

## COMMITTEE REPORT

BY THE DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC GROWTH & NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES  
READING BOROUGH COUNCIL  
PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE: 21 July 2021

**Ward:** Abbey

**Application No:** 210163FUL and 210164LBC

**Address:** Bristol & West Arcade 173-175 Friar Street and no.s 27-32 Market Place, Reading.

**Proposal:** Full and Listed Building Consent for:

210163FUL - Demolition of vacant former Bristol & West Arcade (173-175 Friar Street) and redevelopment of site including minor excavations at basement level to provide an 8-storey building to provide a hotel (C1 use) of up to 182 beds, creation of a bar/restaurant/gym at ground floor associated with the hotel and the provision of ancillary facilities including outdoor terrace, demolition of rear parts of 29-31 and 32 Market Place, the change of use of the retained units at 27-28, 29-31 and 32 Market Place at first, second and third floors to provide 8 residential units, retention of flexible Class E uses at ground and basement floors

210164LBC - Demolition of 20th Century additions to the rear of 29-31 Market Place and 32 Market Place with associated internal and external alterations to listed buildings

**Applicant:** Sonic Star Properties Ltd

**13 Week Decision Target Date:** 30/06/2012

### RECOMMENDATION

#### 210163FUL

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 31<sup>st</sup> August 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)

The legal agreement to secure the following:

1. Affordable housing Contribution of £213,000 towards provision of off-site affordable housing within the Borough (index-linked from the date of permission)
2. An obligation to update the existing 1893 covenant by entering into a permissive path agreement with the Council as Local Planning authority within 6 calendar months following completion of construction
3. Provision and implementation of both a construction and end user phase

Employment Skills and Training Plan or equivalent financial contributions, as calculated by the levels as set out in the adopted Employment and Skills SPD (all financial contributions index-linked from the date of permission)

4. C1 Hotel use only:

- no hotel room shall be used for any use other than as a C1 Use
- no hotel room 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 hotel rooms 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 hotel room for a continuous period for more than 3 months to the same Customer or Customers
- not to require Customers of any hotel room 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 hotel rooms

5. Works to listed buildings at 27-32 Market Place and provision of public realm/landscaping prior to first occupation of the hotel. Works to include:

- Clearing of all rainwater good and necessary leads repairs
- Overhaul of roof slopes replacing damaged and missing tiles
- Re-pair to leadwork to flat roof areas
- Removal of air conditioning units
- Repairs to glazing and timber windows
- Securing all windows to intruders and water ingress
- Re-painting of external elevations
  
- Soft strip of all damp affected plaster including laths to allow underlying brick and timber to breath and dry out
- Inspection of all timbers together with studs to internal walls and application to all timbers suitable for retention of anti-fungicidal timber preservation treatment.
- Where required new timbers to be spliced using matching hardwood or softwood and installed adjacent to existing leaving the original timbers in situ (also treated with anti-fungal treatment to prevent further decay).
- Replacement of timber windows that are beyond repair with new windows to match existing
  
- Demolition of the rear of the Market Place buildings, re building of the rear elevations and provision of rear area of public realm

and landscaping

6. High Street Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ) contribution towards public realm improvements equivalent to 2% of construction costs

Conditions:

1. Time Limit - standard 3 years
2. Approved Plans
3. Prior to commencement of development (hotel) submission and approval of material samples
4. Prior to commencement of development (hotel) submission and approval of details of additional entrance column to the Friar Street frontage
5. Prior to commencement of development submission and approval of a construction method statement (hotel)
6. Prior to commencement of development submission and approval of a construction method statement (Market Place)
7. Standard hours of construction: 0800 to 1800hrs Monday to Friday, 0800 to 1300hrs Saturdays and no working on Sundays and Bank Holidays
8. No burning of waste on site
9. Provision of approved cycle parking prior to occupation of relevant part of the hotel development
10. Provision of approved cycle parking prior to occupation of relevant part of the market place development
11. Prior to occupation of hotel, submission and approval of servicing and refuse management plan
12. Prior to occupation of Market place retail units/pub, submission and approval of a servicing and refuse management plan
13. Prior to occupation of hotel submission and approval of bin store details (vermin control). Provision of approved bin stores also prior to occupation.
14. Prior to occupation of Market Place retail units/pub submission and approval of bin store details (vermin control). Provision of approved bin stores also prior to occupation.
15. Prior to occupation of Market Place residential units' submission and approval of bin store details (vermin control). Provision of approved bin stores also prior to occupation.
16. Prior to occupation of hotel implementation of approved of approved glazing and ventilation, insulation details
17. Prior to occupation of Market Place residential units' implementation of approved glazing and ventilation details
18. No installation of mechanical plant until submission and approval of a noise assessment
19. Prior to occupation of hotel submission and approval of access control strategy
20. Prior to occupation of hotel submission and approval of a CCTV strategy
21. Prior to occupation of hotel submission and approval of operational

- management plan
22. Prior to commencement of development (hotel) submission and approval of hard and soft landscaping scheme (to include details of green roof). Implementation prior to first occupation
  23. Prior to commencement of development (Market Place) submission and approval of a hard and soft landscaping scheme. Implementation prior to first occupation.
  24. Prior to commencement of development (hotel) submission and approval of a scheme of biodiversity enhancements (to include bat boxes)
  25. Pre-commencement submission and approval of Natural England license for works affect bats (Market Place buildings)
  26. Pre-occupation of hotel use, submission and approval of a landscaping management plan
  27. Pre-occupation of market place uses, submission and approval of a landscaping management plan
  28. Prior to commencement of development submission and approval of a scheme of archaeological investigation
  29. Programme of post-excavation archaeological assessment in accordance with approved scheme of archaeological investigation
  30. Prior to occupation of hotel submission and approval of details of air source heat pump
  31. Pre-occupation submission and approval of BREEAM as built certification for hotel - Very Good standard
  32. Pre-occupation submission and approval of BREEAM as built certification for Market Place retail units/pub - Very Good standard
  33. Pre-occupation submission and approval of BREEAM as built certification for Market Place residential flats - Very Good standard
  34. Adherence to approved hours of use (hotel and ancillary uses)
  35. Adherence to approved hours of use (Market Place pub)
  36. Prior to commencement of development (hotel) submission and approval of an external lighting scheme
  37. Prior to occupation of hotel provision/retention of lift(s) to hotel
  38. Prior to occupation of hotel submission and approval of full details of gates
  39. Gates to open inwards only
  40. Gates to be locked and passageway closed to public access outside of the permitted hours of use of the hotel restaurant/bar
  41. Retail units to Market Place to be under Use Class E only
  42. Prior to commencement of development (hotel) submission and approval of SuDS Strategy
  43. Adherence to approved SuDs Strategy
  44. Prior to occupation of hotel submission and approval of a litter management strategy
  45. Parking permits - pre-occupation notification of postal addresses of all residential units
  46. Parking permits - prohibition on entitlement to parking permits for occupiers of all residential units

47. Prior to occupation of hotel, submission and approval of details of information boards relating to the former retail arcade use of the site
48. Prior to commencement of development submission and approval of contaminated land assessment
49. Prior to commencement of development submission and approval of a contaminated land remediation scheme
50. Implementation of contaminated land remediation scheme as approved
51. Reporting of unidentified contamination
52. Pre-occupation of the hotel restaurant installation of approved odour control and kitchen extraction equipment
53. Pre-occupation submission and approval of an odour assessment and mitigation scheme for any of the Market Place units to be occupied for a use involving food preparation/cooking
54. No fixing or installing of miscellaneous items to the external faces or roof of any building without the prior approval in writing of the local planning authority
55. Flat roof/green roof areas not to be used as roof terraces
56. Implementation in accordance with approved Fire Strategy

Informatives:

1. Building Control
2. Terms and conditions
3. Positive and Proactive Statement
4. Complaints about construction
5. Damage to the highway
6. Highways
7. Noise between residential properties - sound insulation of any building
8. Related section 106 Legal Agreement
9. Related listed building consent
10. Possible need for future separate advertisement consent
11. Pre-commencement conditions
12. CIL
13. Parking permits

**210164LBC**

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 schedule and materials for works all works to rear elevation of no.s 27-32

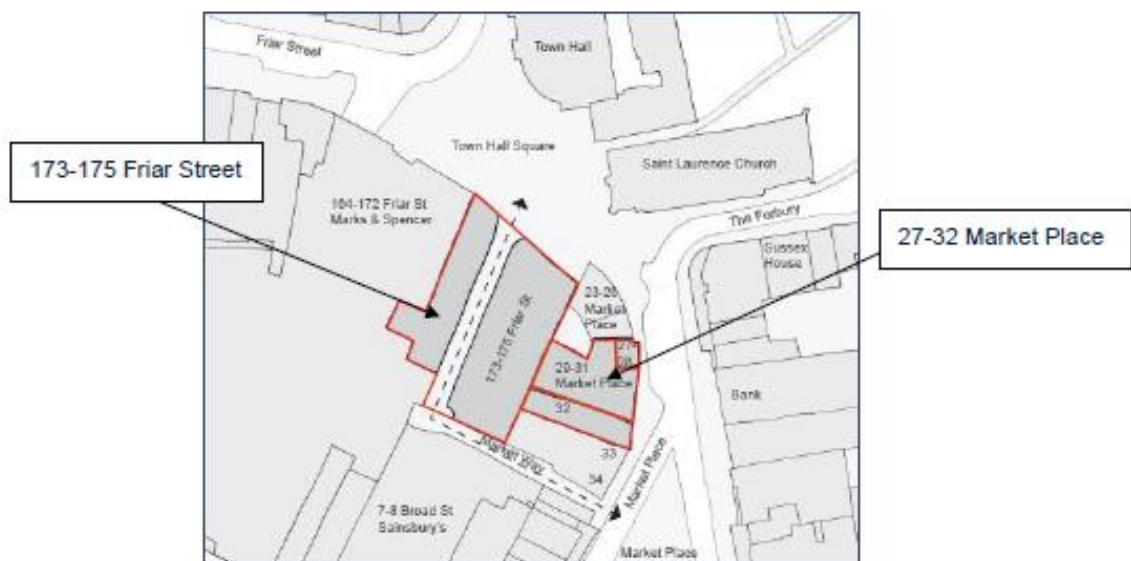
4. Pre-commencement submission and approval of a detailed scheme of internal works and finishes (to include partition walls, cornices and skirting boards, etc.)
5. Pre-commencement submission and approval of detailed plans/sections of windows and doors
6. Pre-commencement submission and approval of detailed plans/sections of secondary glazing
7. Pre-commencement submission and approval of methodology for installation of insulation between ground and first floor level of the building
8. Pre-commencement submission and approval of external plant and services
9. Pre-commencement submission and approval of materials
10. Retention of all other features of historic and architectural interest unless referred to on approved plans

Informatives:

1. Terms and conditions
2. Positive and Proactive Statement
3. Clarification over pre-commencement conditions

## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The application site is formed of two adjoining plots with separate frontages, one plot fronting Town Hall Square, consisting of 173-175 Friar Street (the former Bristol and West Arcade / Brook Henderson House); and the other comprising of three buildings on the western side of Market Place, Nos 27-32, fronting onto the wide footway and the Market Place itself. Part of the application site (the properties fronting Market Place and Number 175 Friar Street) sit within the London Street/Market Place Conservation Area (See map below).



Location Plan (Listed Buildings highlighted red)

- 1.2 The former Bristol and West Arcade/ Brook Henderson House building is located at the eastern end of Friar Street, opposite the Town Hall and St Laurence's Church. The site is presently occupied by two buildings constructed in the mid-20th Century in a neo-Georgian style. No 173-174 and No 175 Friar Street are both four-storey in height constructed of red brick with pale stone elements set above the ground floor. This building is not Listed but is considered to be of Townscape Merit, as set out within the Council's Townscape Appraisal Map.
- 1.3 The upper floors of both buildings were formally in office use. The ground floors, consisting of the former arcade of retail shops and a link through to Market Way, are constructed in pale stone with full height glazing. The ground floor frontage therefore contains contemporary shop windows and an open passageway through the site to Market Way and the existing Sainsbury's store.
- 1.4 Within the buildings the existing retail units and office space are now entirely vacant with ground floor openings enclosed by hoardings to the front and rear. This site has not been fully in use for a period of 10 years, although building work was commenced to the rear (by virtue of permission 06-01560-FUL) but then ceased prior to completion due to market forces.

#### *Existing Market Place Units*

- 1.5 No.27-28 Market Place is a Grade II listed, three storey (plus attic accommodation and basement) building and is a fine example of an original merchant's house. The building is timber framed and dates from the seventeenth century. Internally, the building is currently just one room deep; it is apparent that sometime in the past, access to the rear rooms has been blocked and the floor areas incorporated into the No.29-31 (Coopers Arms). The building is vacant but was formally an A1 shop on the ground floor with ancillary storage at the upper floors.
- 1.6 No.29-31 Market Place (Coopers Arms) is Grade II listed and has three storeys (plus accommodation in the roof space and an extensive basement). The existing structure of the building dates largely from the seventeenth century, however the building has been extended to the rear (three storeys plus basement) in the 1950s/60s and an internal open courtyard roofed over. The existing half-timbered Market Place façade was added in the early twentieth century (1930s), and the ground floor shop front is a more modern, mid-twentieth century addition. The building is vacant but was formally a public house, incorporating basement storage and ancillary use of the upper floors as accommodation by staff.
- 1.7 No.32 Market Place is a four-storey building, Grade II listed, constructed in the mid-nineteenth century (1840-1853). The front façade survives largely intact with traditionally proportioned sash windows. The ground floor had been completely stripped out and a modern shop front is now in situ. On the rear elevation, the original sash windows have been replaced with modern UPVC double glazed units and, also on the rear, there is a large flat roof, single storey extension. These units make a significant contribution to the character of the surrounding Market

Place/London Street Conservation Area but are currently all vacant with all ground floor windows boarded up.

- 1.8 As shown on the site plan above the sites are effectively 'land locked' to their rear by existing town centre development. The former arcade is bounded to the west by the rear entrance of Marks and Spencer's and to the east by No 23-26 Market Place. To the north the former Arcade fronts Town Hall Square containing the Listed Town Hall and Listed St Laurence's Church. To the south the Arcade adjoins Market Way, and via Sainsbury's link to Broad Street.
- 1.9 The existing properties on Market Place directly adjoin the Friar Street property at their rear and have been built up to the boundary so there is no separation between them. The Market Place buildings front eastwards onto Market Place Square and are bounded by 23-26 Market Place (as above) and 33-34 Market Place containing Romans estates agents. These adjoining buildings are also Listed.
- 1.10 The site is set within the historic town centre in close proximity to a number of listed buildings, including the Grade I St Laurence's Church, the Grade II\* Town Hall, the Grade II statue of Queen Victoria and the Grade II buildings at 23 through to 34 Market Place. A large number of unlisted buildings in the Conservation Area are noted on the Townscape Appraisal map as being 'Buildings of Townscape Merit'. These include:
  - No. 175 Friar Street; and
  - No. 172 Friar Street.
- 1.11 The Forbury Gardens, which are located to the east of St Laurence's Church, is an area of high-quality townscape, with the gardens also containing a number of Listed Buildings. The gardens are significant as the largest area of open space in central Reading and have a high degree of permeability for pedestrians moving through the area. Town Hall square which provides an open space enjoyed by the the public is set to front of the site on Friar Street. There are also a several public houses and night clubs (a number with late licenses) located around the junction of Friar Street and Blagrove Street.
- 1.12 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
  - Partially within the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area (Policy EN3)
  - No.s 27-32 Market Place Grade II Listed Buildings (Policy EN1)
  - The Market Place frontage is also within the High Street Heritage Action Zone for Reading.



1.13 It should also be noted that an existing covenant (dated 1893) grants public access through the former Bristol and West Arcade whilst the Corn Exchange and General Market are open. Within the S106 Legal Agreement for the 2007 permission to develop the Bristol and West Arcade, and 2003 permission for the current Sainsbury's site (directly south of the application site) this route was retained via a section 106 Legal agreement.

1.14 The application is referred to committee as it is classified as a 'major' category development.

## 2. PROPOSALS

2.1 Full planning permission is sought for demolition of vacant former Bristol & West Arcade (173-175 Friar Street) and redevelopment of the site including minor excavations at basement level to provide an 8-storey hotel (C1 use) of up to 182 beds with ancillary bar/restaurant/gym at ground floor associated with the hotel and the provision of ancillary facilities including outdoor terrace. It is also proposed to demolish the rear parts of 29-31 and 32 Market Place and the change of use of the retained units at 27-28, 29-31 and 32 Market Place at first, second and third floors to provide 8 residential units, retention of flexible Class E uses at ground and basement floors. The proposed demolition and internal alteration work to the Market Place buildings are also subject to a related application for listed building consent.

2.2 It is proposed to retain the former arcade route through the site which connects the Friar Street frontage with Market Way where the rear entrance to Sainsburys is located which then links through to the Market Place frontage. The main entrance to the proposed hotel would be located centrally off the route through the site with the demolition of the rear elements of the Market Place buildings enlarging this area creating a small public courtyard. The bar and restaurant would be accessed via the Friar Street frontage and would be open to hotel guests and the public.

2.3 The eight residential units (C3 use) to the upper floors of no.s 27-32 Market Place are proposed as a mix of 4 x 1-bedroom units, 3 x 2-bedroom units and 1 x 3-bedroom unit. At ground and basement floor level the Market Place building would be retained in their existing commercial use. Including reinstatement of the former public house (sui generis use) at 29-31 Market Place. The proposals to the Market Place buildings are the same as that under existing planning permission ref. 180358FUL (& listed building consent ref. 180359LBC).

2.4 The Applicant sought detailed pre-application advice from the Local Planning Authority (LPA) prior to submitting the applications which have been subject to detailed discussions and series of meetings and written advice letters.

2.5 Plans and Documents Considered:

- Design and Access Statement, prepared by Norr Consultants;
- Draft Operational Management Plan, prepared by the applicant;
- Economic Impact Statement, prepared by Savills;
- Retail Market Assessment, prepared Hicks Baker;
- Office Market Assessment, prepared by LSH;
- Heritage Statement, prepared by Turleys;
- Condition Report for Market Place Properties, prepared by Roc Associates;
- Archaeology Statement, prepared by RPS;
- Transport Statement, prepared by iTransport Planning;
- Hotel and market Place Framework Travel Plan, prepared by iTransport Planning;
- Delivery and Servicing Statement (included in Transport Statement), prepared by iTransport Planning;
- Air Quality Assessment, prepared by South Downs Environmental Consultants;
- Bat Survey Report, CSA Environmental;
- Sustainability Statement, prepared by JH Partners;
- BREEAM Pre-Assessments prepared by Summers Inman;
- Surface Water Drainage & SuDS Assessment, prepared by Clancy Consulting;
- Fire Engineering Review, prepared by JGA;
- Odour Assessment, prepared by South Downs Environmental Consulting;
- Indicative external lighting scheme, prepared by JH Partners;
- Outline Utilities Statement, prepared by JH Partners;
- Provisional roof level MEP requirements, prepared by JH Partners;
- Wind & Microclimate Assessment, prepared by RWDI.

#### Drawings no.s

- REBW-NOR-01-ZZ-DR-A-90010 Rev 1- Site Location Plan
  - REBW-NOR-01-ZZ-DR-A-00102 Rev 8 - GA Elevations South & West
  - REBW-NOR-01-00-DR-A-0000B Rev 7 - GA Plan Level -01
  - REBW-NOR-01-00-DR-A-00001 Rev 12 - GA Plan Level 01
  - REBW-NOR-01-00-DR-A-00002 Rev 9 - GA Plan Level 02
  - REBW-NOR-01-00-DR-00003 Rev 9 - GA Plan Level 03
  - REBW-NOR-01-00-DR-A-00004 Rev 8 - GA Plan Level 04
  - REBW-NOR-01-00-DR-A-00005 - Rev 8 - GA Plan Level 05
  - REBW-NOR-01-00-DR-A-00006 - Rev 8 - GA Plan Level 06
  - REBW-NOR-01-00-DR-A-00007 - Rev 8 - GA Plan Level 07
  - REBW-NOR-01-RF-DR-A-27001 Rev 7 - GA Plan - Roof
  - REBW-NOR-01-ZZ-SH-A-00402 Rev 7 - GIFA Schedule
- 
- DE.101 - Demolition Basement Floor Plan
  - DE.102 - Demolition Ground Floor Plan
  - DE.103 - Demolition First Floor Plan

- DE.104 - Demolition Second Floor Plan
- DE.105 - Demolition Third Floor Plan
- DE.106 - Demolition Roof Plan
  
- DE.201 - 27-32 Market Place Basement Floor Plan
- DE.202 - 27-32 Market Place Ground Floor Plan
- DE.203 - 27-32 Market Place First Floor Plan
- DE.204 - 27-32 Market Place Second Floor Plan
- P.305 Rev B - Section EE (Cross Section Facing St. Laurence)
- P.306 - Section FF (Cross Section Facing South)
- P.307 - Section GG (Rear Elevation of Market Place)
- P.318 - Signage Position - Section HH (Market Place Elevation)

Received by the Local Planning Authority on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2021

- REBW-NOR-01-00-DR-A-00000 Rev 13 - GA Plan Level 00
- REBW-NOR-01-ZZ-DR-A-00101 Rev 11 - GA Elevations North & East
- REBW-NOR-01-ZZ-DR-A-00201 Rev 8 - GA Sections

Received by the Local Planning Authority on 6<sup>th</sup> July 2021

- REBW-NOR-01-00-DR-A-00020 Rev 1 - GA Plan Landscape Areas

Received by the Local Planning Authority on 9<sup>th</sup> July 2021

### 3. PLANNING HISTORY

#### Application site

- 3.1 There are numerous applications relating to both plots forming the site. Those applications considered to be of relevance in the determination of this application are specified below:
- 3.2 *173- 175 Friar Street*
- 06-01560-FUL - Refurbishment of shopping arcade and offices. Partial demolition and addition of health club and 14 dwellings - **Granted.**
  - 06-00825-FUL - Refurbishment of shopping arcade and offices (including partial demolition), construction of new gym and 14 apartments (12 x 2 bed and 2 x 3 bed) - **Refused.**
  - 06-00663-FUL - Demolition to rear of part first floor 4 shop units and roof light reconstruction of retail units with a new glazed wall and new roof - **Granted.**
- 3.3 *173-175 Friar Street and 27-32 Market Place*

- 180358FUL & 180359LBC - Demolition of vacant former Bristol & West Arcade (173 - 175 Friar Street) and erection of an eight storey mixed -use building (plus basement) to provide 35 residential units, 4,208 sqm of B1 office floorspace, and 5 retail units (A1/A2/A3); demolition of rear parts of 29 - 31 and 32 Market Place, the change of use of the retained units at 27 - 28, 29 - 31 Market Place at first, second and third floors to provide 8 residential units, change of use at ground and basement level of 32 Market Place from A2 to flexible retail use (A1/A2/A3), retention of 260.4 sqm of A4 use at ground and basement at 29-31 Market Place, change of use at ground and basement of 27 - 28 Market Place to flexible retail use (A1/A2/A3), and associated internal and external works to the Listed Buildings, landscaping, refuse, plant, cycle stores and substation at basement level - **Granted** (associated S106 legal agreement).

3.4 Planning permission ref. 06-01560-FUL referred to above for the *“Refurbishment of shopping arcade and offices. Partial demolition and addition of health club and 14 dwellings”* was granted in 2007. This permitted the erection of 3 tower elements above the existing building at 175 Friar Street (to be retained) allowing 8 storey development on the site. Construction works were commenced on site, but subsequently left unfinished with elements clearly visible from the rear of the Sainsbury’s Store. Although the legal status of this 2007 permission cannot be determined under this application, it was accepted under planning permission 180358FUL that this 2007 permission set the parameters for the height and bulk of development within this site and this is again considered the position in respect of the current planning application.

### 3.5 29-32 Market Place

- 08/00969/FUL & 08/00970/LBC - Change of use of building to a basement bar (class A4 use), ground floor retail units, and a mixed-use hotel/restaurant/bar (class C1/A3/A4) on the first, second and third floors, partial demolition of rear of building, three storey extension to the rear, refurbishment of building, and new Market Place façade - **Granted**.
- 11/01719/EXT & 11/01720/LBC- Application for an extension of the time limit for implementation of permission 08/00969/FUL for a change of use of building to a basement bar (Class A4 use), ground floor retail units, and a mixed-use hotel/restaurant/bar (class C1/A3/A4 use) on the first, second and third floors. Partial demolition of rear of building, three storey extension to the rear, refurbishment of building, and new Market Place façade - **Granted**.
- 12/01257/FUL - Change of use of the first, second and third floors from office use to residential accommodation - **Granted**

## 4. CONSULTATIONS

4.1 Historic England - No formal comments received. However, advice received that a condition that the Market place buildings are brought into good repair before work

on the arcade commences given the now serious state of disrepair of the buildings and the failure of the owners to fulfil their obligation to keep them in good repair.

- 4.2 RBC Conservation and Urban Design Consultant - No objection, subject to conditions to secure submission and approval of materials samples for all external works, scheme of window repair/replacement, details of additional column to Friar Street entrance, 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 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.
- 4.3 RBC Transport - No objection, subject to conditions to secure submission and approval of a construction method statement, refuse and servicing strategy and cycle parking plans as detailed with the appraisal section of this report.
- 4.4 RBC Environmental Protection - No objection, subject to conditions to secure implementation of glazing, ventilation, extraction and insulation specifications, submission and approval of details of any additional plant equipment to be installed, an operational management plan, details of bin stores, contaminated land assessment (and remediation scheme if required) and a construction method statement together with compliance to Councils standard construction working hours and limiting of delivery times to daytime hours. As detailed within the appraisal section of this report.
- 4.5 RBC Natural Environment - No objection, subject to conditions to secure submission and approval of a hard and soft landscaping scheme (including details of green roof) and a landscaping management plan. As detailed within the appraisal section of this report.
- 4.6 Ecology Consultant - No objection, subject to conditions to secure submission and approval of a scheme of biodiversity enhancements (including bat boxes) and evidence of a Natural England License for works impacting bat roosts. As detailed within the appraisal section of this report.
- 4.7 Berkshire Archaeology - No objection, subject to conditions to secure submission and approval of a scheme of archaeological investigation and post excavation assessment. As detailed within the appraisal section of this report.
- 4.8 Thames Valley Police Crime Prevention Design Adviser - No objection, subject to conditions to secure submission and approval of security, CCTV Strategies and an external lighting scheme. As detailed within the appraisal section of this report.
- 4.9 Berkshire Fire and Rescue - No comments received.

*Public consultation*

- 4.10 No.s 172, 173, 176 Friar Street, 7-8 Broad Street, 19, 20, 21-22, 23-24, 25-26, 27-28, 32, 33-34, 36, 37-42 Market Place, Flats 1 & 2 30 Market Place and Sussex House 6 The Forbury were notified of the applications by letter. Two site notices were also displayed at the application site on the 24<sup>th</sup> February 2021.
- 4.11 One letter of objection has been received which objects to the loss of the existing building of townscape merit at 173 Friar Street.
- 4.12 One letter of observation has been received raising the following issues:
- Welcome the redevelopment of the site
  - Concern about the modern frontage to the building and consider this should be a red brick design
  - Concern about rough sleeping with the large entranceway to the hotel
- 4.13 The Conservation Area Advisory Committee (CAAC) have also commented on the applications and raise the following in summary:
- Welcome retention of the set back of the Friar Street frontage of the hotel building but consider the frontage to be monolithic in appearance and have concern about dominance of the white stone section of the façade
  - Concerned about removal of the single doorway entrance into no. 29-31 Market Place (former Coppers Pub) and replacement with two doors.
  - The application should be used as an opportunity to replace the existing modern shop front to no. 32 Market Place
  - The large entrance to the site from Town Hall Square is visually unattractive and uninviting
  - Concerned about 24 hours access to the hotel and security of this.
- 4.14 A Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) has been submitted with the applications. This sets out that the Applicant also undertook their own public consultation about the development proposals which included a web-based survey, leaflet drop to 911 commercial and residential addresses surrounding the site, and two virtual online engagement events (face to face public engagement event no possible due to Covid19 social distancing restrictions at the time).

## **5. LEGAL AND PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT**

- 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 a listed building or its setting or any features of special interest which it possesses.
- 5.2 Section 72 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the local planning authority in the exercise of its functions to pay special

attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.

- 5.3 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy framework (NPPF) - among them the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'.
- 5.4 The application has been assessed against the following policies:

National planning policy framework (NPPF) 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

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

CR14d: 173-175 FRIAR STREET AND 27-32 MARKET PLACE

#### 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**

### 6.1 The main issues are considered to be:

- Principle of development and land use considerations
- Demolition, layout, height & massing, appearance, design and effect on Heritage Assets
- Archaeology
- Natural Environment
- Amenity
- Transport Matters
- Sustainability
- Other matters

#### **Principle of development and land use considerations**



- 6.2 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. 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 shall be the focus for new investment.
- 6.3 Furthermore, the proposals are considered to reflect the requirements of Policy CR1 (Definition of Central Reading) which sets out that 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 for leisure provision which make best use of available (often limited) site area. The proposed eight flats to the upper floors of the Market Place buildings would also align with Policy H4.
- 6.4 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.

*Site Allocation Policy CR14d and Extant Planning Permission*

- 6.5 The site, including both the former Bristol and West Arcade at no.s 173-175 Friar Street and the listed buildings at no.s 27 to 32 Market Place is allocated for development within the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 under Policy CR14d. This policy states that the development principles for the site are:

*Change of use of listed buildings and development of remainder for residential and/or offices with retail and related uses on the ground floor, retaining the arcade form and that development should:*

- *Avoid detrimental effects on the significance of the listed building and the Conservation Area and their settings;*
- *Take account of potential archaeological significance;*
- *Address noise impacts on residential use; and*
- *Address air quality impacts on residential use.*

- 6.6 Therefore whilst the proposed hotel and ancillary bar, restaurant and gym would be acceptable uses in general terms within the Town Centre as per Policies CR1

(Definition of Central Reading) and CR4 (Leisure Culture and Tourism) as referred to above, this use would not align with all stipulations of the site allocation Policy CR14d which seeks to retain the arcade form of site and for provision of residential and/or office uses to the upper floors. In terms of the ground floor uses officers are satisfied that the ancillary bar, restaurant and gyms uses to the hotel, which would be open to the public and hotel guests, are appropriate 'retail and related uses' in the context of Policy CR14d.

- 6.7 In terms of the no.s 27-32 Market Place the proposals seek to retain the existing two retail units and pub and convert the upper floors to eight residential flats which would align with the requirements of Policy CR14d.
- 6.8 It is also relevant to note that there is an extant planning permission on the site ref. 180358FUL (& listed building consent ref. 180359LBC) (permission expires on 9<sup>th</sup> January 2022), for a development of very similar layout, scale and massing. The extant consent is the same as the current application proposals in terms of the uses and works proposed to no.s 27-32 Market Place but proposed a mix of office and residential accommodation (35 flats) to upper floors of a new building on the Friar Street and former arcade part of the site, incorporating four ground floor retail units. The extant planning permission was granted in January 2019 under the now superseded, Reading Core Strategy Policies when the site was not allocated for development. The new Reading Local Plan having been adopted after this decision in November 2019.
- 6.9 The Applicant has provided a number of documents in support of the planning application which evidence the steps taken to market the development as proposed by the 2018 extant permission. However, a significant commitment from a developer to bring the site forward or interest from potential tenants for the non-residential elements of the permission (seven retail units at ground floor) has not been forthcoming.
- 6.10 In respect of the above, the evidence submitted sets out that a number of agents were appointed to advertise the consented development off-market over a 9-month period. The off-market exercise reached 37 parties but resulted in no significant interest or commitment to bring forward the residential or retail elements. Following this a more formal open market approach to advertising the site was undertaken. Details were sent to over 2,400 property developers and investors, in response to which 35 enquiries were received with only 7 considered to be 'firm interest' with 4 of the 7 parties interests relating to the potential use of the site as hotel and not the consented development itself. The remaining 3 parties interest related to the conversion of the Market Place properties only and the development on the former arcade part of the site. Only one offer for the site was received in January 2020 which related to bringing it forward in a hotel use. This offer was not accepted with the Applicant instead switching focus in an attempt to bring the site forward as a hotel themselves.

- 6.11 Of the interested parties who made enquiries about the site the general reasons for not pursuing their interest was that much of the site was not market facing and that the layout of some of the retail units was not desirable with them not directly visible to the main thoroughfares of Friar Street and Market Place due to efforts to retain some of the arcade layout of the site. This meant that there were significant concerns about securing future occupiers for the units and viability of the scheme given the challenging nature of the retail market with increasing number of vacant units across the country, a situation which has worsened as a result of the Covid19 pandemic.
- 6.12 Officers acknowledge the detailed evidence put forward by the Applicant in terms of the difficulties encountered in marketing of the consented scheme. This evidence is considered relevant to consideration of the current proposals in ensuring that a development on the site is capable of contributing to the vitality and viability of the town centre.

#### Proposed Uses

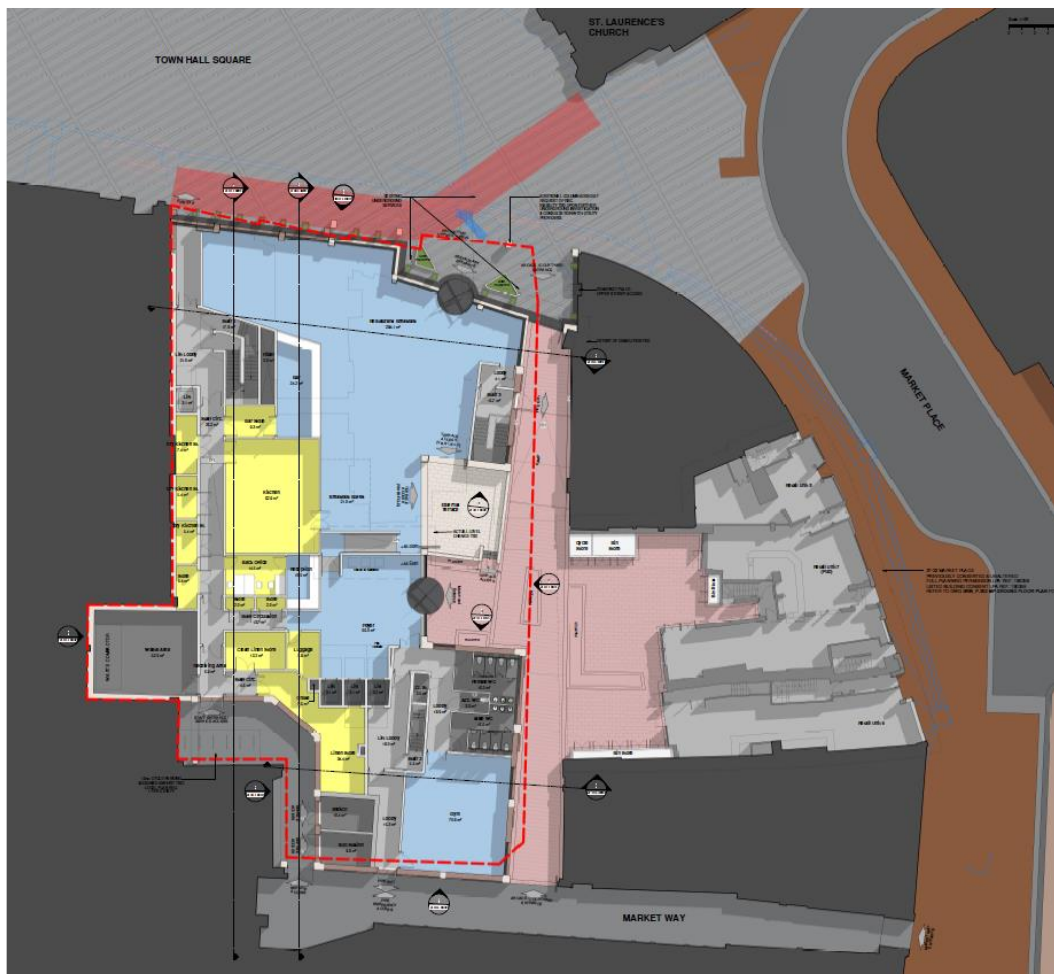
- 6.13 Given some aspects of the current proposals deviate from that set out within the site allocation policy it is important to assess the individual elements and development as a whole against the other detailed Local Plan Policies and relevant material planning considerations.

#### *Ground Floor Uses*

- 6.14 Within the arcade part of the site it is proposed to replace the former shopping arcade use with ancillary restaurant, bar and gym associated with the hotel use, together with the hotel reception/lobby area. This is different to the 2018 permission at the site which sought to provide four retail units at ground floor level. As discussed above, the site allocation Policy CR14d seeks that ground floor uses to the site are 'retail or related uses' and in this respect, officers are satisfied that the proposed bar, restaurant and gym uses are appropriate related uses.
- 6.15 Policy CR8 (Small Shop Units in Central Reading) is relevant and states that small shop units (less than 75 sqm), such as those formerly occupied within the arcade, make an important contribution to the diversity of the town centre. In addition, the site allocation Policy CR14d as set out above, states that development on site should 'retain the arcade form' which consists of small shop units. However, it should be noted that significant loss of the arcade form on the site is permitted under the extant 2018 planning permission which whilst providing ground floor retail units to this part of the site, none are less than 75m<sup>2</sup> in size and therefore not considered 'small shop units' in the context of Policy CR8. The officer report at the time when assessing the loss of the shop units and arcade form explained that detailed retail market reports were submitted with the application which demonstrated the lack of demand within the market for small retail units set in an arcade style layout.

- 6.16 As set out above the current proposals seek to provide the hotel reception/lobby, restaurant and bar to the ground floor - no small shop units are proposed. The Applicant has provided an updated retail market assessment report as part of the supporting documentation to the application as justification for why retention of small shop units in an arcade layout is not viable. The evidence within this report states that there is already an oversupply of small retail units in the town centre, demonstrated by high vacancy rates (above UK average) and lack of occupancy or demand for existing arcade style pitches. The report references the Kings Walk shopping Centre which has not been in 100% occupation since it was built in 1992 and also the Harris Arcade which has only had 100% occupancy for a period of three days within the last four years. The market report also sets out that outside of The Oracle and Broad Street Mall there are 403 retail units in the town centre of which 62 are vacant with 30 of those units with a floorspace of less than 100m<sup>2</sup> (as of January 2020).
- 6.17 The significant adverse impact of the Covid19 pandemic on the retail market is also referenced noting a sharp drop off in new lease agreements and closure of many national operators such as Debenhams and Arcadia who have gone into administration. The report concludes that in the current market with the growth of online shopping, shopping centres require an anchor store to attract other retailers and footfall to a pitch and that a national anchor retailer would not be interested in the arcade location. This is largely due to lack of a destination point to attract the required footfall with smaller retailers mostly interested in sites close to existing larger anchor stores which generate footfall and a higher chance of long-term sustainability.
- 6.18 Officers acknowledge the evidence put forward by the applicant in terms of the current and longer-term challenges of the retail market and the issues associated with an arcade style layout. These are issues that were raised in consideration of the 2018 permission on the site, which permitted removal of the small shop units and significant loss of the arcade form, issues which have, in part due to the pandemic, worsened over time as also indicated by the evidenced lack of interest in bringing forward the existing permission on the site.
- 6.19 The Applicant acknowledges that the arcade layout is not just a land use matter but also one of character with these layouts characteristic of certain parts of the town centre as per Policy CR8. To retain some of the character of the arcade, the central route through the arcade that leads from Friar Street through to Market Way to the rear is to be re-provided and a small public courtyard area is also proposed around the hotel and gym entrances which are located off this public route through the site. The route through the site has also been designed so that it is split at ground floor level to appear as individual frontages that would have been characteristic of a shopping arcade. This has been done by splitting the façade of the ground floor into separate blocks with glazing representing active frontage as well as the hotel reception. The Applicant has also indicated that

information boards would be included along the passageway referring to the sites retail history as an arcade details of which can be secured by way of condition.



*Proposed Ground Floor Layout Plan*

- 6.20 The principle of the creation of the public courtyard area and new area of public realm in a currently inaccessible and 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 contributes 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. The Market Place part of the application site is also located within a designated High Street Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ) and it is

proposed to secure a financial contribution (2% of construction costs), as part of a section 106 legal agreement, towards public realm improvements within Market Place.

- 6.21 The Friar Street frontage of the site is located within a designated Primary Frontage under Policy CR7 (Primary Frontages in Central Reading) and therefore the impact of the hotel use of the primary frontage must be considered. The Policy requires that uses at ground floor level within the frontages are within 'town centre uses' which include hotels, restaurants and bars and as such these uses, which would form the Friar Street frontage of the site, are considered to be appropriate in this location. The restaurant and bar would be open to the public as well as hotel guests and would provide a glazed active frontage to Friar Street.
- 6.22 Policy CR7 goes on to set out that proposals that would result in loss of shop units (or units in financial and professional services use) within the frontage where the proportion of shop units within the frontage would fall below 50% would not be permitted, unless the proposals introduce a use that makes a positive contribution to the overall diversity of the centre. The purpose of the Policy is to help retain the retail character of the town centre. The designated Friar Street active frontage is extensive and includes both sides of the street with the proportion of shop units (or units in financial and professional services use) at 34% and already below the policy threshold. However, the arcade has been vacant and boarded up for over 10 years and as such, in this time, has made no contribution to the active frontage or vitality the town centre in recent years. Officers consider that the uses proposed as part of the wider hotel function of the site would contribute positively to the active frontage as well as the overall diversity and vitality of the town centre and are considered to be appropriate uses in this context.
- 6.23 In terms of no.s 27-32 Market Place the retention of the two commercial units, public house and associated frontages comply with the site allocation Policy CR14d and are considered appropriate and in accordance with Policy CR7.
- 6.24 In overall terms Officers consider the proposed ground floor uses to be acceptable in this location and that they would contribute positively to the vitality and interest the active frontage and town centre, both as individual elements but also as part of the wider hotel use. Loss of the arcade layout and small shop units is a shortfall of the proposals. However, based on the detailed supporting documents submitted by the Applicant evidencing the current challenging nature of the retail market, difficulties in attracting tenants to an arcade style layout, fact that the arcade has been vacant for over 10 years and given that the loss of the small shop units and the majority of the arcade form is already permitted under the extant planning permission on the site, Officers accept that there is strong justification for loss for these elements. Nonetheless, this shortfall will be considered in the overall planning balance judgement of the application.

*Uses to Upper Floors*

- 6.25 The existing upper floors to both the arcade part of the site and no.s 27-32 Market Place consist of vacant former office space. 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.
- 6.26 Also relevant to the assessment is that use of the upper floors of the buildings as offices is included under the site allocation policy CR14d and that the extant planning permission on the site includes provision of 4000 sqm of office floor space.
- 6.27 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. The supporting information submitted with the application referred to above in this report details the applicant's efforts to market the site and lack of interest in the current proposed uses, including the office accommodation. The proposed hotel use is also considered to represent potential for a more comprehensive development of the site as opposed to a mix of uses.
- 6.28 The Applicant has also provided an Office accommodation market assessment report which details the significant impact of the Covid19 pandemic and reduced demand and use of office space and likelihood of continued working from home practices moving forward beyond the pandemic. The report also details difficulties in terms of the quality and layout of the existing office space which is not considered readily compatible with a modern open plan office environment. Whilst challenges are also identified in terms of the attractiveness of the office space permitted under the extant permission due to its lack of street-level presence and expectation that a large modern office has reception lobby area to welcome guests and visitors.
- 6.29 Given the prevalence of office accommodation elsewhere within the Borough Officers do not object to the loss of office employment accommodation nor that this proposal no longer brings forward the office accommodation secured under the extant permission. It is also pertinent to note that the proposed hotel accommodation would also officer significant employment opportunities with around 100 jobs likely to be created.
- 6.30 Loss of potential residential accommodation is also a relevant consideration. Whilst there is no existing residential accommodation on the site, the site allocation Policy CR14d stipulates a potential residential use of the upper floors (indicative capacity of 36-54 dwellings) of any new development on the site. The extant 2018 planning permission also includes provision of thirty-five dwellings to the arcade

part of the site and eight dwellings to the upper floors of the Market Place buildings, including thirteen affordable housing units

- 6.31 Whilst the current proposals seek to retain the eight residential units to the upper floors of the Market Place buildings the thirty-five dwellings to the upper floors of the arcade part of the site are no longer proposed. This loss of potential residential accommodation is disappointing and in particular the loss of 13 affordable homes. However, it should be noted that the eight units still proposed to the upper floors of the Market Place buildings would be subject to an affordable housing contribution in accordance with Policy H3 (Affordable Housing). The Applicant has agreed to a policy compliant level of contribution to be secured by way of a section 106 legal agreement which equates to £213k. The mix of units proposed is four x 1-bedroom units, three x 2-bedroom units and one x 3-bedroom unit. This mix is considered appropriate for the town centre location in accordance with Policy CR6 (Living in Central Reading) which seeks that developments provide a range of housing opportunities.
- 6.32 Provision of new Housing within the Borough is supported by Policy H1 (Provision of Housing) which sets the housing provision target over the plan period. The Council's Annual Monitoring Report sets out that the Borough can demonstrate a strong five-year housing supply in accordance with the requirements of the NPPF. Therefore, there is no current overriding need to provide residential dwellings where other policy considerations allow other development types. It should also be noted that the site allocation policy CR14d sets out that use of the upper floors of development on the site should be in residential and/or office use and therefore there is clear potential for the site to come forward without providing residential accommodation that would in principle accord with this policy. Nonetheless, whilst there is some justification for not bringing forward all the residential units proposed under the extant planning permission this is still considered a shortfall compared to the consented development and one which would also fall to be assessed in the overall planning balance judgement of the application.
- 6.33 In terms of the proposed use, the upper floors of the arcade part of the site would consist of 182 hotel bedrooms under the C1 hotel use class. As with similar proposals, occupation of the hotel units on a short stay basis only in accordance with Policy CR6 (Living in Central Reading) would be secured by way of a section 106 legal agreement to secure the following terms:
- no hotel room shall be used for any use other than as a C1 Use
  - no hotel room 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 hotel rooms 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 hotel room for a continuous period for more than 3 months to the same Customer or Customers



- not to require Customers of any hotel room 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 hotel rooms

### **Demolition, height & massing, appearance and effect on Heritage Assets**

- 6.34 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 EN3 (Enhancement of Conservation Areas) seeks that the special interest and character of such areas is conserved and enhanced
- 6.35 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 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.
- 6.36 The proposal has been carefully assessed by officers in relation to the Heritage Assets within and surrounding the site. As set out in the introduction section of this report the application site falls partly within the London Street/ Market Place Conservation Area, the site contains listed buildings and a building of Townscape merit; and the immediately surrounding area contains important Listed Buildings including the Grade II\* Town Hall and Grade I Listed St Laurence's Church.
- 6.37 The London Street / Market Place Conservation Area Appraisal defines the features of the conservation area that contribute to its special interest. Those features relevant to the part of the conservation where the application site is located include>
- Presence of one of Reading's three Medieval Churches (St Laurence's)
  - 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Century timber framed buildings found to Market Place
  - 19<sup>th</sup> Century Municipal buildings to Blagrove Street including the Town Hall building and Museum
  - Examples of red, blue and buff brick buildings reflecting Readings extensive local brickworks
  - Public open space and trees to Town Hall Square and Market Place

- 6.38 These designations have also been noted by the applicant and the application submission is accompanied by a detailed Heritage Statement.

*No.s 27-32 Market Place*

- 6.39 The Market Place listed building buildings at no.s 27-32 are grade II listed and are in poor condition both internally and externally and Officers have raised concerns with the Owner over the last few years, including issuing of warning letters, with regard to the upkeep, condition and security of the buildings following a series of break ins. Owners of listed buildings have a duty of care to maintain the buildings and their heritage significance under the Listed Buildings Act. At the end of May 2021, the Applicant began a series of essential works and repairs to the listed buildings following discussions with Officers and Conservation and Urban Design Officer. These works are being carried out separately to the current listed building consent application as essential works under their duty of care. The works include:

- Clearing of all rainwater good and necessary leads repairs
- Overhaul of roof slopes replacing damaged and missing tiles
- Re-pair to leadwork to flat roof areas
- Removal of air conditioning units
- Repairs to glazing and timber windows
- Securing all windows to intruders and water ingress
- Re-painting of external elevations

- 6.40 The Applicant has advised that a report evidencing the works that have been carried out will be provided to Officers and Members of the Planning Applications Committee prior to the Committee meeting. This will be included as update report to the Committee for this item.

- 6.41 The current listed building consent application is also accompanied by a more detailed condition report of the listed buildings and schedule of repairs. This includes the works already untaken by the application but also other works, largely internal that, that would go beyond the scope of the essential works being undertaken by the owner separately to these applications. The additional works proposed this more detailed schedule include:

- Soft strip of all damp affected plaster including laths to allow underlying brick and timber to breath and dry out
- Inspection of all timbers together with studs to internal walls and application to all timbers suitable for retention of anti-fungicidal timber preservation treatment.
- Where required new timbers to be spliced using matching hardwood or softwood and installed adjacent to existing leaving the original timbers in situ (also treated with anti-fungal treatment to prevent further decay).
- Replacement of timber windows that are beyond repair with new windows to match existing

6.42 The repair works already undertaken and the more detailed works outlined above have been reviewed by the Conservation and Urban Design Officer who considers these appropriate to ensure the preservation of the significance of the listed buildings. Implementation of the more detailed schedule of works is to be secured as part of the section 106 legal agreement to require this work to be completed prior to first occupation of the permitted hotel. Therefore, if the event that the development is implemented in a phased manner with the hotel element being built out first this works to the listed buildings as a minimum would still be secured. It should be noted that under the extant planning permission on the site there is no requirement of that permission or associated listed building consent and legal agreement to require the works to the Market Place listed buildings to be carried out.

6.43 In relation to the works to the listed buildings proposed under the current applications the proposals are the same as that approved under the extant planning permission and listed building consent. This comprises internal works to re-provide retail units and a public house at ground floor and the new residential units above. The major alterations proposed relate to a demolition of a series of modern extensions to the rear of the listed buildings and reinstatement of the original rear elevations of the listed buildings using sympathetic materials and detailing. The rear elevations of the listed building would be visible from the passageway and courtyard area through the site that is to be re-provided as part of the development. The proposals also include repair of the existing shop fronts and removal of modern shop front additions.

6.44 The submitted heritage statement sets out a detailed assessment of all the external and internal changes proposed and the Officer assessment of these works remains the same as under consideration of the previous application. Officers are satisfied that that internal works to the core areas of the listed buildings would involve minimal loss of original fabric and notably the plan form of the buildings would be retained and, in some places, enhanced via reinstatement of internal walls. The demolition of the poor-quality modern additions to the rear of the listed buildings and reinstatement of original rear elevations is considered to be a significant benefit as is the removal of modern additions to the existing shopfronts. Existing doors to the shopfronts that formerly provided access to the office accommodation to the upper floors would be retained and adapted to provide access to the new residential units. Officers consider that the proposed works to the listed buildings include a number of benefits which in overall terms would both preserve and enhance their historic significance, including:

- Securing the viable reuse of the listed buildings on Site (which are currently vacant and their conditions deteriorating) in the interests of their future conservation;
- Works of required repair, refurbishment and ongoing maintenance of the historic buildings, funded by their conversion and reuse;
- Reinstatement of a private residential entrance to the front elevation of Nos.27-28 Market Place;

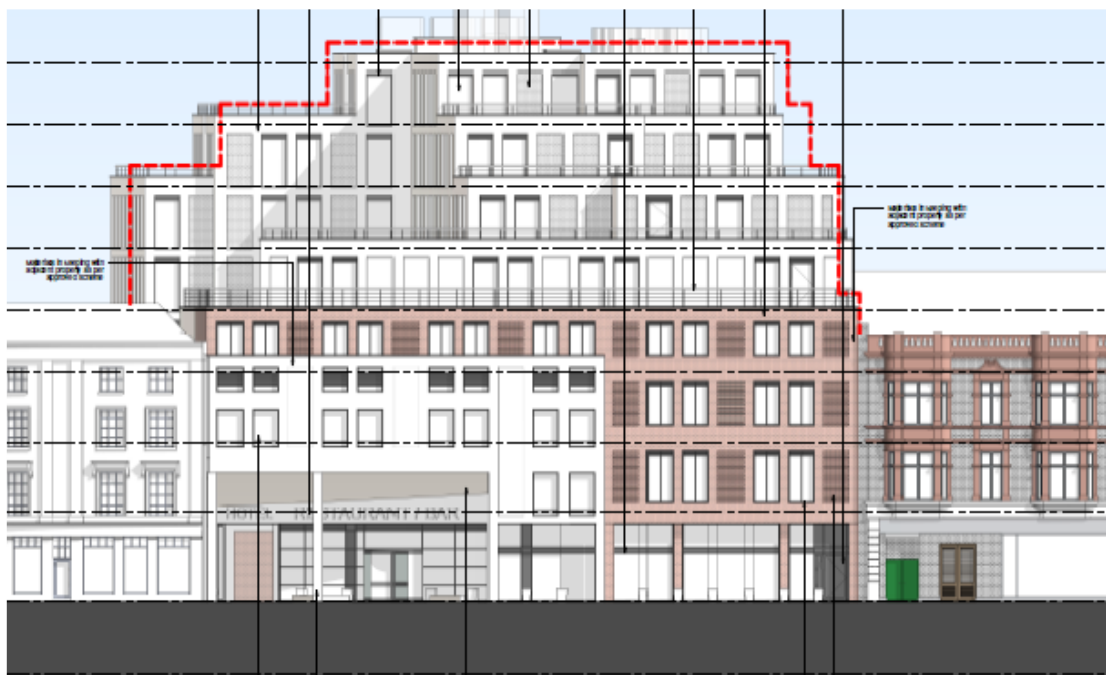
- Reinstatement of the front elevation of the former Coopers Arms pub including removal of modern fanlight above entrance.
  - Removal of unsympathetic modern extensions to better reveal the historic form and appearance of the listed buildings;
  - Reinstatement of traditional timber sash window frames to No.32 Market Place;
  - Reinstatement of the rear room of Nos.27-28 Market Place (which had become incorporated within Coopers Arm pub footprint)
  - Reinstatement of the original proportions of the street vault at basement level to Nos.27-28 Market Place;
  - Reinstatement of a staircase between the ground and upper floors of No.32 Market Place, as there would have been historically;
- 6.45 It should be noted that the works proposed to the Market Place listed buildings are identical to that which is subject to the existing planning permission and listed building consent.
- 6.46 Implementation of the works to demolish the modern additions to the rear of no.s 27-32 Market Place, rebuilding of these rear elevations and provision of the enlarged passage way and courtyard along the public right of way through the site is also to be secured prior to first occupation of the hotel as part of a s106 agreement.
- 6.47 The proposed listed building works are considered to preserve the buildings themselves and enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area in which they are located. Details of materials, internal finishes and bespoke methods of construction can be satisfactorily secured by conditions.

*No. 173-175 Friar Street*

- 6.48 In relation to the demolition of the existing building at 173-175 Friar Street this building is of Townscape Merit but is not itself Listed (non-designated heritage asset). The removal of this building will alter the appearance of the conservation area but is not considered to result in significant harm to the conservation area (or setting of nearby listed buildings) subject to its replacement being of high architectural quality which is discussed below. It is noted that substantial construction works have been carried out to the rear of the building by virtue of previous permissions at the site, so the building is not wholly intact at present. Additionally, it is considered by officers that the current scheme for the restoration of existing Listed Buildings and regeneration of vacant buildings is a welcome opportunity to improve this important area to make a positive contribution to the townscape and significance of the heritage assets. The removal of the existing building is therefore justified on this basis.
- 6.49 The proposed new built form to the arcade part of the site has, following pre-application discussions with Officers, been kept largely within the envelope of the building permitted under the extant planning permission and follows a similar

approach in terms of design and use of materials. The image below shows the proposed Friar Street elevation of the building with a red line outline indicating the massing envelope of the building permitted under the extant consent.

- 6.50 In terms of the height, massing and design it is noted that the prevailing heights of the adjacent buildings within the Conservation Area are 4 storey with the existing buildings exceeding this height being the Town Hall, St Laurence's Church and the Clock Tower that forms the Corn Exchange Arcade Entrance on Market Place. At 8 storeys in height the building is not a 'tall building' in the context of Policy CR10 (Tall Buildings) which relates only to commercial buildings of 10 storeys or more and residential buildings of 12 storeys or more.



*Comparative Friar Street Elevation (red line shows envelope of extant permission)*

- 6.51 The proposals consist of an 8 storey building with the top four floors of the building gradually recessed from the Friar Street frontage. This was the same approach that was adopted under the existing permission in order to set back the tallest parts of the massing away from Friar Street frontage and soften the massing of the upper floors to longer range views given the buildings greater height when compared to those in its immediate surroundings. It should be noted that the previous scheme did also incorporate angled and off-set position of the recessed upper floors but this is no longer proposed under the current applications as a result of construction difficulties with this approach identified by the Applicant. Notwithstanding this Officers consider that the recessed nature of the upper floors still acts as a suitable design approach to soften the massing of the upper floors.
- 6.52 In terms of the detailed design of the building this again reflects the principle of the extant permission with the Friar Street frontage of the building having the

appearance of two individual buildings. The western part of the building is proposed in light ashlar sandstone to reflect the light stone appearance of nos 23-26 Market Place, a grade II listed building, which adjoins the site to the west. The height of this part of the building has also been designed to reflect the parapet height of the adjoining listed building to providing continuity and sympathetic transition within the street-scene. The eastern portion of the building frontage is proposed in red brick to reflect the materiality of the existing building and those found elsewhere on Friar Street. Panels of brick detailing are also included to the red brick part of the building to add visual interest. The fourth floor of the building is proposed in red brick and spans the full width of the building, running across the top of the stone part of the building to tie the two distinct parts of the building frontage together. The predominant use of red brick reflects that on surrounding buildings and part of the special interest of the surrounding conservation area.



*Proposed visual Friar Street (Town Hall Square Entrance) (not showing additional column to frontage)*

- 6.53 The proposed window proportions and alignment to the upper floors of the Friar Street frontage have also been designed to reflect window hierarchy of the adjoining buildings either side of the site to further aid the integration of the building within the street and town hall square. Whilst the window hierarchy differs between the two different elements of the building it is considered that this is important to soften the transition between the existing and proposed buildings and that the distinct differences in design and materiality to the two elements facilitate this in a sympathetic manner.
- 6.54 The applicant has provided a views study from surrounding streets to assist in understanding the wider visual impact of the proposals upon the surrounding area. A series of visuals showing this are set out below and include comparisons with the already consented development.

View across Town Hall Square form corner of Friar Street and Blagrove Street



*As consented*



*As proposed*

View from The Forbury

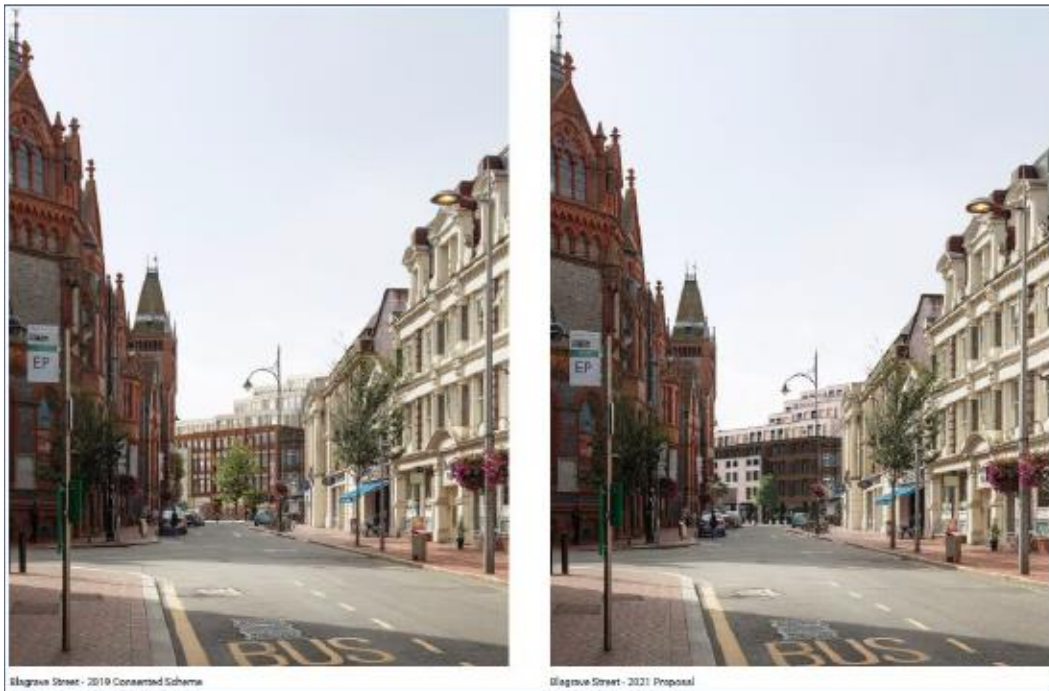


*As consented*



*As proposed*

View from Blagrove Street



*As consented*

*As proposed*

View from Market Place



*As consented*

*As proposed*

- 6.55 As per the extant planning permission the overall height of the proposed building has been set lower than the tower of St Laurence Church to maintain the latter's visual prominence. The stepped and recessed form of the upper floors also ensures that the tallest elements of the proposal are set furthest from the external



boundary of the site on Market Place/Friar Street; and therefore, also furthest from the Listed Buildings located outside of the site and the adjacent Conservation Area. The use of light-colored brick/stone to the upper floors also assists in softening the visual impact of the massing from longer range views.

- 6.56 In terms of more detailed design matters the main difference between the consented scheme and that proposed relates to the position of the Friar Street frontage. As existing, the frontage of no.173-175 Friar Street displays a significant set-back from the frontage of the adjoined building to the east (no. 23-26 Market Place) but sits flush with the front elevation of the Marks and Spencer building which adjoins the frontage to the west. Under the extant permission the frontage of the proposed building was to be brought forward to reinstate the previously curved historic building line adjoining no.s 23-26 Market Place. The current proposals still seek to reinstate this building line but incorporate a much larger double height entrance to the western stone element of the building frontage which would provide access to the public right of way through the site and entrance to the hotel restaurant and bar.
- 6.57 This change is proposed following further investigation into the area to the front of the site which has revealed a major meeting point of a significant number of underground utilities and services. These services and utilities require horizontal and vertical clearance zones around them to allow operators to maintain and access the infrastructure at all times. The proposed larger and double height entrance would allow this access to be maintained. The entrance would be double height at the point of the frontage but has been designed to be angled such that it slopes down to single storey height to the rear at the point of the existing building frontage and proposed entrances to the restaurant, bar and passageway.
- 6.58 Officers consider the larger entrance has been designed sympathetically and provides a landmark entrance to the hotel when viewed from the town hall square. The large entrance is also likely to draw people to the site and encourage footfall via the passageway and small public courtyard area through the site to Market Way that is to be opened up as part of the development. A series of planters would be provided within the entrance areas as soft landscaping features together with external lighting and stone paving to reflect that found with the wider square.
- 6.59 Amended plans have also been submitted during the course of the application to provide a vertical column to the entrance to provide some additional grounding and reduce the possible poor perception of the overall width of the entrance when viewed from the square. Due to the underground services this column would not be structural but would be a removable aesthetic feature. Materials used for the column would be different to the stone façade due to the need for the structure to be lightweight. Full details of this column would be secured by way of pre-commencement condition. The entrance to the bar and restaurant as well as entrance to the passageway through the site are considered to provide appropriate active frontages to Friar Street and within Town Hall square.

- 6.60 The proposed larger entrance also has the benefit of enabling an existing side door to the adjoining listed building at no. 23-26 Market Place to be retained with access to this door provided under the covered entrance area.
- 6.61 The side and rear elevation of the building would be visible within the site and to the rear from Market Way which would also provide access to the proposed passageway through the site and small courtyard area. The rear elevations of the building would be constructed of light brickwork, pale reconstructed stone and glazing. All facing materials will be secured via condition, including on-site samples, to ensure the design quality envisaged at application stage is achieved in practice.
- 6.62 As per the previously consented scheme, it is proposed to reinstate the historic 1893 right of way through the site which links Friar Street and Market Way to the rear, which connects to Market Place and currently provides pedestrian access to the rear of Sainsburys. Continuation of this route was previously secured by way of a permissive path agreement which the former arcade operator of the site which allowed public access through the central avenue of the arcade to Market Way before it became vacant and the route was boarded up and shut off to the public.
- 6.63 Reinstatement of this route and addition of small courtyard area as an extended area of public realm within the site is considered a significant benefit of the scheme which would reactivate this area of the town centre and provide enhanced connectivity to Market Way. As part of the section 106 agreement it is proposed to secure an amendment to the permissive path agreement to reflect the slightly amended orientation of the new route through the site now proposed and use of this by the public during the daytime operational hours of the hotel. No change to the position of Market Way is proposed.
- 6.64 The public right of way route through the site would also be laid in stone paving and incorporate soft landscaping planters along its route. The main entrance to the hotel would be located centrally off the route where it widens by virtue of the proposed demolition of the modern additions to the rear of the Market Place listed buildings to provide a small courtyard area. The siting of the hotel entrance in this location is considered to be positive as it would encourage footfall and activation of this part of the site. A spill out ground floor dining terrace area is also proposed within the central courtyard area next to the hotel entrance serving the hotel restaurant and bar, further activating this space. As discussed in the land use principles section of this report the ground floor elevation of the hotel along the passageway through the site has been designed in a sectional manner as a nod to the retail arcade history of the shown in the visuals below.
- 6.65 Securing implementation of the works to demolish the modern additions to the rear of no.s 27-32 Market Place, rebuilding of these rear elevations and provision of the enlarged passage way and courtyard along the public right of way through the site prior to first occupation of the hotel as part of the s106 works will also ensure that the appropriate setting and finish is provided to the public realm area

and main entrance to the hotel. Conditions are recommended to secure details of the external materials and finishes of the rear of the Market Place listed buildings and details of the design and appearance of the proposed gates at either end of the proposed reinstated passageway.



*Proposed Visuals from Passageway and Courtyard*

- 6.66 In overall terms Officers consider that the proposals have been well considered in terms of scale, massing and articulation and display a high design quality which builds on many of the positive elements of the scheme subject of the extant planning permission. The proposals are considered to integrate satisfactorily with the character of the surrounding area and together with the reinstatement of the public route through the site connecting to Market Way and creation of a small public courtyard area, are considered to create new visual interest in the street-scene within Town Hall Square. In this respect it is considered that the proposed replacement building would be of suitable quality such that no objection to the demolition of the building of townscape merit at no.175 Friar Street is warranted. The proposed internal alterations to no.s 27-32 Market Place are considered to preserve and enhance their historic character.
- 6.67 Notwithstanding the high quality design and well thought out nature of the proposals Officers do, as per the development subject of the extant planning permission, identify some minor harm to the setting of surrounding listed buildings

(Grade II listed no.s 23-34 Market Place and Grade I listed St Laurence's Church) as a result of the height and massing of the proposed hotel building and its proximity to these listed buildings. It is acknowledged that the building design incorporates a number of features intended to mitigate its impact and Officers consider that the harm identified would be 'less than substantial harm' which as per paragraph 196 of the NPPF (2019) requires to be weighed against the public benefits of the development.

- 6.68 Officers also identify 'less than substantial harm' to the setting of the Market Place / London Street Conservation Area on the basis of the impact on St Laurence's Church identified above given the church is identified as a feature of special interest within the conservation area. Views of the upper floors of the building behind the elevations of no.s 23-24 Market Place from within the Market Place public square, an area identified as being of special interest within the Conservation Area, is also considered to contribute to the 'less than substantial harm' identified.
- 6.69 As assessment of this harm weighed against the public benefits of the proposals will form part of the conclusion of this report.

#### **Archaeology**

- 6.70 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.
- 6.71 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 notable archaeological activity, dating as far back as the 11th century and including the burial of human remains. Berkshire Archaeology advise that a detailed multi-phase archaeological investigation will be required, and two conditions are recommended to secure submission and approval of a detailed scheme of investigation and post-excavation programme of works.

#### **Natural Environment**

- 6.72 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.

#### *Biodiversity*

- 6.73 The application site is currently entirely covered in built form and does not contain any vegetation or landscaping, but a bat survey submitted with the application indicates that works proposed to the roofs of no.s 27-32 Market Place would result in disturbance to a number of Pipistrelle bat roosts. This report has been reviewed by the Council's Ecological Consultant who is satisfied that the survey and report have been carried out to an appropriate standard. Given the works would disturb the roosts of a protected species the Applicant will be required to obtain a licence to carry out the works from Natural England and a condition is recommended to require evidence of this licence being secured to be submitted and approved by the Local Planning Authority.
- 6.74 The application proposes to provide new bat habitats within the development in the form of bat boxes (and bird boxes) and subject to a condition to secure submission and approval of the detailed location and specifications of the bat (and bird) boxes the Ecological Consultant is satisfied that the proposals would enhance conditions for bats (and birds) on the site. This together with the proposed extensive areas of green roof proposed to the flat roof of the upper floors of the building are considered to result in a net gain in biodiversity across the site as a result of the proposed development.

#### *Landscaping*

- 6.75 The Council's adopted Tree Strategy (2020) identifies that the site sits within a low canopy cover ward and as such, there is a need to incorporate and maximise greening to improve green features within the ward, improve air quality and soften the appearance from within the conservation area.
- 6.76 The Natural Environment Officer has reviewed the proposals and notes the addition of the enhanced public route through the site and open space courtyard area when compared to the development subject of the extant planning permission. This addition is considered to be a significant benefit of the development in terms of potential for landscaping and greening of the site. Planters are also indicated within the large entrance area from Town Hall Square. Detailed landscaping specifications and management details are to be secured by conditions.
- 6.77 The proposed extensive areas of green roof to the flat roof areas of floors (4<sup>th</sup> floor and up) are a positive although will not be visible from street level but do provide further biodiversity enhancements. However, the green roof to fourth floor level includes a number raised planters to the Friar Street frontage which would be visible from Town Hall Square and are a benefit in terms of increasing greening over the site.



*Proposed visual showing green roof areas to hotel*

- 6.78 The proposed green roof areas would not be publicly accessible areas from within the hotel with access only for servicing and maintenance. Full details of the proposed green roof specification and its management/maintenance will also be secured by way of condition.
- 6.79 Subject to the recommended conditions the proposals are considered acceptable in terms of biodiversity and landscaping matters and are considered to an enhancement above the previously consented development on the site.

#### **Amenity**

- 6.80 Policy CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity) states that development should not adversely harm the living environments of existing or new residential properties, including privacy, outlook and daylighting. Policy CC7 (Design and the Public Realm) seeks to create safe and accessible environments. 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.

*Standard of Accommodation and Daylight /Sunlight*

- 6.81 The main consideration in terms of future occupiers is the standard of accommodation to be provided for within the eight residential flats proposed by way of conversion works to the upper floors of no.s 27-32 Market Place.
- 6.82 Policy H5 (Standards for New Housing) seeks that new housing outside of the town centre is designed to adhere to the nationally prescribed spaces standards. Whilst the site is location with the town centre, it is welcomed that the application proposes that all of the residential units would meet or exceed the national standards. The flats would have outlook to both the Market Place and the rear of the buildings with many of the units being triple aspect. All habitable rooms have at least one external window and are considered to be well served in terms of outlook and daylighting.
- 6.83 The rear of the flats would face the eastern elevation of the hotel across the rear courtyard area. This elevation of the hotel is proposed to be mainly brick but punctuated with some windows to serve bedrooms, however these are sited over 20.3m from the nearest window of the Market Place properties and between 26.7m and 29.2m at the furthest point such that it is not considered there would be any adverse overlooking from the hotel to the flats or vice versa. This would accord with Policy CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity) which seeks a minimum back to back separation of 20m between windows to protect privacy. This is an enhancement on the situation provided under the extant permission whereby the rear of the flats to the Market Place buildings faced the formerly proposed new office/residential block at much closer distances of between 8m and 17m. Therefore, outlook and daylighting to the flats is considered to be much enhanced under the current proposals. A condition is recommended to ensure the green roof areas to the upper floors are not used as terrace or balcony areas to prevent more direct overlooking from these areas.
- 6.84 There are no adopted standards for hotel rooms within adopted planning policies. However, the hotel rooms proposed range from 19 sqm to 32 sqm and are all provided with en-suite accommodation to suit the requirements of a four-star standard operator. The majority of rooms will be double although 21 of the total rooms will be suitable for larger occupations (family) and 10 rooms will also be designed to be universally accessible. Each room will be served by windows and are considered to be served by adequate levels of natural daylight and sunlight.
- 6.85 The closest existing occupiers near to the application site are the residential flats on the upper floors of no.s 36-42 Market Place to the south of the site which have rear windows which would face towards the proposed hotel building, albeit at an oblique angle. An assessment of the impact of the proposed development upon access to daylight and sunlight to existing surrounding occupiers has been

submitted with the application. This concludes that loss of daylight to all but one of the neighboring windows would be well within the Building Research Establishment (BRE) guidelines and that the loss of light to the single impacted window would be a minor adverse effect in the overall context. This is the same conclusion as the daylight assessment relating to the development subject of the extant planning permission which was reviewed on behalf of the LPA by the BRE and who agreed with the report's findings. Given the current proposal relates to a building of reduced overall height (albeit a minor reduction) and that parts of the currently proposed building are set further from the rear of the Market Place properties Officers are satisfied that the impact of the current proposed building on daylight to existing surrounding residential occupiers would be acceptable and in overall terms there would be a lesser impact given the small reduction in height of the building. Loss of sunlight to the neighboring building is not an issue as the relevant windows face within 90 degrees of due north.

- 6.86 In respect of overlooking, visual dominance and overbearing matters, it is acknowledged that for occupiers of the existing flats to the upper floors of no.s 36-42 Market Place the view from rear facing units will change as a result of the proposed development. These units are set in a tight knit urban context at present with the Sainsbury's building to the rear. However, given the oblique angle of the relationship between the two sites and separation distance (15m to 20m) it is not considered that the proposals would result in any significant detrimental impacts in terms of overbearing or visual dominance.
- 6.87 Impact of the proposed built form on the other units adjoining the site is not considered to be significantly adverse due to the commercial nature of these units.

#### *Amenity Space*

- 6.88 Policy H10 (Private and Communal Outdoor Space) sets standards for access to suitable private or communal outdoor space for new residential dwellings. The policy acknowledges that flats within central Reading are unlikely to be able to meet these standards in full. Due to the location of the eight proposed flats, to the upper floors of no.s 27-32 Market Place, these dwellings would not be served directly by private or communal amenity space. This situation is not uncommon for town centre developments with the flats being well served by leisure and recreation facilities within the town centre with Forbury Gardens close by. Future occupiers of the flats would also have convenient access to the public courtyard area proposed to rear. Given the central location of the site Officers are satisfied that future occupiers would be served by suitable access to outdoor space.

#### *Noise and Disturbance*

- 6.89 The application is accompanied by a detailed noise assessment and mitigation scheme considering both the existing uses surrounding the site and the new uses proposed. This assessment and mitigation scheme has been reviewed by



Environmental Protection Officers who are satisfied that the glazing, ventilation (mechanical ventilation heat recovery system for hotel) and insulation proposed for both future occupiers of the residential flats and hotel bedrooms would ensure acceptable internal noise levels are achieved. Implementation of these measures prior to occupation of the relevant parts of the development are to be secured by condition. Secondary glazing is proposed the front windows of the upper floor flats to the listed buildings and details and specifications of this can also be secured by way of appropriate condition.

- 6.90 The Environmental Protection Officer has noted that the noise assessment and mitigation scheme does not specifically assess noise from the proposed gym which can be high risk in terms of structure borne noise and therefore a separate condition is recommended to secure a supplementary noise assessment and mitigation scheme in respect of the gym.
- 6.91 Details of mechanical plant to be installed, such as that proposed in connection with the ground floor restaurant, are also to be secured by condition, to ensure this is of suitable specification to prevent undue noise impacts.
- 6.92 A condition is also recommended secure submission and approval of a servicing and refuse management plan to ensure of deliveries and waste collection associated with the site, are carried out in manner which can protect both future and existing occupiers from unreasonable noise disturbance.
- 6.93 A draft operational management plan for the hotel, bar and restaurant uses together with use of the passageway way through the site and courtyard area has been submitted with the application. A final operational management plan will be secured by condition prior to first occupation of the hotel
- 6.94 The draft operation management plan sets out that the hotel would operate 24 hours a day and the following opening hours in the table below are proposed for the restaurant and bar uses. The Environmental Protection Officer considers the proposed hours of use to be appropriate for this town centre location to avoid unreasonable noise disturbance to both existing and proposed surrounding occupiers. The public house to Market Place is proposed to operate 0700-2400 hours Monday to Saturday and 0700-2300 Sundays and Bank Holidays.

Day / Area	Restaurant	Bar
Monday - Friday	07:00 - 23:00	10:00 - 23:00
Saturday	07:00 - 23:00	10:00 - 23:00
Sunday	07:00 - 23:00	10:00 - 22:00
Bank Holidays	07:00 - 23:00	10:00 - 23:00
Terrace area / outdoor eating and drinking	07:00 - 23:00	10:00 - 23:00

- 6.95 The hotel reception and front desk will be staffed throughout the night to facilitate guest and visitor arrivals and departures through the courtyard entrance accessed from Friar Street. This will be supplemented by a comprehensive CCTV monitoring

system and access control system to prevent unwanted access and anti-social behaviour. The passageway through the site connecting Friar Street to Market Way would be secured by gates both from the Friar Street and Market Way entrances which would be closed and locked overnight (in line with the hours of use of the proposed restaurant and bar areas) to ensure there are no incidents of noise or anti-social behaviour (rough sleeping too) within these areas during night time hours.

- 6.96 The draft operational management plan also sets out that any music played within the bars will be subject to automatic sound level limiters with the levels to be agreed with the LPA when the final operational management plan is submitted for approval by way of condition.
- 6.97 Conditions are also recommended to secure submission and approval of a construction method statement to ensure surrounding occupiers are not unduly impacted by noise (and dust) associated with construction works associated with the proposed development and compliance with the Council's standards hours for construction work (0800hrs to 1800hrs Mondays to Fridays, and 0800hrs to 1300hrs on Saturdays, and not at any time on Sundays and Bank or Statutory Holidays).

#### *Odour*

- 6.98 The application is accompanied by a detailed odour assessment and mitigation scheme in relation to the proposed restaurant. The Environmental Protection Officer is satisfied that the specification of the proposed kitchen extraction system is acceptable to ensure that both existing and future occupiers within and surrounding the site would not be subject to adverse odours. A condition is recommended to secure implementation of the extraction system prior to first occupation of the hotel. A further condition is recommended to require submission and approval of an odour risk assessment and mitigation schemes in the event that any of future occupiers of the three Market Place units involve food preparation and cooking.
- 6.90 Details of the all proposed bin stores are also to be secured by condition including pest and vermin control measures.

#### *Air Quality*

- 6.91 The site is located within a busy town centre location and designated air quality management area (AQMA). An air quality assessment has been submitted with the application and has been reviewed by Environmental Protection Officers who are satisfied that new residential dwellings within the development would not be subject to unacceptable air quality levels.
- 6.92 The submitted air quality assessment also considered potential increased emission and harm to air quality as a result of the proposed development. In this respect the site is located in a highly accessible location with excellent public transport links

including close proximity to Reading Train Station and the development is proposed to be car free with no on-site vehicle parking. As such it is not considered that the development would result in a significant increase in emissions nor any significant adverse impact upon air quality.

#### *Contaminated Land*

- 6.93 The proposals are for a major category development within the town centre and the Environmental Protection Officer recommends conditions are attached to secure submission and approval of a contaminated land assessment (and remediation scheme and its implementation, if required) prior to commencement of any development to ensure that future occupiers are not subject to contamination risks.

#### *Wind and Microclimate*

- 6.94 A wind assessment has been submitted with the application which looks at the microclimate conditions that would be created around the open-air passageway through the site and small central courtyard area. This concludes that the increased width of the passageway and creation of courtyard area would result in an enhancement in the microclimate conditions in this part of the site and acceptable conditions for pedestrians and outdoor seating. The increased width of these areas and separation between the rear of the proposed hotel and rear of the Market Place buildings reduces the potential for generation of strong winds. Officers are satisfied that microclimate conditions at the site would be acceptable for the proposed use and would result in an enhanced situation when compared to the development subject of the extant planning permission.

#### *Access and Security*

- 6.95 The proposed hotel building will be fully accessible for all users with lift access to all floors and entrances to the building providing level access. Ten universally accessible hotel rooms are also proposed providing generally rooms, accessible bathrooms and wider doorways for wheelchair access. Level access is also provided across the right of way through the site that is proposed to be reinstated.
- 6.96 It is not proposed to provide lift access to the residential and retail units to the Market Place properties given that this would necessitate significant intrusions in the building's historic fabric. As with the extant planning permission, given the relatively small number of dwellings proposed and duty to preserve and enhance the historic significance of the listed buildings officers accept that fully accessible units can not be provided to this part of the site.
- 6.97 With regard to security measures the draft operational management plan submitted includes a scheme of security measures for the site. This includes gated access to the passageway through the site with the gates to be closed by the hotel management during night time hours to prevent unauthorised access. The hotel

would be manned 24 hours a day and staff would be able to access the passageway during night time hours using key fob access and similar could facilitate emergency access. Guests would be able enter the hotel and access the reception area during night time hours via the Friar Street entrance to the restaurant/bar areas.

- 6.98 Other security measure proposed for the development include CCTV surveillance across the site, glazed frontages to the ground floor of the hotel, restaurant, bar and gym facing into the passageway and courtyard area to also provide natural surveillance of these areas. External lighting, tactile paving to prevent rough sleeping and strategically located planters are also proposed within the large hotel entrance from Town Hall Square to prevent opportunities for hiding and anti-social behaviour.
- 6.99 The proposals have been reviewed by Thames Valley Police's Crime Prevention Design Adviser who is satisfied that the site security measure proposed are appropriate and raise no objection to the proposed development. Conditions are recommended to secure full details of the proposed CCTV scheme, an external lighting scheme and, as set out earlier in the report, a final operational management plan (including security strategy).
- 6.100 In overall terms, subject to the recommended conditions it is considered that the proposals ensure suitable standards of amenity and the development could operate without adversely impacting upon the amenity of both proposed occupiers and existing occupiers surrounding the site.

### **Transport Matters**

- 6.101 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.
- 6.102 The site is in a central location in close proximity to Reading rail station and is well served by bus links and public car parks. Access restrictions are in operation in Market Place whereby access is restricted to buses, taxis and permit holders between 07:00-11:00 and 16:00-19:00. There are a number of bus stops in Market Place as well as being a well-used bus route. 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.
- 6.103 No on-site parking is to be provided for the development. Given the town centre location, existing extensive parking restrictions nearby and close proximity to public transport routes this is considered to be acceptable. An informative is to be attached to any planning permission to advise that future occupiers of the residential units would not eligible to apply for parking permits to use nearby roads given existing high pressure to on-street parking.

- 6.104 Service access to the hotel and Market Place units is proposed via Market Way providing access to a dedicated servicing entrance to the hotel and rear servicing areas of no.s 27-32 Market Place. Servicing vehicles are proposed to use existing on street loading bays on Market Place and Friar Street. This arrangement is consistent to previous uses and other businesses in the area and Transport Officers are satisfied that this is acceptable. Refuse will be stored within ground floor bin storage areas which is an internal store for the hotel accessed via the dedicated servicing entrance and secure external bin stores store within the courtyard area for the Market Place units (both retail units/pub and flats). Refuse collection is also proposed from Market Place via Market Way. Transport Officers consider this arrangement to be acceptable in principle and a servicing and refuse management plan is proposed to be secured by condition to detail how waste and deliveries would be transferred to and from the collection points on Market Place for all uses on the site.
- 6.105 Cycle storage for the hotel use is located internally at ground floor level, whilst the retail units and pub on Market Place would incorporate mix of internal and external cycle stores with the external one located in the rear courtyard area. Transport Officers are satisfied with the level and accessibility of the cycle storage proposed.
- 6.106 Subject to the recommended conditions Officers are satisfied that the proposals are acceptable in terms of transport related matters.

### **Sustainability**

- 6.107 In accordance with Policy CC2 (Sustainable Design and Construction) the proposed hotel would be required to meet a BREEAM Excellent standard whilst the proposed retail units, pub and flats to the Market Place buildings would be expected to meet a Very Good 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.
- 6.108 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 some of 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.

- 6.109 In this respect the application proposes that the new build hotel element of the would achieve a BREEAM standard of Very Good (with a BREEAM score of 61.86). In terms of BREEAM scoring a Very Good rating is 55 points and above whilst an Excellent score is 70 points and above. The submitted sustainability assessment sets out that an Excellent score has not been achieved given the additional service and infrastructure requirements this would place on the building which would result in additional height and massing and potential harm to the setting of surrounding heritage assets. The assessment also sets out that certain credits do not apply to hotel uses and therefore cannot be achieved and that given the town centre location of the site there is a reliance upon mechanical ventilation to ensure suitable noise environments within the development which further reduce availability of credits.
- 6.110 Separate BREEAM assessments have also been submitted in respect of the Market Place buildings which confirm that the ground floor retail and pub units would achieve a policy compliant BREEAM rating of Very Good (score of 58.81) and that the residential element and conversion of the upper floors of the buildings to eight flats would also achieve a policy compliant rating of Very Good (score of 62.36).
- 6.111 Whilst the proposed BREEAM score for the hotel is a shortfall from the Policy/SPD target level Officers consider that when considered overall the proposed development strikes an appropriate balance between preserving and enhancing the significance of surrounding heritage assets and provision of sustainability measures. In this respect, the proposed hotel building also incorporates provision of an on-site source of decentralised energy provision in the form of an air source heat pump (ASHP). Further details of the ASHP and its provision are to be secured by way of condition which would comply with the requirements of Policy CC4.
- 6.112 The application also incorporates a range of other sustainability measures to help the development adapt to climate change which are considered to align with the intentions of Policy CC3. This includes a 'fabric first' approach to the design and construction to reduce energy demand and carbon emissions. This will include the use of sustainable construction techniques, prioritising sustainable materials, minimising waste generation and maximising recycling. The thermal properties of the building fabric will also exceed the minimum standards within the Building Regulations, energy efficient lighting will also be provided throughout to minimise electricity consumption. As set out in the Natural Environment section of this report the proposals also include provision of extensive areas of green roof (736m<sup>2</sup> which is 36% coverage of the site) which together with the proposed landscaping would significantly enhance the greening of the site.
- 6.113 In terms of sustainable drainage systems (SuDS), the application site is currently 100% impermeable but through the proposed provision of the extensive green roofs together with an underground attenuation tank to be located under the courtyard

area the proposals would result in a significant improvement of the drainage conditions across the site. 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 on sustainability matters.

## **Other Matters**

### *Community Infrastructure Levy*

- 6.114 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 new hotel building consists of approximately 7500sqm of floor space whilst the eight flats consist of approximately 680sqm of floor space which would equate to a potential chargeable level of approximately £1, 280, 000.

### *Employment Skills and Training*

- 6.115 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.

### *Fire Safety*

- 6.116 Although fire safety is not a material planning consideration, the application includes details of the fire strategy for the development designed in accordance with Part B of Building Regulations. Whilst owing to the height of the hotel building (less than 30m) building regulation standards do not require the building to be fitted with sprinklers, a full sprinkler system is proposed throughout.

### *Equalities Impact*

- 6.117 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 There are considered to be a number of benefits associated with the proposed development which include:

- Provision of a high-quality hotel within an accessible town centre location and associated economic benefits and job provision enhancing the vitality and interest of the town centre
- Provision of 8 residential dwellings towards the Borough's housing supply and policy complaint contribution towards off-site affordable housing provision elsewhere within the Borough.
- Reinstatement and activation of historic right of way through the site and associated greater activation of Market Way
- Creation of public courtyard area of open space
- Repair and refurbishment of grade II listed buildings at no.s 27-32 Market Place
- Re-provision of public house and two retail units within Market Place active frontage
- High design quality and use of materials
- Enhancement and activation of the Town Hall Square frontage of the building and public realm.
- Significant biodiversity, landscape and drainage enhancements across the site via extensive green roof areas
- Revitalisation of a prominent vacant and derelict site within the town centre

7.2 However, as set out in appraisal section of this report above Officers have identified that the proposed hotel building as a result of its height and siting would result in 'less than substantial harm' to setting of nearby listed buildings (Grade II listed no.s 23-34 Market Place and Grade I listed St Laurence's Church) as well as the setting of the London Street /Market Place Conservation Area. In accordance with Paragraph 196 of the NPPF this 'less than substantial harm' is required to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposed development.

7.3 The proposed developments lack of compliance with some parts of the site allocation Policy CR14d must also be considered including not bringing forward new office or residential development (as per the extant planning permission on the site) as well as loss of the arcade form.

7.4 However, on balance Officers consider that the benefits of the proposed development would outweigh the shortfalls and identified 'less than substantial harm' to heritage assets. The proposed hotel and associated ancillary uses are acceptable land uses within their own right within the town centre which together with the proposed reinstatement of the historic right of way through the site and creation of small area of public open space, green roofs and landscaping are considered to contribute positively to the interest and vitality of the town centre. The mechanism of securing the repair and refurbishment works to bring the Market Place listed buildings back into viable use within an agreed timeframe required by a



S106 is also a benefit of the proposals in terms of conservation of the listed buildings.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

210163FUL - GRANT full planning permission, subject to conditions and section 106 obligations set out in the recommendation box at the beginning of this report.

210164LBC - GRANT listed building consent, subject to the conditions set out in the recommendation box at the beginning of this report.

**Case Officer: Matt Burns**

Proposed Plans:



Proposed Ground Floor Layout Plan





Proposed First Floor Plan



Proposed Second Floor Plan



Proposed Third Floor Plan



Proposed Fourth Floor Plan



Proposed Fifth Floor Plan





Proposed Sixth Floor Plan



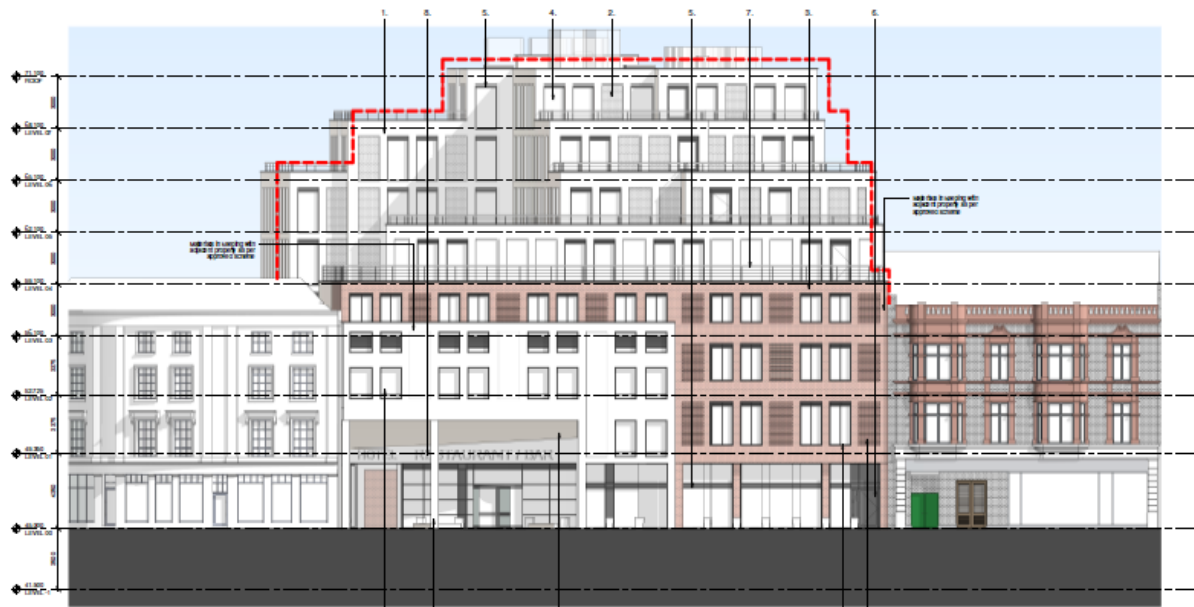
Proposed Seventh Floor Plan



Proposed Roof Plan

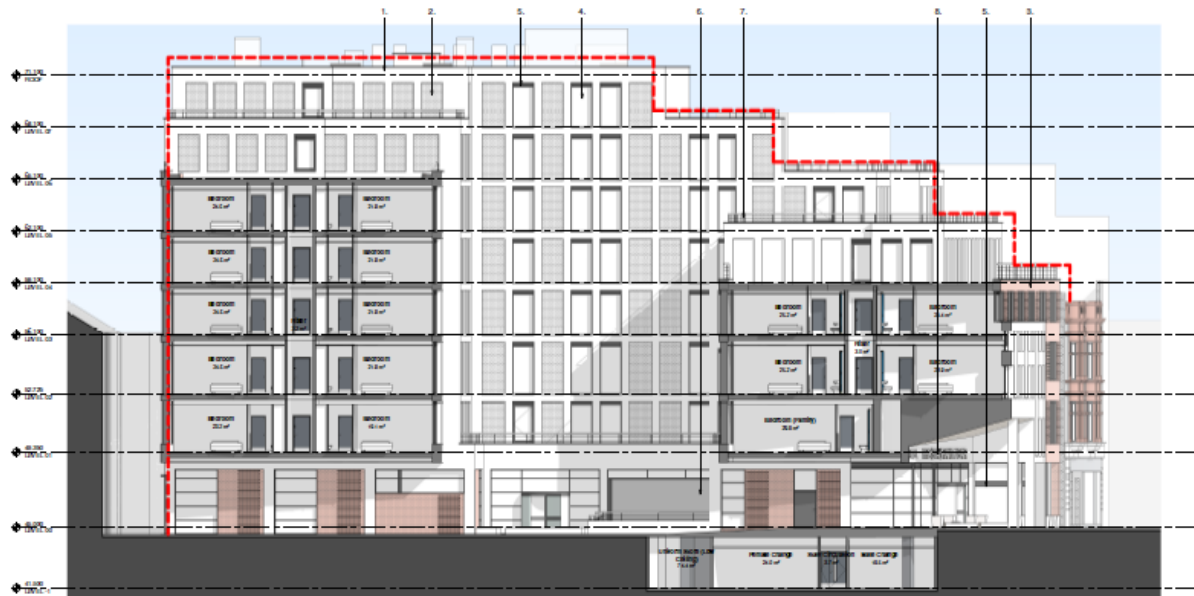


Landscape Plan



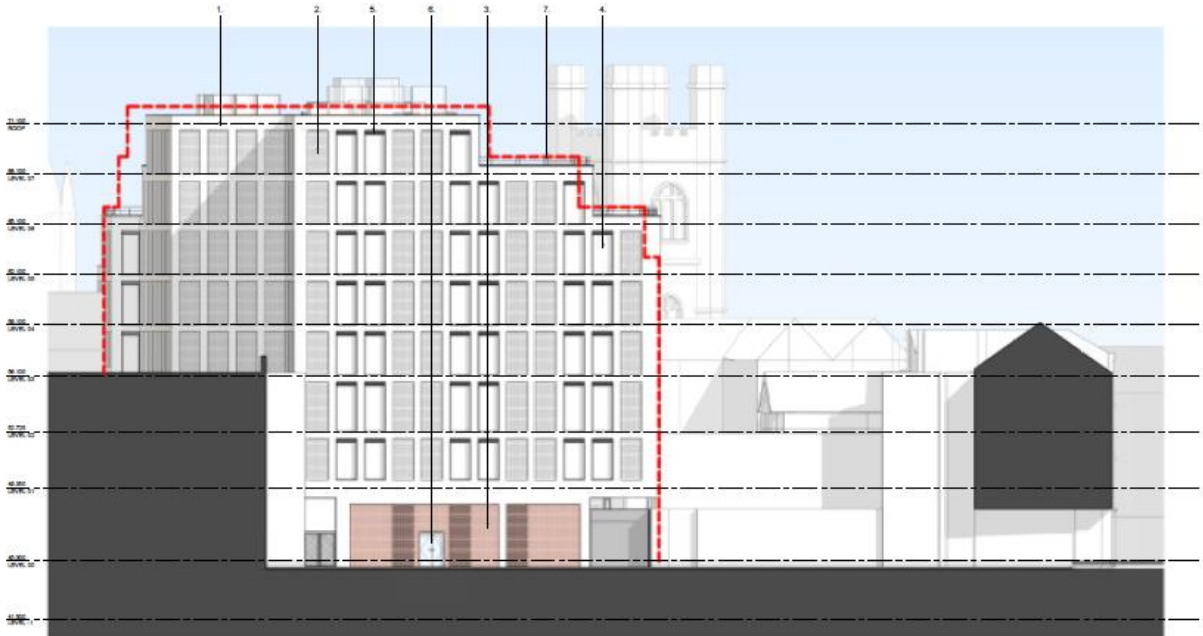
1 GA ELEVATION - NORTH 1  
SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"

- Maintain 10' height with existing canopy, 10' height canopy
- 10' height canopy
- 10' height canopy
- Add this 10' height with existing canopy to new apartment canopy
- Coordinate canopy with existing structure to maintain 10' height canopy to the ground level
- Maintain 10' height with existing canopy, 10' height canopy
- 10' height canopy
- 10' height canopy

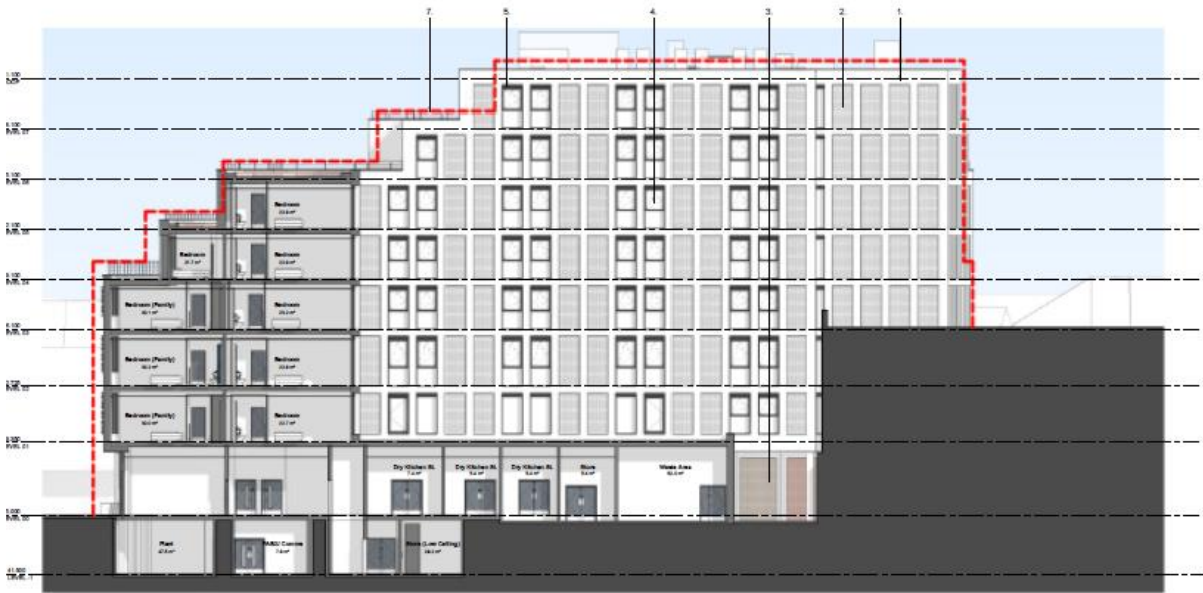


2 GA ELEVATION - EAST  
SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"

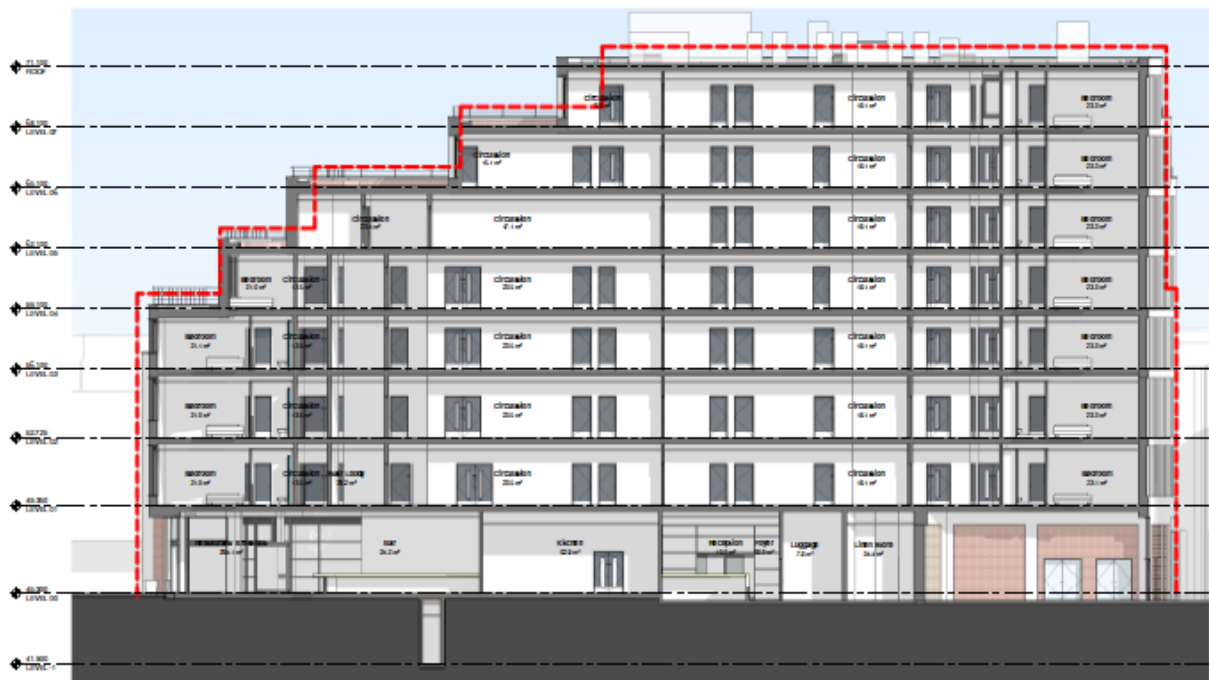
Proposed North and East Elevations



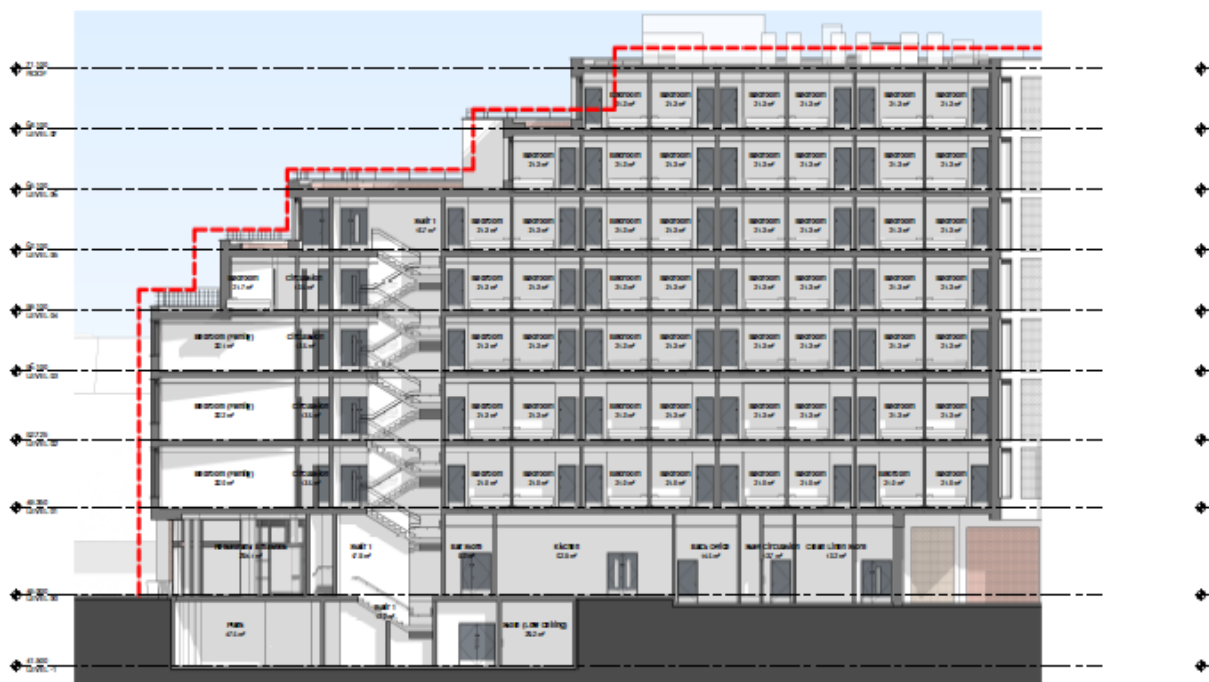
① GA ELEVATION - SOUTH 1  
SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"



Proposed South and West Elevations



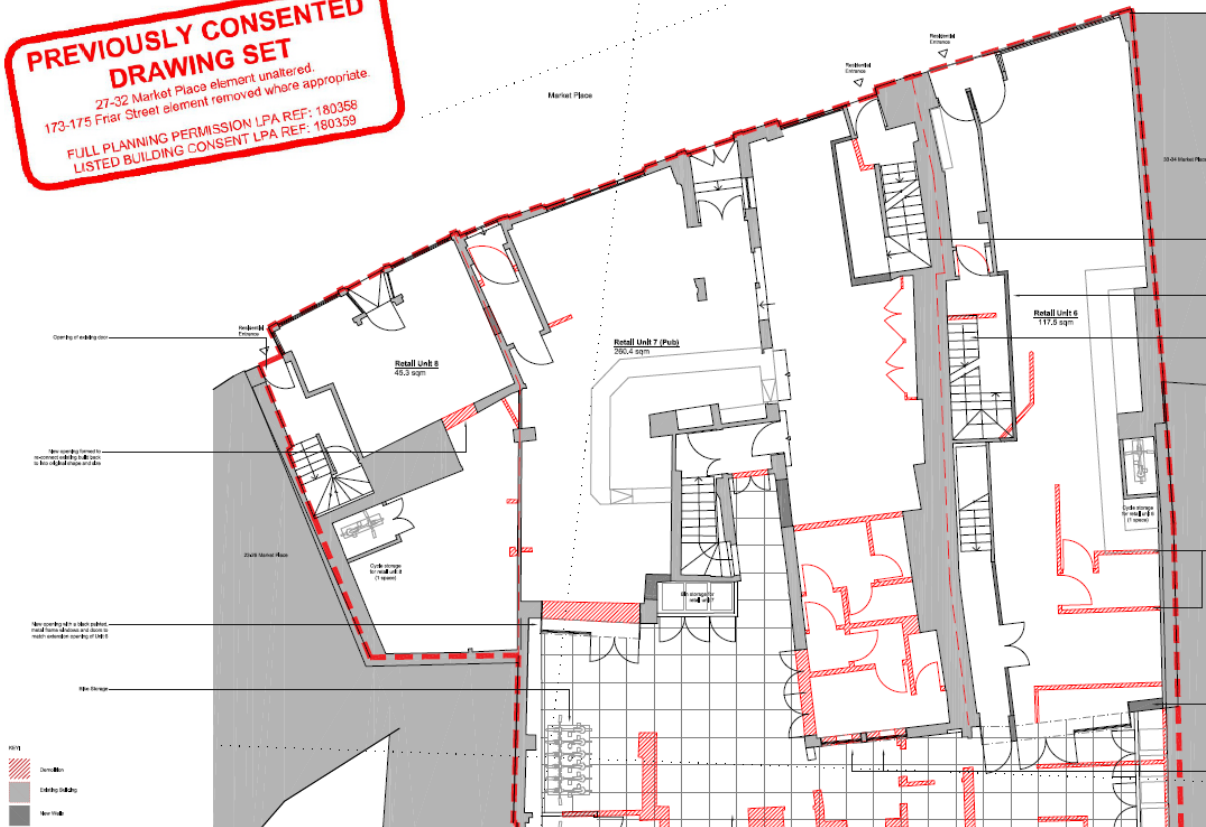
1 GA SECTION - LONG 1  
SCALE: 1/100



2 GA SECTION - LONG 2  
SCALE: 1/100

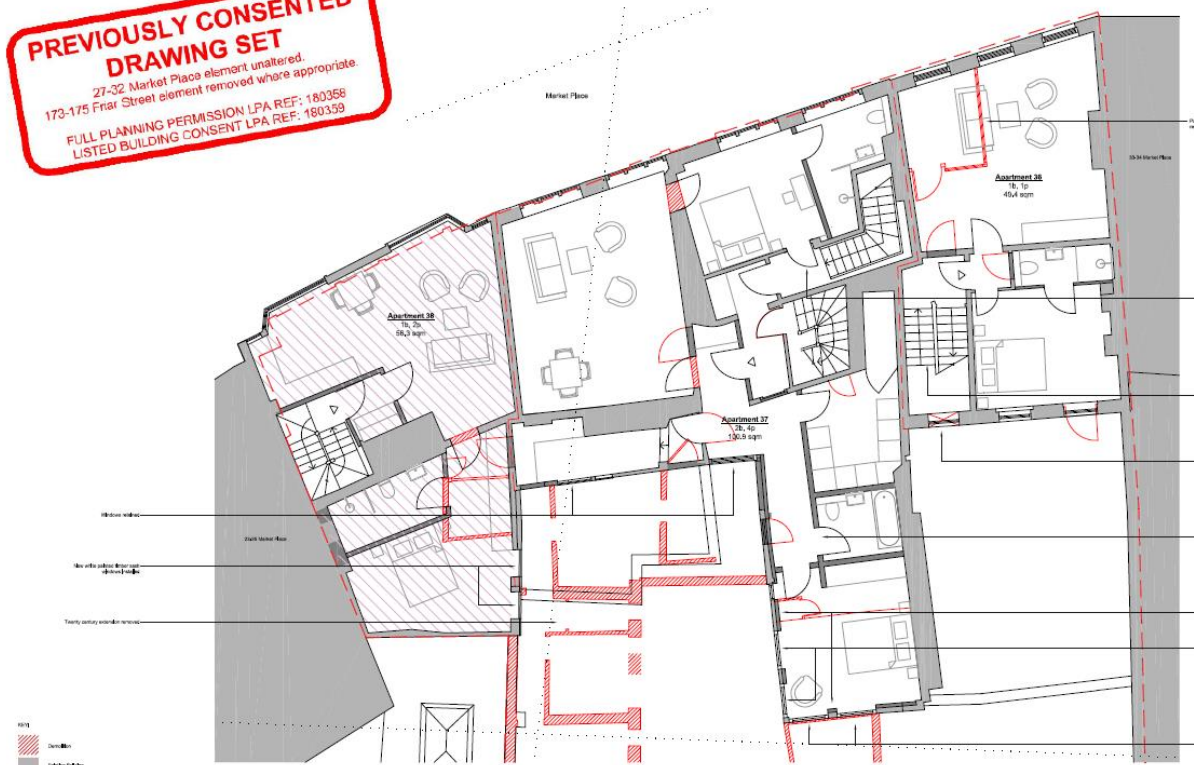
Proposed Sections

**PREVIOUSLY CONSENTED  
DRAWING SET**  
 27-32 Market Place element unaltered.  
 173-175 Friar Street element removed where appropriate.  
 FULL PLANNING PERMISSION LPA REF: 180358  
 LISTED BUILDING CONSENT LPA REF: 180359



Market Place Units - Proposed Ground Floor Plan

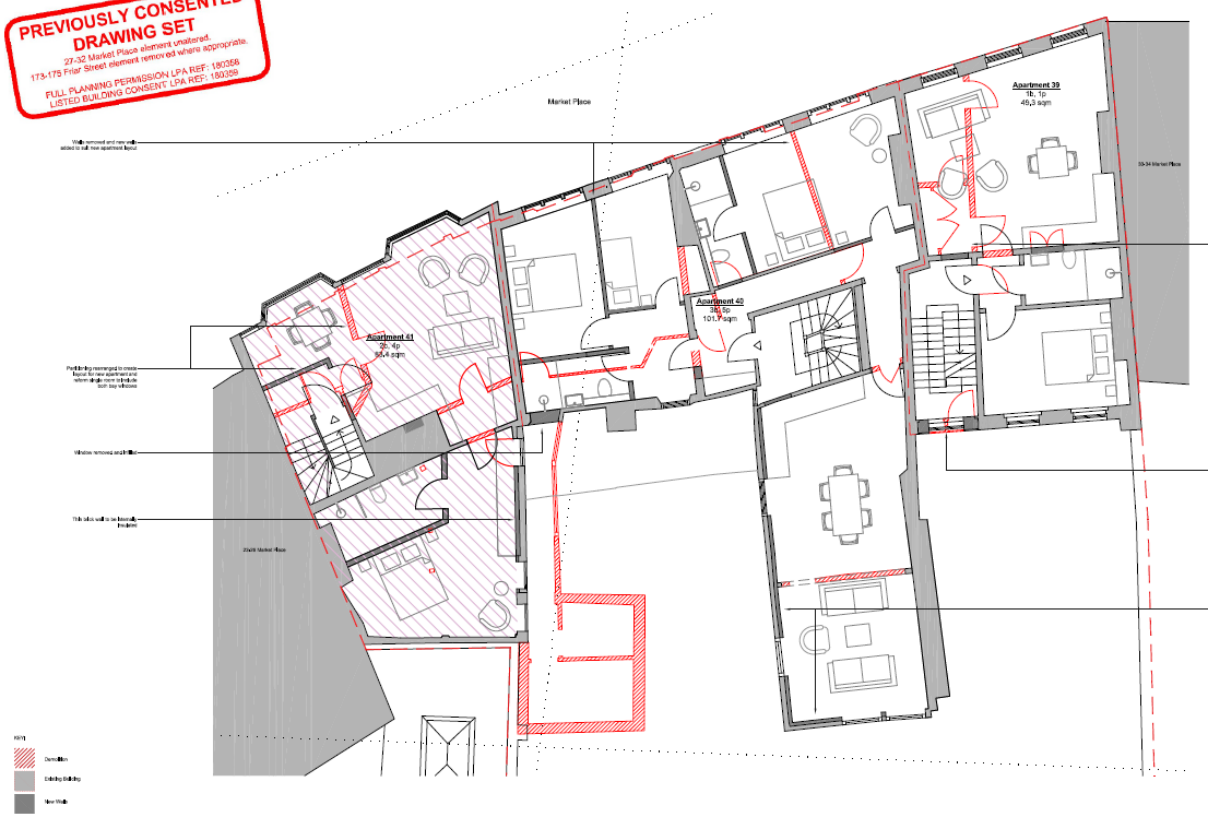
**PREVIOUSLY CONSENTED  
DRAWING SET**  
 27-32 Market Place element unaltered.  
 173-175 Friar Street element removed where appropriate.  
 FULL PLANNING PERMISSION LPA REF: 180358  
 LISTED BUILDING CONSENT LPA REF: 180359



Market Place Units Proposed First Floor Plan



**PREVIOUSLY CONSENTED  
DRAWING SET**  
 27-32 Market Place element unaltered.  
 173-175 Prior Street element removed where appropriate.  
 FULL PLANNING PERMISSION LPA REF: 180266  
 LISTED BUILDING CONSENT LPA REF: 180380



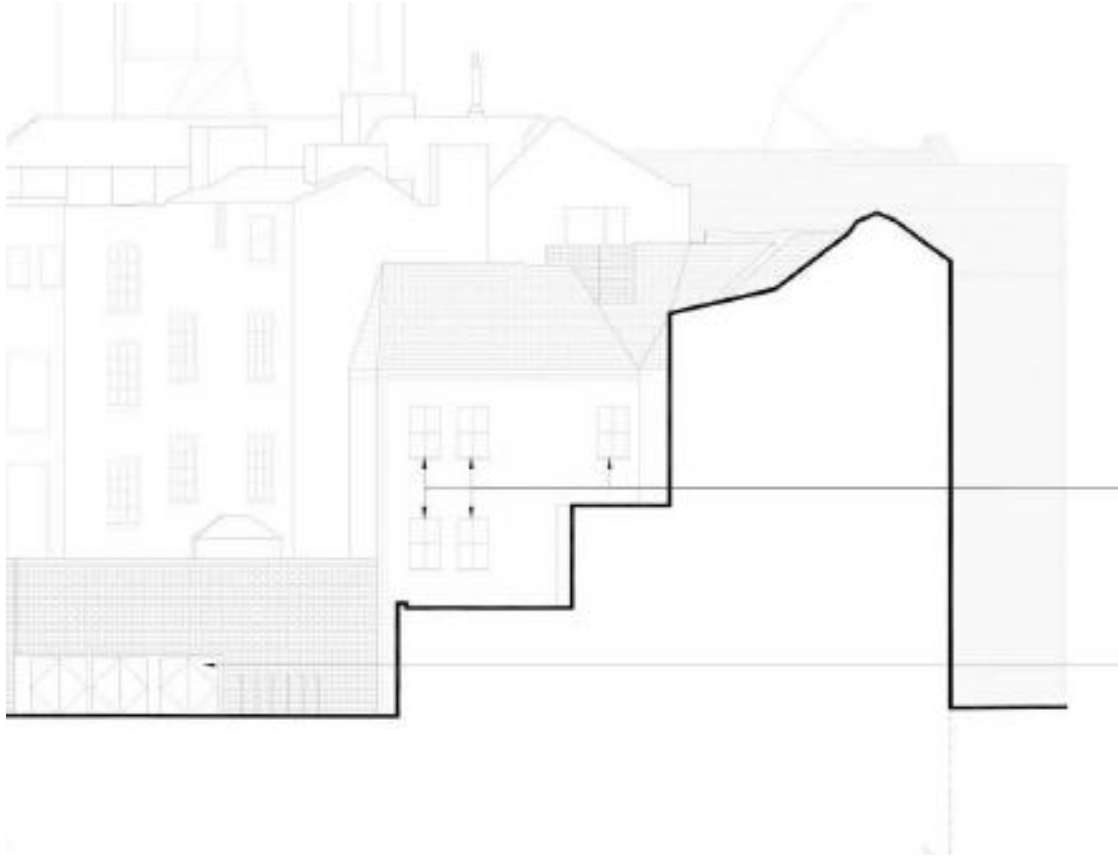
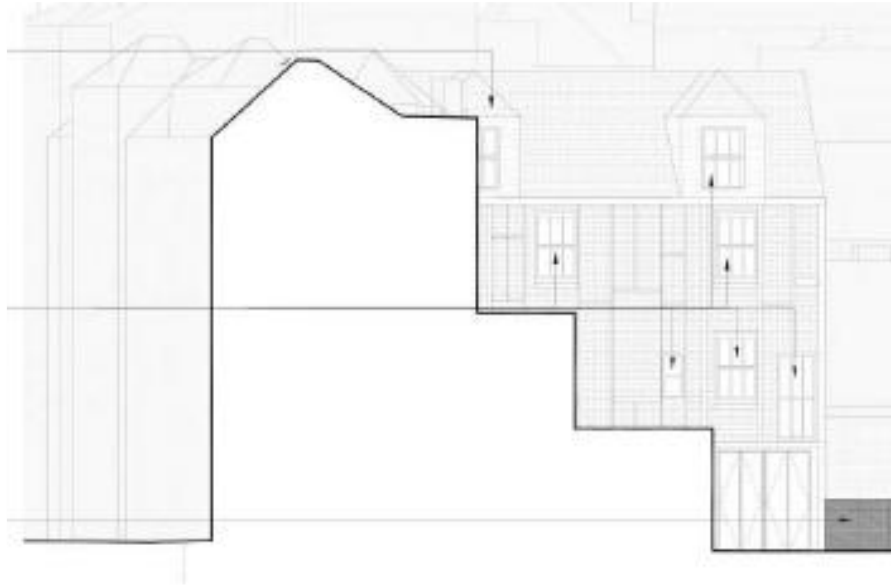
Market Place Units - Proposed Second Floor Plan



Market Place Units - Proposed Rear (passageway) Elevation



Market Place Units - Proposed Front (Market Place) Elevation



Market Place Units - Proposed Side Elevations



1 VIEW 1 - THE FORBURY PERSPECTIVE



3 VIEW 3 - MARKET PLACE PERSPECTIVE

## Proposed Visuals



2 VIEW 2 - FRIAR STREET PERSPECTIVE



4 VIEW 4 - BLAGRAVE STREET PERSPECTIVE

## Proposed Visuals