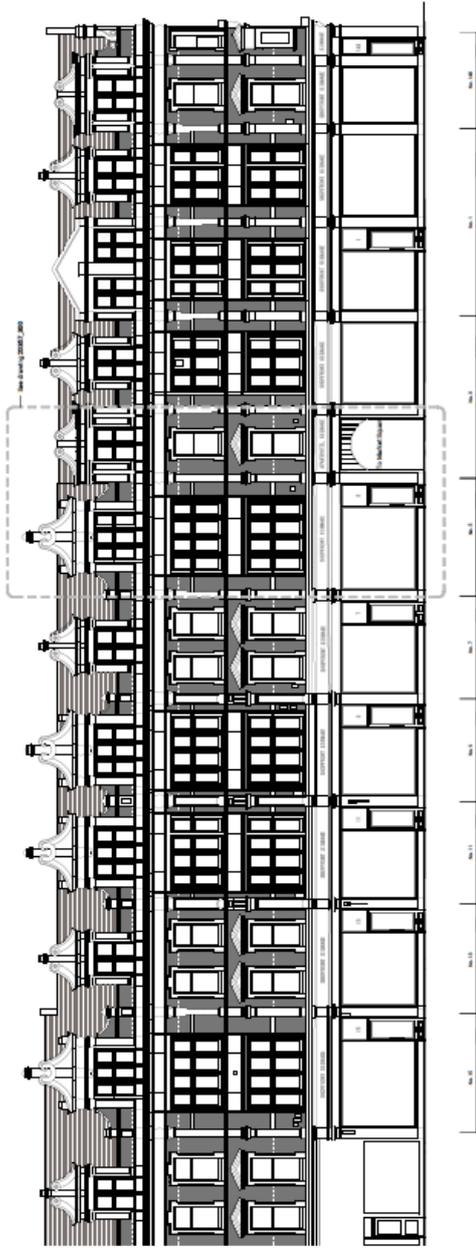
Proposed Second Floor Plan



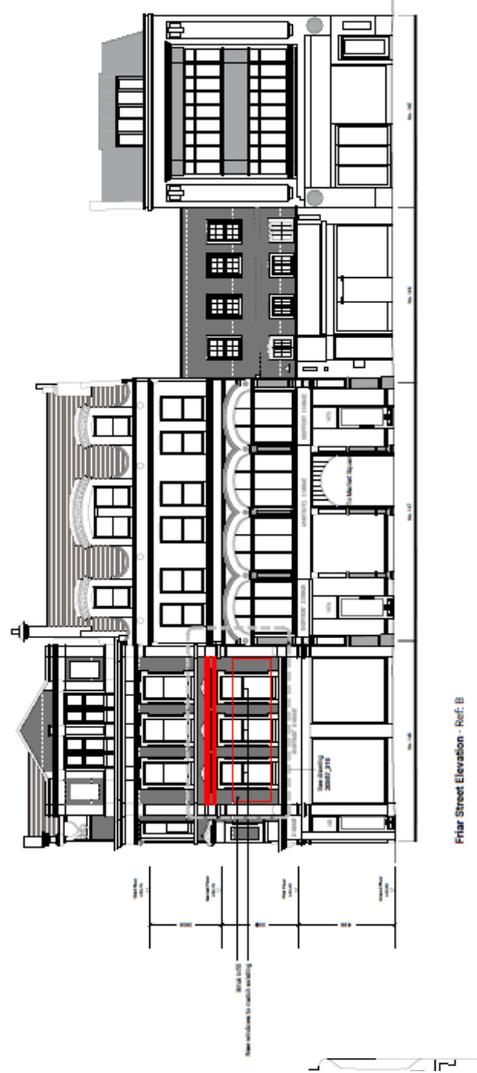
Proposed Third Floor Plan



Proposed Roof Plan

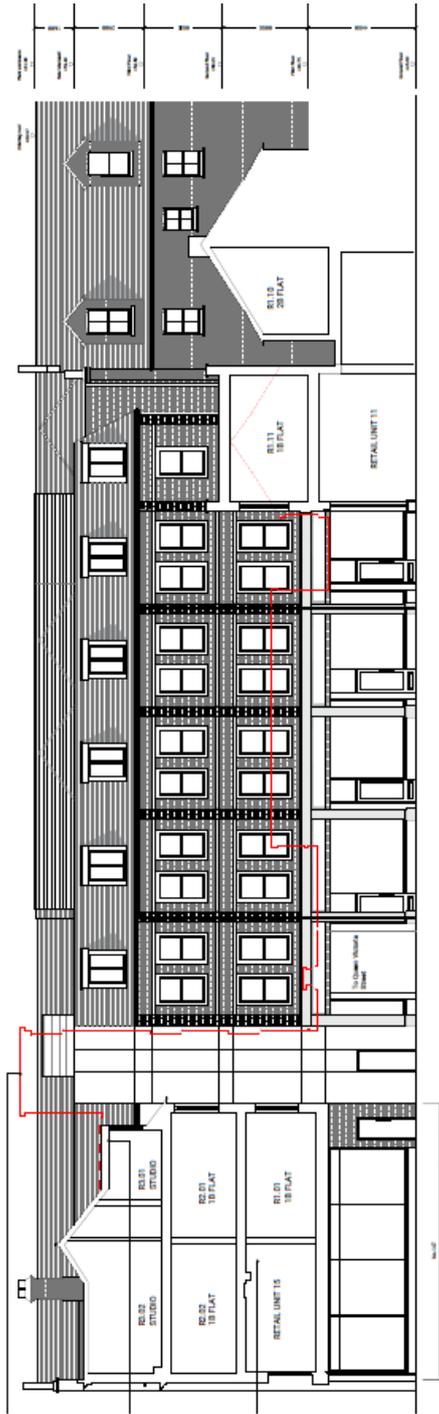


Queen Victoria Street Elevation - Ref. A

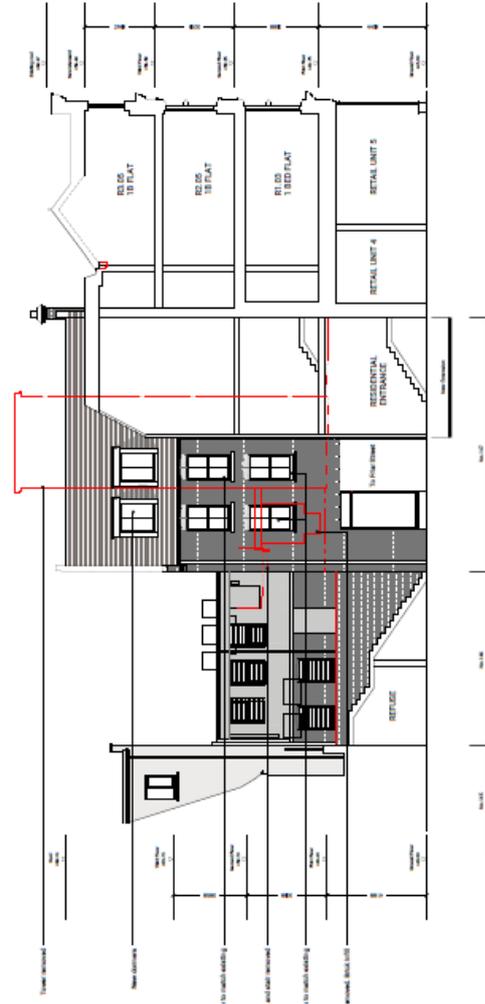


Prior Street Elevation - Ref. B

Proposed Frontage Elevations

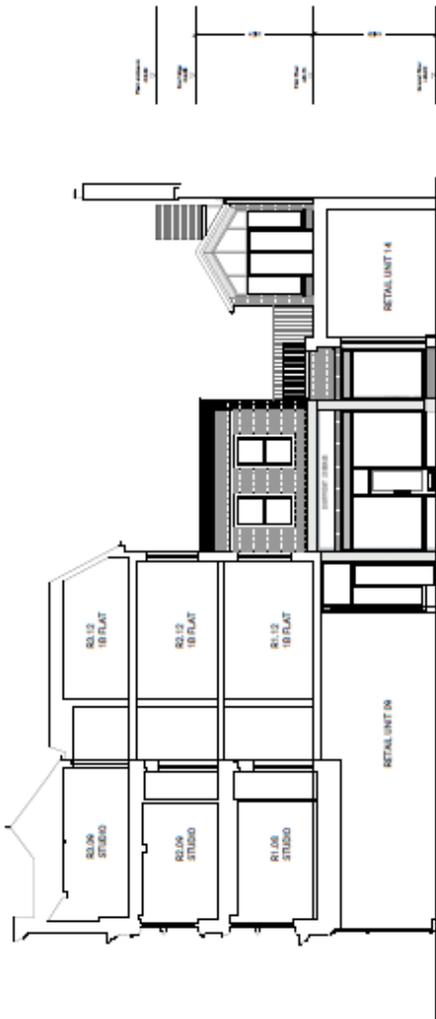


Rear Elevation - Ref: C

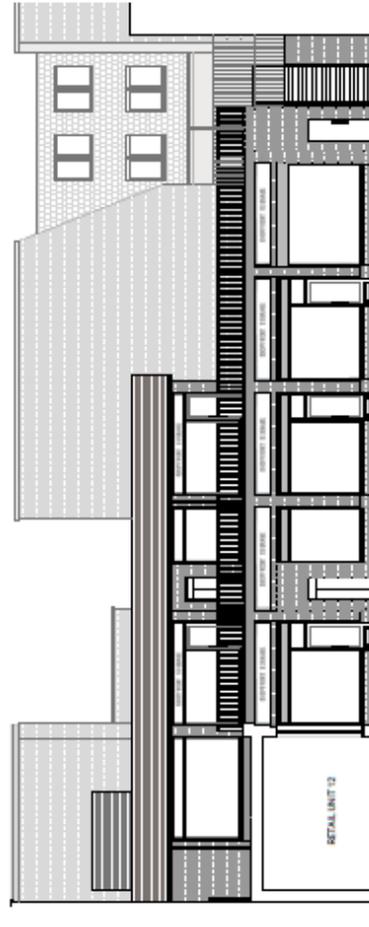


Rear Elevation - Ref: D

Proposed Rear Elevations



Rear Elevation - Ref: E

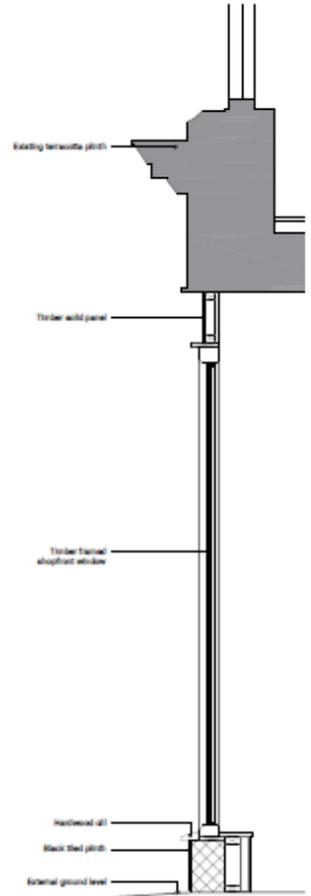


Rear Elevation - Ref: F

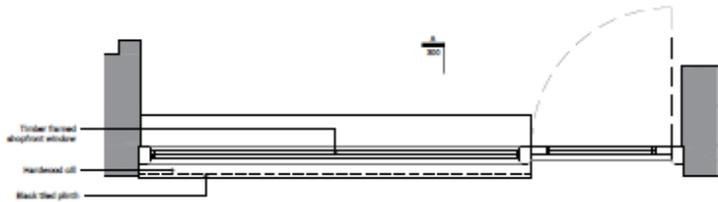
Proposed Courtyard Elevations



Shopfront layout - Queen Victoria Street Elevation Extract
SCALE: 1:50

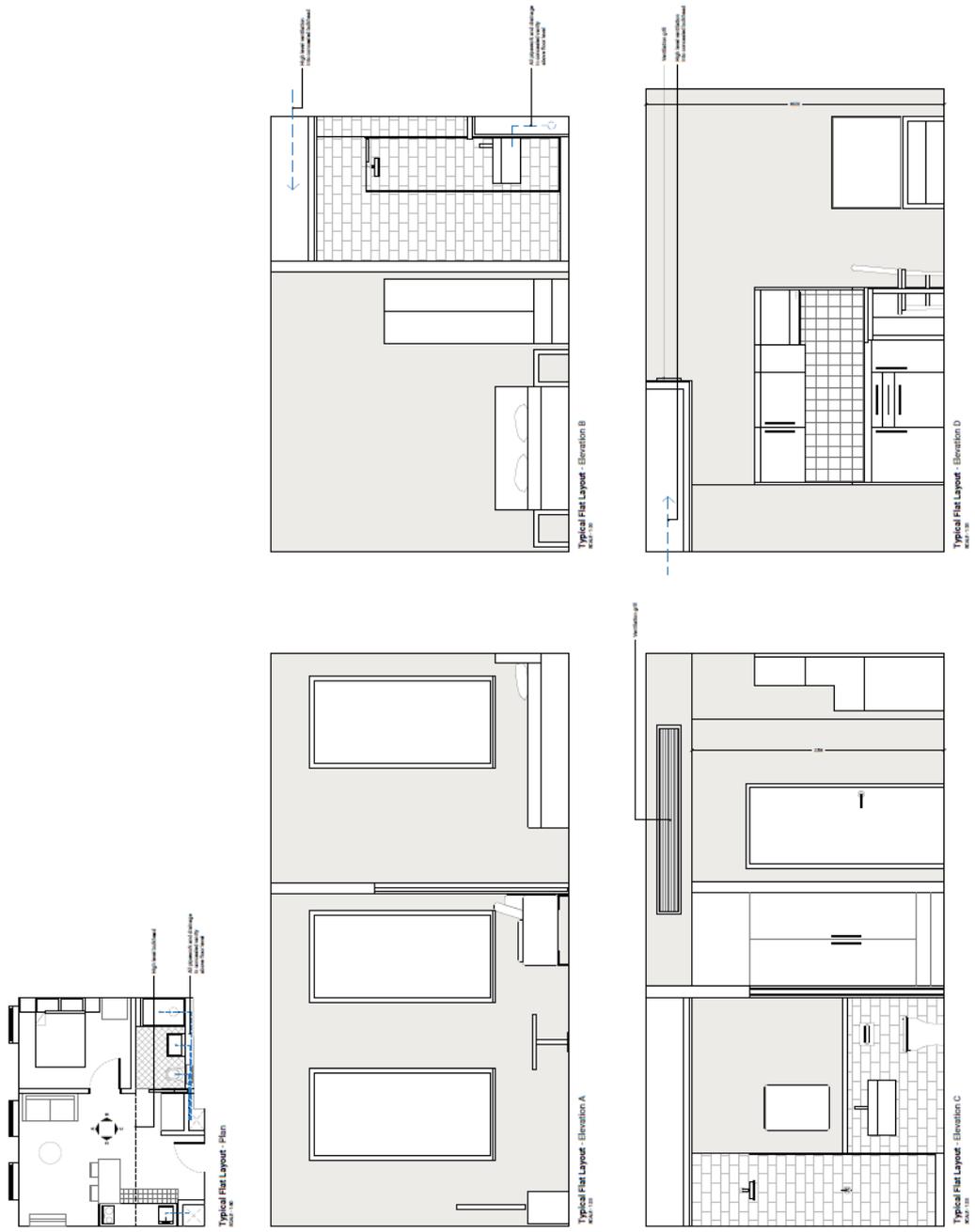


Shopfront layout - Section AA
SCALE: 1:20

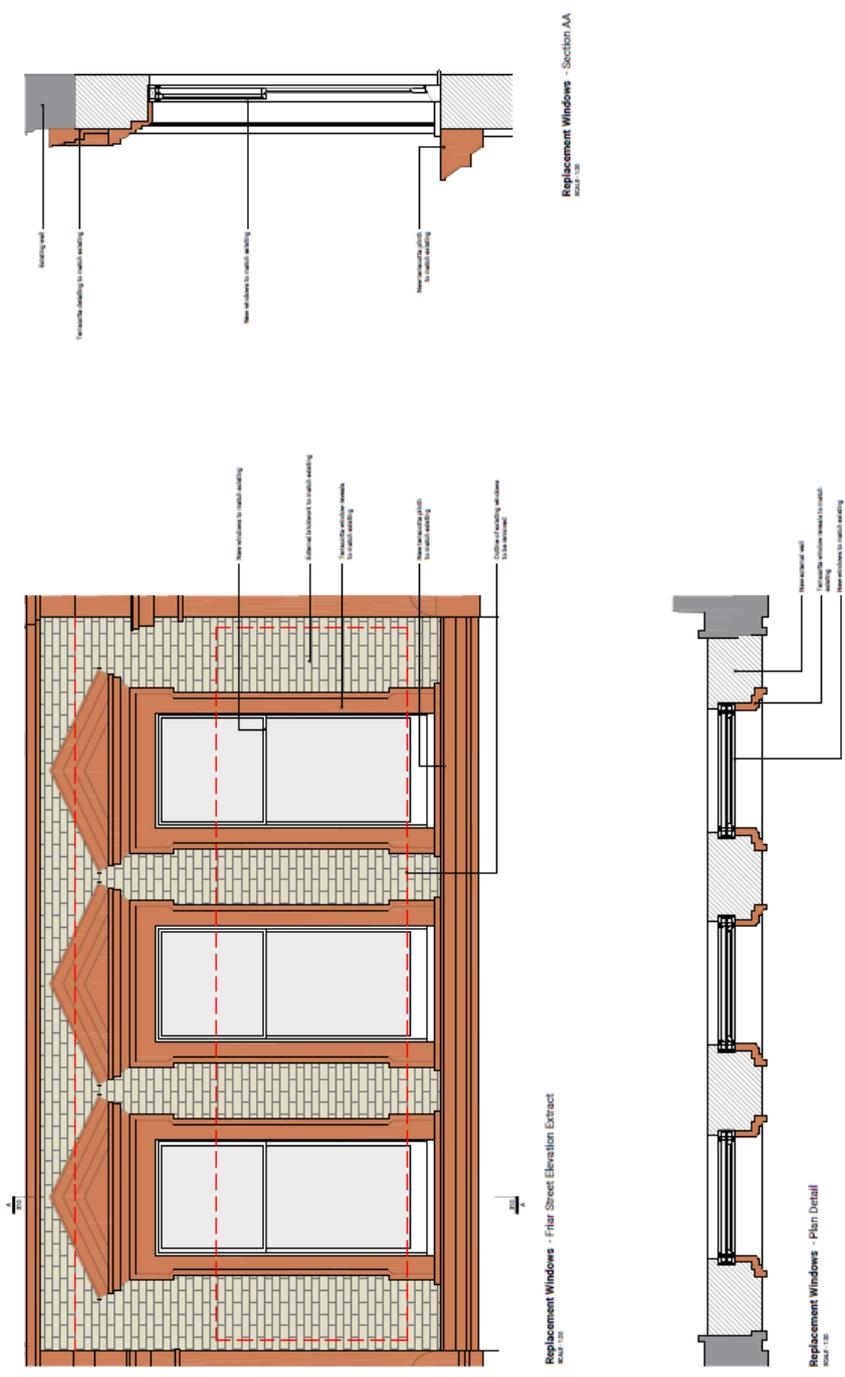


Shopfront layout - Plan Detail
SCALE: 1:20

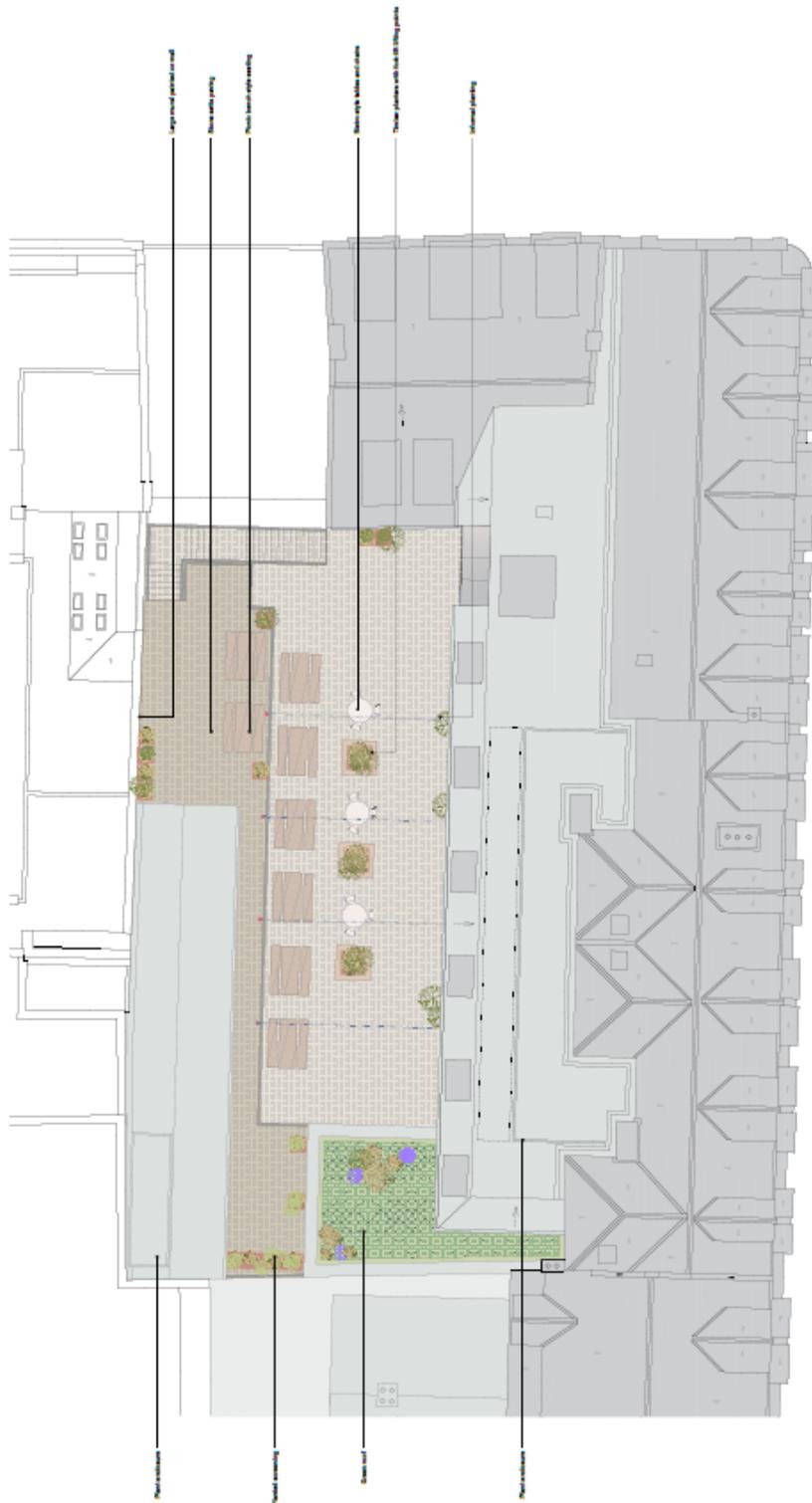
Proposed Queen Victoria Street Shopfront Elevation Detail



Typical Apart-Hotel Room Layout



Proposed Replacement First Floor Window Detail to 148 Friar Street



Proposed Landscaping Plan



Proposed Visuals



Proposed Visuals



Proposed Visuals



Proposed Visuals