

COMMITTEE REPORT

BY THE DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC GROWTH AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES READING BOROUGH COUNCIL PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE: 4th March 2020	ITEM NO.
---	-----------------

Ward: Abbey

Application No.: 191659/REG3

Address: Former Family Centre North Street

Proposal: Two buildings of four and five storeys providing 41 dwellings as affordable housing units including vehicular, cycle and pedestrian access, parking and hard and soft landscaping

Date valid: 28th October 2019

Target Decision Date: 27th January 2020 **Extension of Time Date:** 25th March 2020

RECOMMENDATION

Delegate to the Head of Planning, Development and Regulatory Services (HPDRS) to i) **GRANT** full planning permission, subject to the satisfactory completion of a legal agreement in the form of a Unilateral Undertaking or ii) Refuse full planning permission if the legal agreement is not completed by 25th March 2020 (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 is to include the following heads of terms:

- Secure all units as affordable housing at social rented levels
- £15, 000 car club contribution
- £3, 500 contribution towards a Traffic Regulation Order (section 278 agreement) for highway works to alter the parking restrictions on Weldale Street to provide an on-street car club space
- Adoption of new footway to North Street (section 38 agreement)
- Carbon Off-setting Contribution
- Construction phase Employment Skills and Training Plan

Conditions:

1. Time limit - standard three years for implementation
2. In accordance with the approved Plans
3. Pre-commencement submission and approval of materials
4. Pre-commencement submission and approval of Construction Management Plan
5. Pre-commencement submission and approval of SuDs Strategy
6. Pre-occupation implementation of SuDs Strategy
7. Pre-commencement submission and approval - Contaminated Land 1: site characterisation report
8. Contaminated Land 2: remediation scheme
9. Contaminated Land 3: implementation of remediation scheme
10. Contaminated Land 4: reporting any unexpected contamination
11. Contaminated Land 5: verification report of completed works

12. Pre-commencement submission and approval of a Construction Environmental Management Plan
13. Pre-commencement (of works above slab level) submission and approval of a habitat enhancement scheme
14. Pre-commencement (of works above slab level) submission and approval of details of hard and soft landscaping
15. Pre-commencement (of works above slab level) submission and approval of a security strategy
16. Pre-commencement (of works above slab level) submission and approval of design stage (SAP) sustainability report
17. Pre-commencement (of works above slab level) submission and approval of photovoltaic details
18. Pre-occupation verification of as an as built SAP sustainability report
19. Pre-occupation provision of approved glazing and ventilation specifications
20. Pre-occupation submission, approval and provision of bin store details (pest control)
21. Pre-occupation provision of vehicle parking space
22. Pre-occupation provision of access to vehicle parking space
23. Pre-occupation submission, approval and provision of cycle parking spaces
24. Pre-occupation submission, approval and provision of electric vehicle charging point
25. Pre-occupation notification - no access to parking permits
26. Pre-occupation notification of addresses - no access to parking permits
27. Pre-occupation provision and retention of lifts
28. Control of construction hours (0800-1800 Mon-Fri, 0900-1300 Sat & not on Sundays or Bank Holidays)
29. No burning of waste on site
30. No fixing or installing of miscellaneous item to the external faces or roof of any building without the prior approval from the LPA

Informatives:

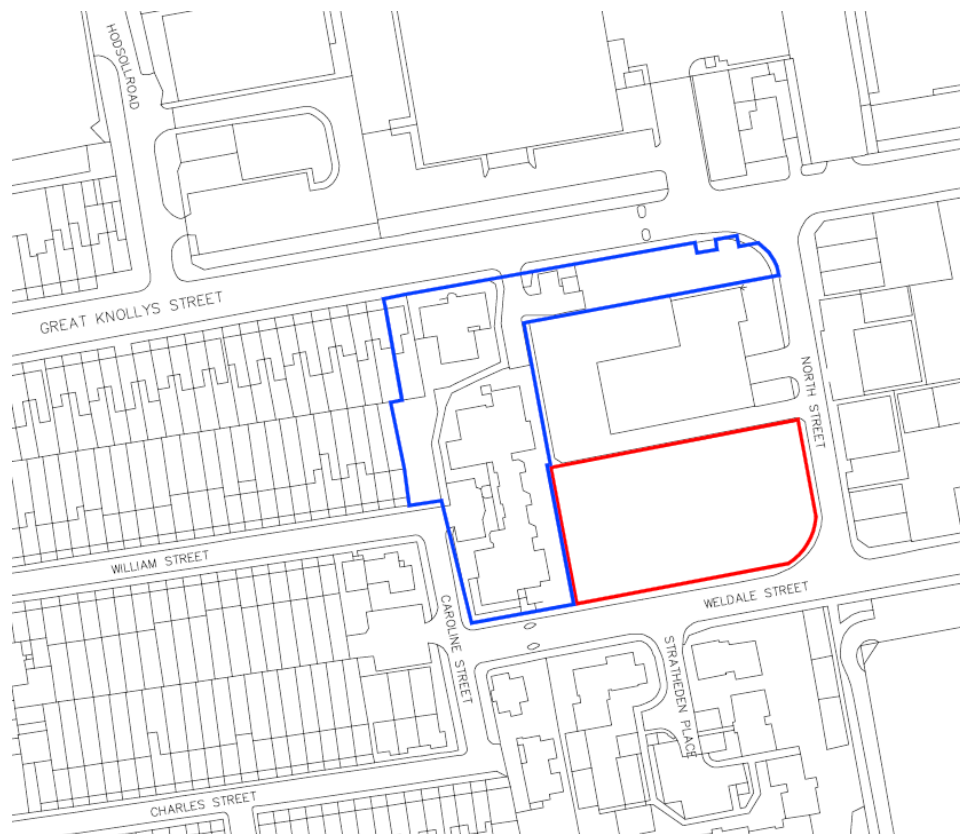
1. Positive and proactive requirement
2. S.106 applies
3. CIL
4. Terms and conditions
5. Pre-commencement conditions
6. Works affecting the Highway
7. Fee for conditions discharge
8. Building Regulations - noise between residential units
9. No parking permits

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The application site is rectangular and extends to 0.23 hectares and is currently vacant, except for some informal parking occurring on an area of hardstanding. The site sits on the North-West corner of the T-junction of Weldale Street with North Street and falls gently from South to North. It contains trees towards the Southern and Western boundaries (including a mature Norway Maple in the South-

East corner), scrub and hardstanding. To the South of the site is Stratheden Place, a residential cul-de-sac of flats and houses. To the South-East is the Iceland/Wickes site, which has planning permission for a residential redevelopment of 427 units for buildings of between four and eleven storeys. To the West is Burford Court, a three-storey housing association scheme, which is set down into its site, such that it appears much lower onto the frontage of Weldale Street. To the North of the site is an ambulance station. On the opposite side of North Street to the East are industrial units (Nos. 12-14 and 16).

- 1.2 The site has previously been in use as the Berkshire County Council social services facility and was more recently the temporary location for what is now the Civitas Academy, which has since re-located to a permanent site on Great Knollys Street. The site is allocated for residential purposes (indicative guideline range of 15-22 dwellings) under Policy CR14b of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.



Location Plan (red line area)

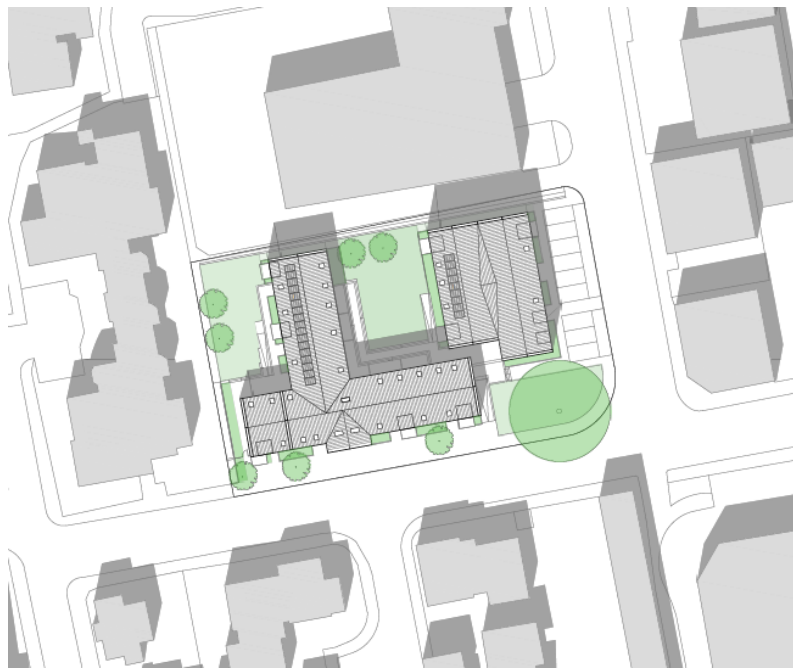
2. PLANNING HISTORY

141626/REG3	A new temporary school of modular construction, single storey and flat roofed. New fencing and gates to site perimeter. New hardstanding for car and cycle parking, and pupil hard play.	GRANTED 7/1/2015
181652/REG3	Outline - erection of a 2.5, 3.5 and 4.5 storey building comprising 47	GRANTED 12/3/2019

	apartments (including 30 per cent affordable housing) in a mix of one, two and three-bedroom units. Landscaping, cycle and car parking with associated works (all matters reserved except layout and means of access).	
181653/REG3	Outline - erection of a 2.5, 3.5 and 4.5 storey building comprising 47 apartments for affordable housing in a mix of one, two and three-bedroom units. Landscaping, cycle & car parking with associated works (all matters reserved except layout and means of access).	GRANTED 12/3/2019

3. PROPOSALS

- 3.1 The application site is the chosen 'surrogate site' for affordable housing in relation to the development under construction at Thames Quarter on Kings Meadow Road (Planning permissions ref. 162166FUL and 190809FUL for Erection of a part 13-storey, part 23 storey building comprising 335 apartments in a mix of studio, one-bedroom, two-bedroom and three-bedroom units; residents' lounges, tech-hub, dining room, and cinema room; various rooftop outdoor amenity spaces; concierge/reception with coffee meeting area; residents' storage facilities; post room; ancillary back-of-house facilities; 335 secure cycle parking spaces; car parking spaces; landscaping; and associated works).
- 3.2 In short, the Thames Quarter development does not provide any on-site affordable housing and instead sought to provide affordable housing units by way of a 'surrogate site' elsewhere within the Borough. This requirement was secured as part of the section 106 legal agreement to provide a surrogate site for 'between 25 and 56 dwellings'. The committee may recall applications for outline planning permission ref. 181652/REG3 and 181653/REG3 for residential developments of 47 units were approved PAC in December 2018. As set out within the PAC reports for both items the purposes of these outline applications were to demonstrate the suitability of the site to provide for an appropriate level of residential development such that the site could be transferred to a registered provider to bring forward as affordable housing units. These outline permissions were for this purpose only and were never intended to be built out.
- 3.3 The application site has since been transferred to Reading Borough Council's ownership to bring forward as affordable housing units.
- 3.4 This planning application seeks full planning permission for two buildings of four and five storeys providing all 41 dwellings as affordable housing units including vehicular, cycle and pedestrian access, parking and hard and soft landscaping.



Proposed Site Layout Plan

- 3.5 The proposals consist of two separate apartment blocks, with a taller four and a half storey block fronting North Street to the east and a lower 'T' shape block fronting Weldale Street to the south being generally three and a half storeys stepping down to two and a half storeys adjacent to Burford Court to the west. The building design is predominantly red brick with detailing provided by red brick pattern and timber and aluminium cladding, standing seam metal gable pitched roofs are proposed with dormer roof projections.
- 3.6 The proposed layout of the two blocks forms a 'U' shape with a partial communal courtyard amenity space area proposed centrally within the site and up to the northern boundary of the site with the adjacent ambulance station building. A further area of communal amenity space is also proposed to the western part of the site adjacent. Hard and soft landscaping is proposed to the communal area as well as to both street frontages.
- 3.7 Access to the central area of communal open-space is provided via the core of the three and a half storey block and via an archway that adjoins the two blocks in the southern east corner of the site. Units are served by a mixture of projecting and inset balconies. Communal bike and bin stores are proposed as well as 9 vehicle parking spaces to the North Street Road frontage.
- 3.8 The development would provide 19 x 1-bedroom units, 21 x 2-bedroom units and 1 x 3-bedroom units all as affordable housing units at social rented levels.
- 3.9 This application is reported to planning applications committee because it is a major category application and the Applicant is Reading Borough Council.
- 3.10 The applicant sought pre-application advice in relation to the proposed development.



Proposed visual - corner of North Street and Weldale Street

4. CONSULTATIONS

RBC Environmental Protection

4.1 No objection, subject to conditions to secure:

- Implementation of the glazing and ventilation specifications set out in the submitted noise assessment report
- Submission and approval by the LPA of a phase 2 contaminated land investigation report and submission/implementation of any necessary mitigation or other measures
- Submission and approval by the LPA of a Construction Management Statement
- Control of construction hours (0800-1800 Mon-Fri, 0900-1300 Sat & not on Sundays or Bank Holidays)
- No burning of waste on site
- Submission and approval by the LPA of details of the proposed bin stores, including pest and vermin control measures

RBC Transport

4.2 No objection, subject to conditions to secure:

- Submission and approval by the LPA of a Construction Management Statement
- Provision of proposed vehicle parking spaces
- Provision of proposed vehicular access
- Submission and approval by the LPA of cycle parking details
- Provision of proposed bin stores
- No access to parking permits - requirement to notify future occupiers
- No access to parking permits - requirement to notify LPA of new addresses
- Provision of electric vehicle charging point
- Submission and approval by the LPA of Sustainable Drainage Strategy
- Provision of Sustainable Drainage Strategy

And a section 106 agreement to secure:

- A financial contribution of £15, 000 towards provision of a car club
- A financial contribution of £3, 500 towards a Traffic Regulation Order (Section 278 agreement) to alter the on-street parking restrictions on Weldale Street to provide an on-street car club parking space
- Section 38 agreement for adoption of proposed footway as part of the public highway on North Street

RBC Natural Environment Trees

4.3 Comments to be provided by way of an update report.

RBC Ecological Consultant

4.4 No objection, subject to conditions to secure:

- Submission and approval by the LPA of a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP)
- Submission and approval by the LPA of a habitat enhancement scheme
- Submission and approval by the LPA of scheme of hard and soft landscaping

Thames Valley Police

4.5 Object due to:

- Lack of physical separation between cycle and bin stores provides little security and likely to lead to bikes being stored in corridors and causing conflict between neighbours. The stores are also accessed by double leaf doors which are difficult to secure. Advise that bin and cycle store should be separate and access via secure single leaf door.
- Bin store, cycle store and residential lobby are interlinked which presents an opportunity for unauthorised persons to gain access to private areas, negatively impacting on security. Advise that secondary security doors are provided to isolate the lobby area from the stairs and lifts to the flats.
- Lack of information regarding location and management of postal boxes
- Secondary security doors should be added to isolate the private residential corridors on each floor from the core (lift and stairs)
- Concerns that the end walls of both blocks to the corner of North Street and Weldale Street lacks surveillance and could be problematic in terms of graffiti. Advise that a defensible strip of bushes should be added in-front of these facades.
- The balustrade to the pedestrian access ramp from Weldale Street incorporates a solid brick balustrade which could also be problematic in terms of graffiti and also in creating a hidden area where people could hide. Advise that balustrade should be of an open rail type design

Subject to the above matters being addressed recommended a condition to secure a security strategy which implements the above security controls.

In response to the above comments amended plans/details were submitted by the applicant on 17th January 2020. Thames Valley Police have not provided further comments on the amended details at the time of writing this report.

Public Consultation

- 4.6 The following neighbouring occupiers were notified of the application by letter - Burford Court Caroline Street (all flats), Units A1, A2 & A3 Great Knollys Street, Units 16, 1A and 12-14 North Street, Reading Ambulance Station North Street, 9a & 24 North Street, Unit C1 Reading Small Business Centre Weldale Street, Flats 1-6 Caroline Street and no.s 1-6 & 38-45 Stratheden Place.
- 4.7 Two site notices were also displayed on North Street and Weldale Street.
- 4.8 No letters of representation have been received.

5. LEGAL AND PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

- 5.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy framework (NPPF) - among them the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'. However, the NPPF does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making.
- 5.2 Accordingly, the National Planning Policy Framework and the following development plan policies and supplementary planning guidance are relevant:
- 5.3 Reading Local Plan 2019

CC1: PRESUMPTION IN FAVOUR OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
CC2: SUSTAINABLE DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION
CC3: ADAPTATION TO CLIMATE CHANGE
CC4: DECENTRALISED ENERGY
CC5: WASTE MINIMISATION AND STORAGE
CC6: ACCESSIBILITY AND THE INTENSITY OF DEVELOPMENT
CC7: DESIGN AND THE PUBLIC REALM
CC8: SAFEGUARDING AMENITY
CC9: SECURING INFRASTRUCTURE
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

EN18: FLOODING AND DRAINAGE
H1: PROVISION OF HOUSING
H2: DENSITY AND MIX
H3: AFFORDABLE HOUSING
H5: STANDARDS FOR NEW HOUSING
H10: PRIVATE AND COMMUNAL OUTDOOR SPACE
TR1: ACHIEVING THE TRANSPORT STRATEGY
TR3: ACCESS, TRAFFIC AND HIGHWAY-RELATED MATTERS
TR4: CYCLE ROUTES AND FACILITIES
TR5: CAR AND CYCLE PARKING AND ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING
CR1: DEFINITION OF CENTRAL READING
CR2: DESIGN IN CENTRAL READING
CR3: PUBLIC REALM IN CENTRAL READING
CR6: LIVING IN CENTRAL READING
CR14: OTHER SITES FOR DEVELOPMENT IN CENTRAL READING
CR14B: FORMER READING FAMILY CENTRE, NORTH STREET

5.4 Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD's)

Supplementary Planning Document: Affordable Housing (2013)
Supplementary Planning Document: S106 Planning Obligations (2014)
Supplementary Planning Document: Parking Standards and Design (2011)
Supplementary Planning Document: Employment Skills and Training (2013)
Supplementary Planning Document: Sustainable Design and Construction (2019)

6. APPRAISAL

The main issues raised by this planning application are as follows:

- Principle
- Development Density, Unit Mix and Affordable Housing
- Design and Character
- Amenity of Surrounding Occupiers
- Standard of Residential Accommodation
- Sustainability
- Transport
- Natural Environment

Principle

- 6.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (2019) encourages the effective use of land by reusing land that has been previously developed (brownfield land) and seeks that all housing applications should be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development. The accessibility of the site, located within the Reading Central Area as defined by the Reading Local Plan (2019), is considered acceptable for the proposed development in accordance with Policy CC6 (Accessibility and Intensity of Development) whilst the provision of new housing would align with the broad objectives of Policy H1 (Provision of Housing) in assisting in meeting the annual housing targets.

- 6.2 The site is also allocated for residential development under Policy CR14B (Former Reading Family Centre, North Street) for an indicative range of between 15-22 dwellings and there are two extant outline planning permissions for residential development on the site (ref.s 181652/REG3 and 181653/REG3) which established the principle of residential development.
- 6.3 The broad principle of the proposal for residential development is therefore considered to be acceptable and in accordance with CC6, H1 and CR14B. The details of the proposed development are now considered within the rest of this report.

Development Density, Unit Mix and Affordable Housing

- 6.4 The application proposes a development density of 178 dwellings per hectare (41 dwellings/0.23-hectare site). Whilst a fairly high density development it is noted that there is no prescribed local policy density upper limit for town centre sites, with Policy H2 (Density and Mix) outlining an indicative density of above 100 dwellings per hectare in town centre locations, with factors such as site characteristics, accessibility and need to achieve high quality design and minimise environmental impacts informing the appropriate density
- 6.5 Furthermore, whilst the site allocation within Policy CR14B gives an indicative potential of 15-22 dwellings for the site, paragraph 5.4.33 of the supporting text to the policy clarifies that these figures, as for all allocations, are intended as a guide based on an initial assessment but that the 'capacity of sites will ultimately depend on various factors to be addressed at application stage, including detailed design and layout' which are matters that will be addressed elsewhere within this report.
- 6.6 Policy H3 (Affordable Housing) seeks that for developments of 10 or more dwellings 30% of the units are provided as affordable housing. In this instance, the development is proposed as 100% affordable housing at a social rented level to meet the obligation as the 'surrogate site' to provide part of the affordable housing provision for permitted development at Thames Quarter (refs. 162166FUL and 190807FUL). In these circumstances it is acceptable under the regulations for S106 agreements for all units to be secured as affordable housing by way of a legal agreement as they are necessary to meet the affordable housing requirements of that development.
- 6.7 In terms of unit mix Policy CR6 (Living in Central Reading) seeks that residential developments within the town centre area should incorporate a maximum of 40% of 1-bedroom units and a minimum of 5% of 3-bedroom units. The application proposes 19 x 1 bed units (46.3%), 21 x 2 bed units (51.2%) and 1 x 3 bed unit (2.4%). Whilst the proposed mixed does not strictly adhere to the requirements of Policy CR6 the application is slightly unique in that it is to provide 100% affordable housing. The unit type/size most in demand for affordable housing within the Borough is therefore a more pertinent indicator of an appropriate unit mix in this instance. The Berkshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2016) identifies a particular need within Reading and Western Berkshire for 1 and 2-bedroom affordable housing units with the demand for these units representing 76.3% of the total demand for affordable

housing within Reading. Officers are therefore satisfied that the proposed unit mix is appropriate and suitably reasoned.

- 6.8 All new building housing development is liable for the community infrastructure levy (CIL). The chargeable floorspace of the development is 3223 square metres which equates to a levy of £506, 591. However, social housing provision is eligible for relief from the levy and therefore in practice the levy due is likely to be £0.

Design and Character

- 6.9 Policy CC7 aims to preserve or enhance the character of the area in which a development is proposed in terms of layout, landscape, density, scale, height, massing, architectural detail and materials. Policy CR2's (Design in the Centre) purpose is to secure appropriate relationships between buildings, spaces and frontages within the centre of Reading and Policy CR3 requires proposals to make a positive contribution towards the quality of public realm in the central area of Reading.
- 6.10 This site is on the edge of the town centre, with the high/density Chatham Place development in close proximity and the future redevelopment of the former Iceland/Wickes site likely to result in a transformation of the area from one with a retail/commercial feel to a more intensive, urban, residential feel. At present the site has more of a transitional feel with commercial/warehousing units in close proximity to residential uses and the area has no strong prevailing character.
- 6.11 Nonetheless, the proposed two block layout of the development is considered to respond positively to its surroundings. In particular the set-back of the two blocks from the Weldale Street and North Street junction allows retention of a mature Norway Maple Tree and provides a setting for the new development. It will make a feature of the development and create an attractive landscaped area of public realm at the most prominent part of the site and will retain and enhance the contribution of this feature tree to the character of the street-scene. In addition, both blocks are set back from the road frontages with a 9m set back from North Street allowing provision of landscape buffer and 9 vehicle parking spaces whilst a 6m set back from the Weldale Street frontage also allows provision of a landscape buffer as well as tree planting. It is recommended that a detailed hard and soft landscaping scheme be secured by way of condition.
- 6.12 Both blocks also incorporate street level entrances helping to activate the Weldale Street and North Street frontages whilst the T shape of the Weldale Street block assists in providing a semi-courtyard area of landscaped communal amenity space within the site. The T shape layout also helps in siting the western perimeter of the block away from Burford Court which are the closest existing residential properties to the site.
- 6.13 In terms of massing the North Street frontage block is proposed at five storeys (four storeys with a fifth storey of accommodation within the roof space) reflecting the city-centre scale of development to the east, more commercial character and drop in levels to North Street as well as providing a taller feature to the focal corner

junction of the site. The Weldale Street frontage block at four storeys (three storeys with a fourth storey of accommodation within the roof space) steps down to reflect the smaller scale residential development to the south and west. The very western edge of the Weldale Street block steps down further to three storeys (two storeys with a third storey of accommodation within the roof space) to acknowledge a drop-in level and the three-storey massing of Burford Court flats adjacent to the western boundary of the site.

- 6.14 In terms of design approach the building presents a contemporary aesthetic through use of accentuated projecting gable pitched standing seam metal roof, timber cladding elements and balconies but the predominant red brick exterior and detailing as well as the pitched roof are also reflective of the wider Reading context and existing nearby residential developments. Officers considered that the accentuated brick gables around the retained Maple Norway Maple Tree to the Weldale Street and North Street corner presents a strong design feature in terms of built form and retention of a notable mature tree. The proposed dormer roof projections are modest and appear acceptable within the roof slope. It is considered that the proposal would contribute positively to the mixed character of the surrounding area. Material samples and specifications would be secured by way of condition.

- 6.15 The proposal is considered to accord with Policies CR2, CR3 and CC7.

Amenity of Surrounding Occupiers

- 6.16 Policy CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity) seeks to protect the amenity of existing surrounding occupiers. Policy EN16 (Pollution and Water Resources) seeks to protect surrounding occupiers from the impact of pollution.
- 6.17 The closest existing residential occupiers to the development are those at Burford Court on the adjacent site to the west, which is a three-storey development of flats. This building is unusual in that it has many east facing outlooks at close proximity (4-5 metres of the boundary with the application site) and so in effect, it significantly borrows outlook from over the application site, at first and second floors. Notwithstanding this, the western elevation of the Weldale Street T block of the proposed development would be located 20m from Burford Court which would accord with the minimum recommended separation distance set out with Policy CC8 to prevent any undue overlooking or loss of privacy. Whilst the frontage part of the T block would be located only 10m from Burford Court, this part of the proposed development does not incorporate any windows to the western elevation such that there are no concerns regarding loss of privacy in this respect.
- 6.18 The other nearby existing residential occupiers are those to the south on the opposite side of Weldale Street within Stratheden Place. The proposals would be sited between 18m and 20m from these units. Whilst some units may be sited marginally less than the recommended separation distance recommended within Policy CC8 this separation is not considered unreasonable and is reflective of other similar relationships in the surrounding area such as to avoid any adverse loss of privacy. The separation distances outlined above are also considered sufficient to prevent any undue loss of light or overbearing impacts to surrounding residential occupiers.

- 6.19 The land to the east of the site on the opposite side of on North Street is currently industrial in nature, although the area is envisaged to come forward for residential development at some point by way of its allocation in the Local Plan. In this respect, Committee may recall application ref. 190086 at Unit 16 North Street, which is directly opposite the application site, which was approved at PAC in November 2019 for a 6-storey building of 10 flats. The proposed development would incorporate a 9-metre set back from the North Street pavement, meaning that a suitable street separation (over 20m) would be provided to this adjacent development or any alternative development that were to come forward on the opposite side of the road. There are no concerns regarding the impact of the proposed development upon the current industrial uses.
- 6.20 To the North of the site is the present ambulance station (two storeys equivalent building), which is in use, this site is not allocated within the Local Plan. However, in terms of considering any comprehensive development of the surrounding land the proposed development does not incorporate any habitable room windows directly on or facing the ambulance station such that it does not borrow outlook from the adjacent site and would not prejudice its development in this respect. There are no concerns regarding the impact of the proposed development on the adjacent ambulance station use.
- 6.21 It is proposed to secure a construction method statement by way of condition to mitigate the impacts of construction works on surrounding occupiers.
- 6.22 The proposals are considered to accord with policies CC8 and EN16.

Standard of Accommodation for Future Occupiers

- 6.23 Policies H5 (Standards for New Housing) set out the standard to which all new build housing should be built. In particular new housing should adhere to national prescribed space standards and provide at least 5% of dwellings as wheelchair user units. Policy EN16 (Pollution and Water Resources) seeks to protect future occupiers from the impacts of pollution. Policy H10 (Private and Communal Outdoor Space) seeks that residential developments are provided with adequate private or communal outdoor amenity space. Policy CR6 (Living in Central Reading) requires that all new residential development in the central area demonstrates how noise, disturbance and air quality implications have been considered.
- 6.24 All units within the development would adhere to the adopted nationally prescribed space standards. The units are mix of both double and single aspect flats, but all units are served by suitable levels of outlook and daylighting with the majority of units served by a south/south westerly outlook providing good solar gains. All upper floor apartments have private outdoor amenity space in the form of a balcony, with a range or projecting/inset/enclosed balconies proposed whilst two good sized communal amenity areas are also proposed. The proposed combination of private balconies and communal amenity space is considered to provide suitable outdoor amenity spaces provision in accordance with Policy H10.

- 6.25 All units are considered to be provided with adequate levels of privacy. Situations of units directly facing each other are limited to across the central semi-courtyard area where at 17m separation distances are considered adequate to prevent any undue overlooking within the development. The ground floor street-level units to both North Street and Weldale Street are set between 6m and 9m back from the public footway with landscape planting in between such that potential for overlooking is limited.
- 6.26 Level access would be obtained to the ground floor units fronting North Street and Weldale Street whilst both blocks also incorporate lift access to the upper floors. Provision and retention of the list would be secured by way of condition.
- 6.27 Given the location of the site within a semi-industrial area and with the adjacent ambulance station to the east, ensuring future residents are adequately protected from noise impacts is a key concern. A noise assessment and mitigation scheme was submitted as part of the application. Environmental Protection Officers are satisfied that the glazing and ventilation specifications proposed would ensure required standards for internal noise levels can be met. Implementation of these measures is to be secured by way of condition. An air quality assessment was also submitted as part of the application which has also been seen by Environmental Protection Officers who are satisfied that the air quality within the development would not exceed relevant air quality objectives and that equally the development itself would not impact significantly on local air quality.
- 6.28 There is a problem in Reading with pests being encouraged by poor waste storage which provides them with a food source, particularly where developments involve shared bin storage areas. A condition is therefore recommended to require details of the bin stores to be submitted and approved, including measures to prevent pests and vermin gaining access.
- 6.29 The site is located within an area of potentially contaminated land. A phase 1 site investigation report was submitted with the application which recommends that further on-site investigations are carried out. Conditions are therefore recommended to secure submission of further investigative reports and implementation of any remediation measures is required.
- 6.30 The proposals are considered to accord with Policies H5, H10, EN16, CR6 and CC8.

Sustainability

- 6.31 Policy H5 (Standard for New Housing) seeks that all new major housing development achieves zero carbon homes standards and the 'higher' water efficiency standard of building regulations. Policy CC2 (Sustainable Design and Construction) and CC3 (Adaption to Climate Change) seeks that proposals should incorporate measures which take account of climate change. Policy CC4 (Decentralised Energy) seeks that developments of more than 20 dwellings should consider the inclusion of combined heat and power plant (CHP) or other form of decentralised energy provision.
- 6.32 The Councils Sustainable Design and Construction SPD (2019) requires that in order to achieve zero carbon homes standards all development must, as a minimum, achieve

a 35% improvement in the dwelling emission rate over 2013 Building Regulations Standards with financial contribution required to off-set any remaining carbon emissions to zero. The application sets out that the proposed development would incorporate a number of sustainability measures. These include a 'fabric first approach' and use of energy efficient materials to provide a well-insulated building envelope with a high level of airtightness. Use of mechanical ventilation with heat recovered (MVHR) is also proposed which will reduce the need to heat homes through heat recovery, whilst solar voltaic panels are proposed to the west facing roof slopes to generate residual energy demand via renewable methods. To reduce water usage low flush toilets will also be used throughout the development.

- 6.33 It is estimated that the development as a minimum will achieve the 35% improvement in the dwelling emission rate over 2013 building regulations required by Policy H5. Written verification of this would be secured by way of pre-commencement conditions. Pre-occupation submission and approval of an as built energy assessment would also be required to demonstrate the actual achieved dwelling emission rate of the development. A mechanism would be included within a legal agreement to ensure any remaining emissions of the as built development are off-set to zero by way of carbon off-setting financial contribution.
- 6.34 Any required carbon off-setting contribution would be ring-fenced for energy-efficiency improvements or renewables projects within the Borough. This may include (but is not limited to):
- Visits from energy advice officers;
 - Free energy-efficient lightbulbs;
 - Subsidised loft and cavity wall insulation;
 - Boiler cash-back scheme for replacement of inefficient boilers with higher rated boilers; and
 - Draught proofing.
- 6.35 As referred to above, the decentralised energy requirements of the development would be met via provision of photo voltaic panels to the west facing roof slopes, implementation of which would be secured by condition.
- 6.36 A sustainable drainage strategy (SuDs) has also been submitted as part of the application. This has been reviewed by the Local Flood Authority (RBC Transport) and is considered acceptable subject to conditions to secure a timetable for its implementation and details of management and maintenance of the scheme and its implementation in accordance with the approved details.
- 6.37 It is considered that the proposal demonstrates a good standard of sustainability and accords with Policies H5, CC2, CC3 and CC4.

Transport

- 6.38 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.

- 6.39 In accordance with the adopted Parking SPD, the development would be required to provide 1 parking space per 1-2-bedroom dwelling and 1.5 space per 3-bedroom dwelling. The development proposals include a total of 9 parking spaces located on the eastern boundary of the site with all spaces facing directly out onto North Street. Therefore, it is noted that the proposed parking provision is below the Council's requirements.
- 6.40 The Council's adopted standards state that a lower provision is acceptable if the site is within a sustainable location and providing a lower provision of parking will not lead to highway safety issues as a result.
- 6.41 A review of the area confirms that North Street and the surrounding road network all have parking restrictions preventing on-street parking. North Street is covered by double yellow lines (no parking at any time) except for a section of the eastern carriageway which has a single yellow line (no parking Monday - Saturday 9am-6.30pm). The southern carriageway and parts of the northern carriageway of Weldale Street are covered by a single yellow line (same restriction as North Street). Double yellow lines and some limited waiting bays are available along the northern carriageway of Weldale Street to the west of the junction with North Street. Great Knollys Street and the surround area is predominately covered by double yellow lines and residential permit parking.
- 6.42 Given the site's close proximity to the centre of Reading, and its easy access to public transport connections and the facilities within the town centre, it is considered that the site is located in a sustainable location. The surrounding road network all have parking restrictions preventing on-street parking, therefore, a reduction in the residential parking provision will not lead to on street parking being detrimental to road safety and is acceptable.
- 6.43 It should also be noted that North Street and Weldale Street do not fall within a Resident's Permit Zone, therefore future residents of the development would not be eligible for a Residents Parking Permit. Conditions and informatives in this respect would be applied. The parking conditions and informative would be applied if this application is approved.
- 6.44 Given that the development has a reduced parking provision, the Council's adopted Parking Standards and Design SPD states that developments of more than 10 residential units in the town centre should provide or support a car club on the site or demonstrate that the development will have access to and the use of a car club on a nearby site. In terms of the car club requirements a financial contribution of £15,000 is recommended to be secured towards the cost of funding a car club whilst a contribution of £3, 500 towards a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO section 278 agreement) is also required to alter the parking restrictions on Weldale Street to provide an on-street car club space. These contributions would be secured by way of a legal agreement.
- 6.45 The Council's Local Transport Plan 3 Strategy 2011 - 2026 includes policies for investing in new infrastructure to improve connections throughout and beyond Reading which include a network of publicly available Electric Vehicle (EV)

charging points to encourage and enable low carbon or low energy travel choices for private and public transport. Policy TR5 of the Local Plan also states that *“Within communal car parks for residential or non-residential developments of at least 10 spaces, 10% of spaces should provide an active charging point.”* The applicant has agreed to provide at least 1no. Electric Vehicle (EV) charging point, details of which will be secured by condition.

- 6.46 The development proposes to provide a total of 9 parking spaces located on the eastern boundary of the site with all spaces located perpendicular to North Street. Provision of the parking spaces and access to them will be secured by way of condition. A footway is to be provided between the parking spaces and the road and this will be offered for adoption by the highway authority under a section 36 agreement as part of the legal agreement.
- 6.47 The proposed development layout shows two refuse stores, one located within each block. This allows direct access for refuse operatives to the store from Weldale Street and North Street. Provision of the bin stores will be secured by condition.
- 6.48 In accordance with the adopted Parking Standards and Design SPD 0.5 cycle spaces are required for 1- or 2-bedroom dwellings and 1 space is required for 3 or more-bedroom dwellings. The proposed site plan demonstrates 2 cycle stores, segregated from the bin store which is acceptable to accommodate the required number of cycles. Details of the specification of the proposed cycle store stands and their provision would be secured by condition.
- 6.49 The proposals are considered to accord with Policies TR1, TR3 and TR5.

Natural Environment

- 6.50 Policy EN12 (Biodiversity and the Green Network) requires development to retain, protect and incorporate features of biodiversity or geological interest found within the application site into their schemes. Policy EN14 (Trees Hedges and Woodlands) states that individual trees, groups of trees, hedges and woodlands will be protected from damage or removal, and the Borough's vegetation cover will be extended with new development to make provision for tree planting within the application site, or off-site in appropriate situations.
- 6.51 The site currently contains trees which are mostly sited along the southern boundary. Most of these are in the lower categories (C and D) with 9 to be removed as part of the proposed development. However, the Norway Maple on the Corner of the junction which is considered to be a Category A/B tree is proposed to be retained and incorporated within the development layout as discussed earlier in this report. Normally this tree would be under a protection order but given it is located on Council land the lack of threat of removal means it has not been the subject of such an order.
- 6.52 An arboricultural method statement, tree protection details, landscaping concepts plan and tree planting details have been submitted as part of the application. Some

amendments to these documents and proposals have been sought by the Natural Environment Officer and details of these changes, the Officers comments and any additional recommended conditions will be provided by way of an update report.

- 6.53 An ecological assessment has also been submitted with the application which concludes that subject to sensitive removal of the trees and vegetation there should be no ecological constraints to the proposals. The LPA's Ecological Consultant has reviewed the assessment and proposals and is satisfied that the proposals would not have any adverse ecological impacts subject to conditions to secure a habitat enhancement scheme, hard and soft landscaping details, as well as a Construction Environmental Management Plan.

Other

Crime/Safety

- 6.54 There is an outstanding objection to the proposals from the Thames Valley Police Crime Prevention Design Advisor (CPDA) as set out in section 4.5 of this report. However, it should be noted that this objection and the comments raised were based upon the original plans submitted with the application. Following receipt of the comments the applicant made a number of changes to the scheme to address the points raised by the CPDA. The changes include:

- The bin and bike stores have been physically separated providing secure access to each with double doors and a single leaf door respectively.
- A secondary security door set has been added to the T-block hallways to enhance the security of the entrance lobbies.
- Access to upper floors via the elevator in the cluster block to be controlled by a fob or code operated lift, (details to be confirmed via condition).
- Mailboxes to be housed in the entrance hallways of both blocks.
- The access path leading to the ramp on the corner of Weldale Street/North Street has been pulled away from the external wall and a planting strip included.
- The balustrade of the access ramp has been amended to timber fins which offer good levels of transparency.

- 6.55 Whilst updated comments from the CPDA on the amended plans have been sought on several occasions no response has been forthcoming. However, Officers are satisfied that the amendments made to the plans by the Applicant address most concerns raised by the CPDA and that subject to a condition to secure a more detailed security strategy the proposals would provide a safe environment for future and surrounding occupiers in accordance with Policy CC7 (Design and the Public Realm).

Employment and Skills Training

- 6.56 In accordance with the Employment Skills and Training SPD a construction phase employment skills and training plan will be secured as part of the legal agreement.

Equalities Impact

- 6.57 When 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 have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to the 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 This proposal has been carefully considered in the context of the Reading Borough Local Plan and the recommendation is to grant full planning permission subject to the conditions and legal agreement heads of terms set out in the recommendation box at the top of this report.

Drawings and Documents Submitted:

70012984-TP-001 P01 - Proposed Highway Adoption
Received by the Local Planning Authority on 28th January 2020

7916_PL_109 rev A - Rendered Elevations
7916_PL_107 rev A - Proposed roof plan
7916_PL_106 rev A - Proposed fourth floor plan
7916_PL_105 rev A - Proposed third floor plan
7916_PL_119 rev A - Proposed second floor plan
7916_PL_104 rev A - Proposed first floor plan
7916_PL_103 rev A - Proposed ground floor plan
7916_PL_102 rev A - Proposed site plan
7916_PL_120 rev A - Tree plan
7916_PL_118 rev A - CIL area calculation
7916_PL_117 - Proposed material elevation
7916_PL_116 rev A - View from junction of North Street/Weldale Street
7916_PL_115 rev A - Section B-B
7916_PL_114 rev A - Section D-D & E-E
7916_PL_113 rev A - West elevation
7916_PL_112 rev A - South elevation and section A-A
7916_PL_111 rev A - East elevation & section F-F
7916_PL_100 rev A - North elevation & section C-C
Received by the Local Planning Authority on 24th January 2020

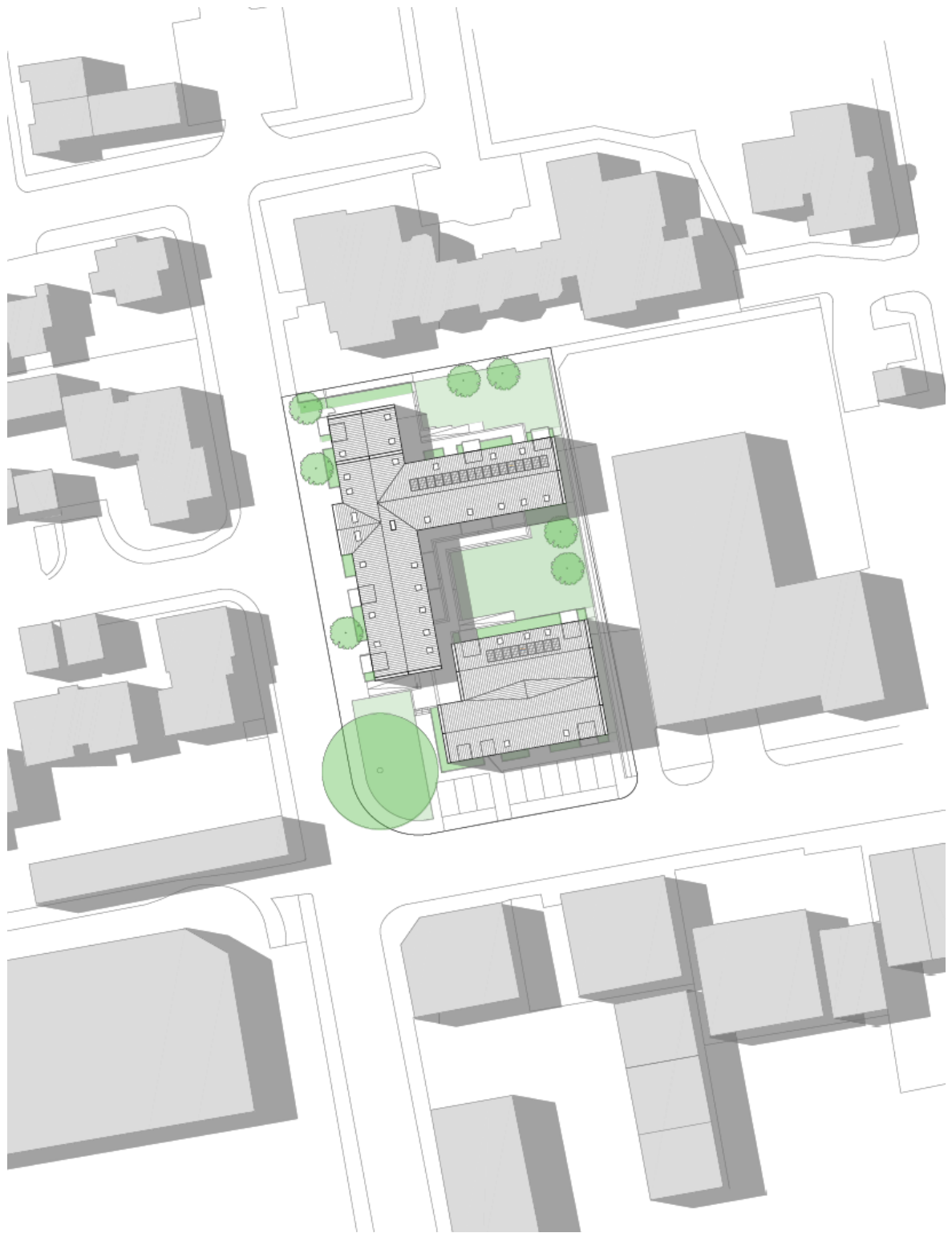
7916_PL_101 - Location plan
WSP Transport Statement ref. 70012984 v1
WSP Phase 1 Contaminated Land Assessment ref. 70012984
WSP Noise Assessment Report ref. 70012984-005
WSP Preliminary Ecological Appraisal ref. 70012984 rev 02
WSP Air Quality Appraisal ref. 70012984-007
WSP Drainage Strategy Statement ref. 70012984

LDA Design Planning Statement ref. 5853 (October 2019)
Saunders Design & Access Statement (October 2019)
Received by the Local Planning Authority on 16th October 2019

70012984-TPP-EV-001 rev P01 - Tree protection plan
Received by the Local Planning Authority on 28th October 2019

WSP Detailed Arboricultural Report ref. 70012984-ARB-04.1
Received by the Local Planning Authority on 17th January 2020

Case Officer: Matt Burns



Proposed site plan



Proposed first floor plan



Proposed second floor plan



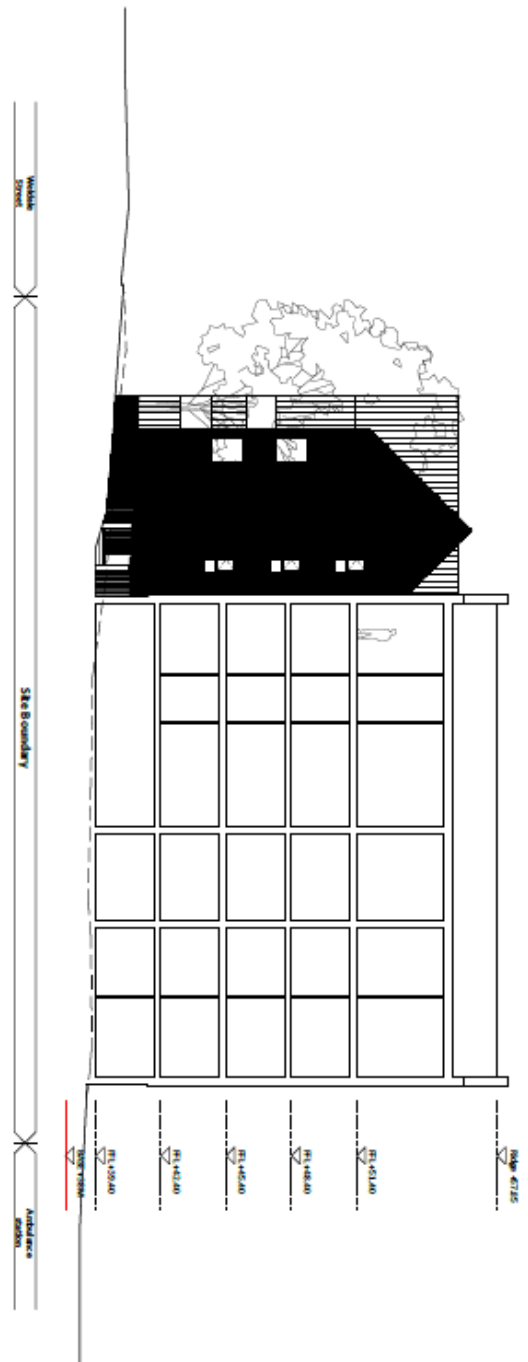
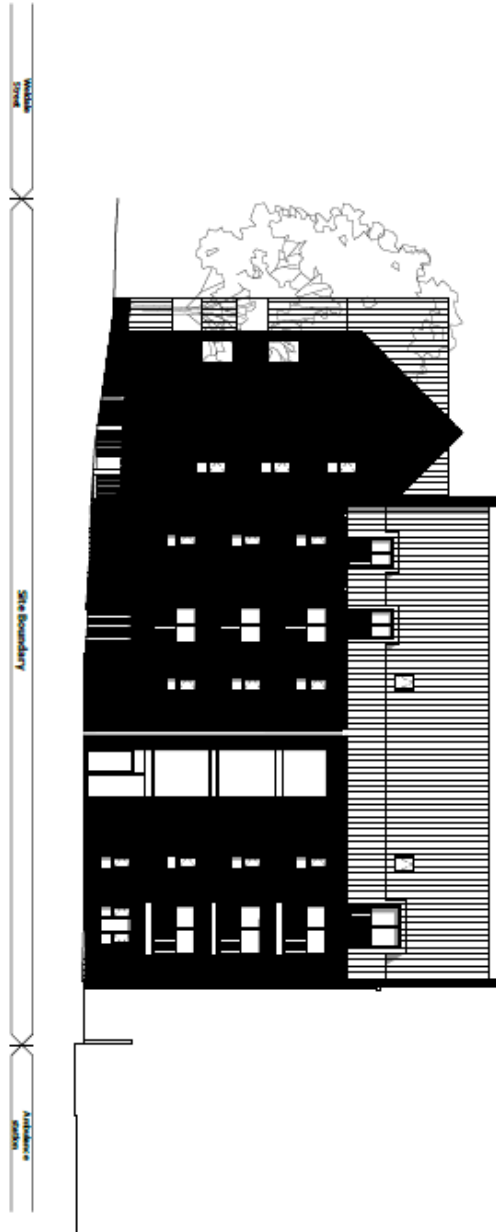
Proposed third floor plan



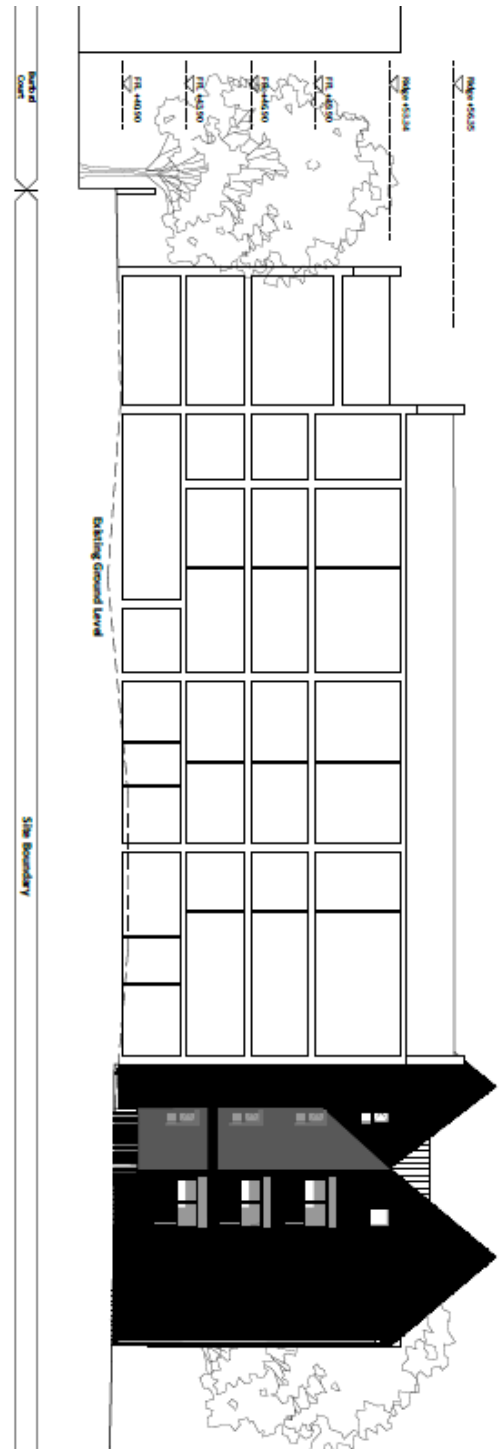
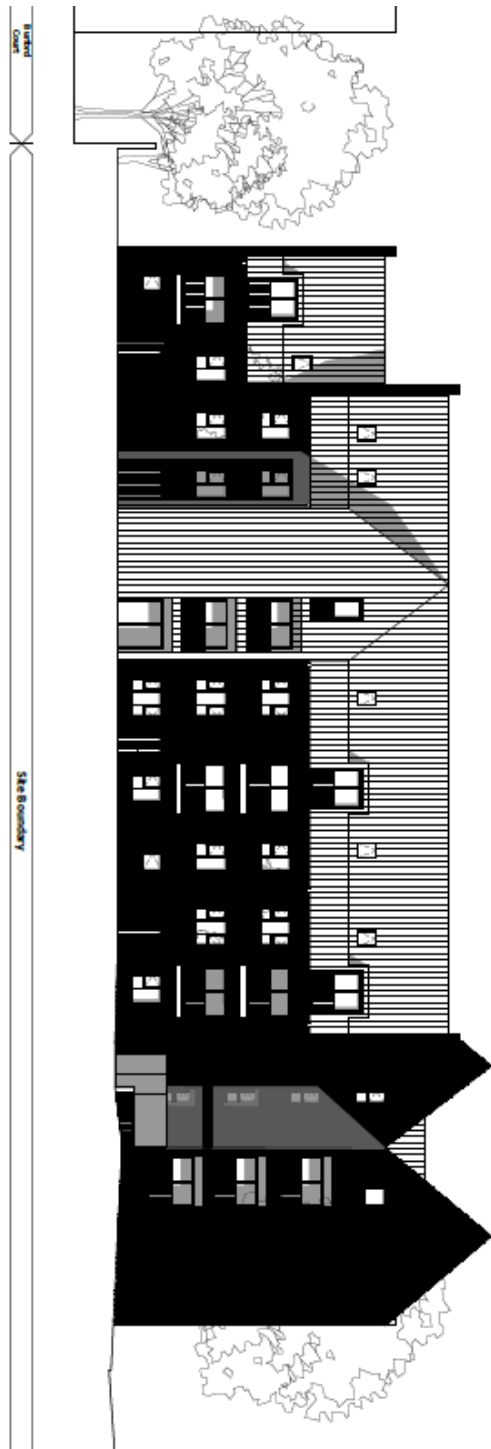
Proposed fourth floor plan



Proposed north elevation and section



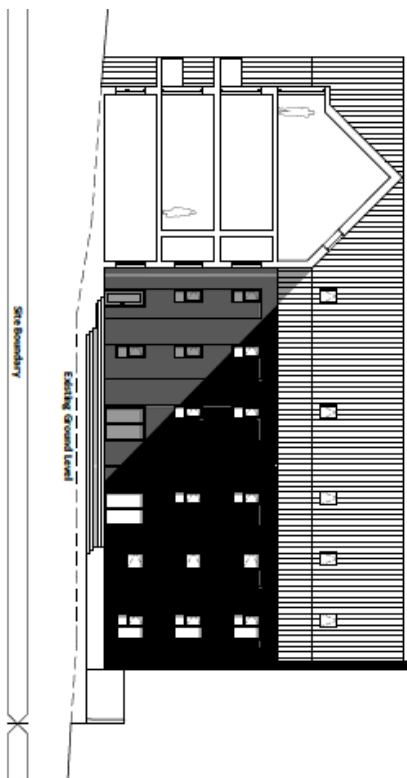
Proposed east elevation and section



Proposed south elevation and section



Proposed west elevation



Proposed section



Proposed sections



Proposed colour street-scene elevations



Proposed visual - corner of North Street and Weldale Street



Proposed materials detail