

04 March 2026



Reading
Borough Council
Working better with you

Title	PLANNING APPLICATION REPORT
Ward	Abbey
Planning Application Reference:	PL/19/0549 Full planning permission
Site Address:	Shillingford House, 78 Oxford Road, Reading, RG1 7LJ
Proposed Development	Demolition of existing three storey building containing 4 x ground floor retail units and 4 x flats to first and second floors and erection of a six storey building containing 3 x ground floor retail units and 13 x flats (6 x 1 bed, 6 x 2 bed and 1 x 3 bed) with associated enclosed communal areas, bin store, services room and cycle storage facility (amended description)
Applicant	Trenton Limited
Report author	Matt Burns
Deadline:	21/08/2019 Extension of time date: 8 May 2026
Recommendations	GRANT subject to S106 being entered into and subject to planning conditions
S106	<p>Heads of Terms to include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Affordable Housing Contribution of £142,500 towards the provision of off-site affordable housing within the Borough. Index linked and payable prior to commencement of development.2. Affordable Housing Deferred Payment Mechanism (DPM) to ensure that the Council shares in any positive uplift in the viability of the development as a result of future lower construction costs or an uplift in values. DPM to be in the form of an open book review of standard development cost and value inputs (triggered on sale or equivalent of the 10th unit) to secure that any excess above a developer's profit of 16.25% of gross value is shared on a 50/50 basis (£1 for £1) between the applicant and the LPA up to the equivalent of the 30% policy cap (£285, 000).3. To secure a zero-carbon offset contribution as per the Sustainable Design and Construction SPD 2019 to ensure the development provides a minimum of 35% improvement in regulated emissions over the Target Emissions Rate in the 2013 Building Regulations, plus a contribution of £1,800 per remaining tonne towards carbon offsetting within the Borough (calculated as £60/tonne over a 30-year period). As per formula in the Sustainable Design and Construction SPD. Index linked and payable prior to occupation of the first unit.4. To secure a construction phase Employment and Skills Plan (ESP) or equivalent financial contribution (£2,647). As calculated

	<p>in the Council's Employment Skills and Training SPD (2013). Contribution index linked and plan/contribution to be provided prior to commencement of development.</p> <p>To allow Officers to work efficiently and effectively it is requested that minor changes to the Heads of Terms and details of the legal agreement that arise during the negotiations are delegated to officers.</p>
<p>Conditions</p>	<p>To include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Time Limit – 3 years. 2. Approved plans to be implemented. 3. <u>Pre-commencement</u> (excluding demolition) details of all external materials and fixtures to be submitted and approved. 4. <u>Pre-commencement</u> (including demolition) demolition and construction method statement to be submitted and approved. 5. <u>Pre-commencement</u> (excluding demolition) submission and approval of all hard and soft landscaping details. All landscaping to be carried out in accordance with approved details in the first planting season following occupation of the development with replacement planting required for first 5 years. 6. <u>Pre-commencement</u> submission (excluding demolition) and approval of a design stage SAP assessment (residential units only) to achieve a minimum of 35% carbon emission improvement over 2013 The Building Regulations. 7. Pre-occupation submission and approval of an as built SAP assessment (residential units only) demonstrating the standard approved under condition no. 6 above has been achieved 8. <u>Pre-commencement</u> (excluding demolition) submission and approved of a design stage BREEAM assessment (commercial units only) to achieve a minimum Very Good standards 9. Pre-occupation submission and approval of an as-built BREEAM assessment to achieve the standard approved under condition no. 8 above. 10. <u>Pre-commencement</u> (excluding demolition) submission and approval of a noise assessment mitigation scheme. 11. <u>Pre-commencement</u> (excluding demolition) submission and approval of an air quality mitigation scheme 12. Pre-occupation provision of all energy measures set out in the Energy and Sustainability Statement hereby approved. 13. Pre-occupation implementation photovoltaic panels. 14. Pre-occupation notification of occupiers that they would not be automatically entitled to a parking permit. 15. Pre-occupation provision of approved cycle parking. 16. Pre-occupation provision of approved residential bin store. 17. Pre-occupation (of each commercial unit) submission and approval of bin store details. 18. Pre-occupation submission and approval of a refuse management and collection strategy 19. Pre-occupation submission and approval of measures to prevent pests and vermin accessing bin stores. 20. Compliance condition – dwelling mix only as approved. 21. Compliance condition – commercial units to be occupied as Class E(a) (retail) only 22. Compliance condition relating to hours of demolition/construction works (0800-1800hrs Mondays to

	<p>Fridays and 0800-1300hrs Saturdays, and not at any time on Sundays and Bank or Statutory Holidays)</p> <p>23. Compliance condition relating to no burning of materials or green waste on site.</p> <p>24. Compliance condition that level access to the development shall be provided and retained</p> <p>25. Pre-occupation provision of the elevator and retention in good working order thereafter.</p> <p>26. No mechanical plant to be installed until a noise assessment and mitigation scheme has been submitted and approved. Installation as approved.</p> <p>27. No fixing or installing of miscellaneous item to the external faces or roof of the building hereby permitted.</p> <p>28. All windows to the west elevation of the proposed building to be obscurely glazed and fixed shut below 1.7m from internal floor level</p>
<p>Informatives</p>	<p>To include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Positive and Proactive Statement 2. Damage to the highway 3. Works affecting highways 4. Section 106 Legal Agreement 5. Pre-commencement conditions 6. Terms 7. Building Control 8. Complaints about construction 9. Encroachment 10. Community Infrastructure Levy 11. No automatic entitlement to parking permits 12. No entitlement of future occupiers to parking permits

1. Executive summary

- 1.1. This planning application, as can be seen from the application submission date and the pre-application enquiry history, has been worked on by officers and the applicant's team on and off for many years. The proposal being presented in this report for a decision is the outcome of those discussions. It is a scheme that provides for retail/commercial use on the ground floor and an assortment of 13 apartments on the upper floors, including one 3 bedroom flat.
- 1.2. The visual impact of the new building will be mitigated, particularly when seen from the street, by the stepped back design and use of red and grey brick to reflect the appearance of the existing building and to blend in with the older buildings in the area. The building will form a transition from mainly 3 storeys on the Oxford Road to the south and 7 storeys plus on Chatham Place to the north.
- 1.3. With the design and appearance resolved negotiations moved to S106 Heads of Terms and particularly how the redevelopment of the site could contribute towards providing affordable housing within the Borough. As set out in the recommendation, a financial contribution has been confirmed plus a deferred payment mechanism agreed to meet the objectives of the relevant Local Plan policy.
- 1.4. Officers acknowledge the concerns raised by both CAAC and the Conservation Officer regarding new development within the conservation area but on balance have concluded that the amended scheme (it's restrained design, use of brick, provision of good standard housing, sustainable development and contribution towards affordable housing elsewhere in the Borough) is acceptable and you are recommended to grant planning permission, subject to a S106 agreement and planning conditions as set out above.

2. Introduction and site description

- 2.1. The application site is located on the north side of Oxford Road at the corner junction with Alfred Street. The site contains a three storey end of terrace building with four commercial units at ground floor level. The largest commercial unit which fronts Oxford Road contains an estate agents, whilst the other three units which front Alfred Street are vacant. On the upper floors of the building there are 4 x two bedroom flats.



Figure 1 - Site Location Plan

- 2.2. The existing building is understood to date from the 1930's. There are four shopfronts with differing window proportions, stall riser heights and door designs. The first and second floors elevations of the building are finished with grey/buff brick with red brick trim and detailing around the edges of each elevation and around windows. The building has a shallow hipped pitched roof but as this is set back from the roof edge behind a raised parapet it is hidden from views from street level with just the parapet visible. The upper floor residential parts of the building have white UPVC windows and are accessed via an entrance door from Oxford Road. There are a number of satellite dishes on the Alfred Street elevation of the building.
- 2.3. The building is part of a wider terrace of buildings on this side of Oxford Road between Eaton Place to the west and Alfred Street. The terrace predominantly consists of three storey buildings with commercial units at ground floor and commercial or residential flats above, whilst some buildings also have a basement level. The buildings within the terrace display a wide variety of shopfront styles and advertisements. The application building, whilst also three storey, is the tallest building within the terrace as a result of the parapet roof. No. 80 Oxford Road, which is the adjacent building, is the smallest building in the terrace at two storeys. A number of the buildings within the terrace have yards and/or service areas to rear accessed from Eaton Place.
- 2.4. To the east of the site, beyond Alfred Street is a small grass verge with two mature trees. Beyond this grass verge is the Oxford Road bridge over the IDR, the other side of which are buildings of larger scale between 5 and 7 storeys with the Holiday Inn and Penta hotels. To the rear (north) of the application site is Mayer House, a contemporary development with ground floor commercial units and residential flats above of between 5 and 7 storeys which forms part of the Chatham Place development. Situated between the application site and Mayer House is a small single storey electrical substation building. Mayer House sits directly behind and spans the full length of the terrace of the buildings of which the application site forms part of. To the east of Mayer House there is a small

area of green open space associated with the Chatham Place development. To south of the application site on the opposite side of Oxford Road buildings are more modest in scale. Directly opposite is no. 101 Oxford Road, a two storey office building, to the west of this building is Providence Evangelical Church and beyond this is a three storey terrace of buildings including offices and ground floor commercial units with residential above.

- 2.5 Much of Oxford Road, including in front of the application site, is a red route with no stopping of vehicles or parking permitted. However, slightly to the west of the site there are temporary stopping and pay and display parking bays to serve the terrace, which the application site forms part of.
- 2.6 The application site and wider terrace of buildings is located within the Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road Conservation Area. The site is located on the north east edge of the conservation area which ends at Alfred Street and spans areas along Oxford Road to the west and roads further south. No. 101 Oxford Road, the office building directly opposite the site is a grade II Listed building and next to this the Providence Evangelical Church is not listed but is identified as a Building of Townscape Merit within the Conservation Area. This parade benefited from public realm improvement works brought forward by the recent High Street Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ) project with the previous tarmac forecourt area refurbished with red block pavements.
- 2.7 The Historic Area Assessment carried out for the HSHAZ considered the quality of the parade and concluded that no.78 (shaded in blue) was a neutral contributor to the character of the parade shown in blue on the plan below.

Map Showing Relative Contributions to Character Within Character Area 6.1

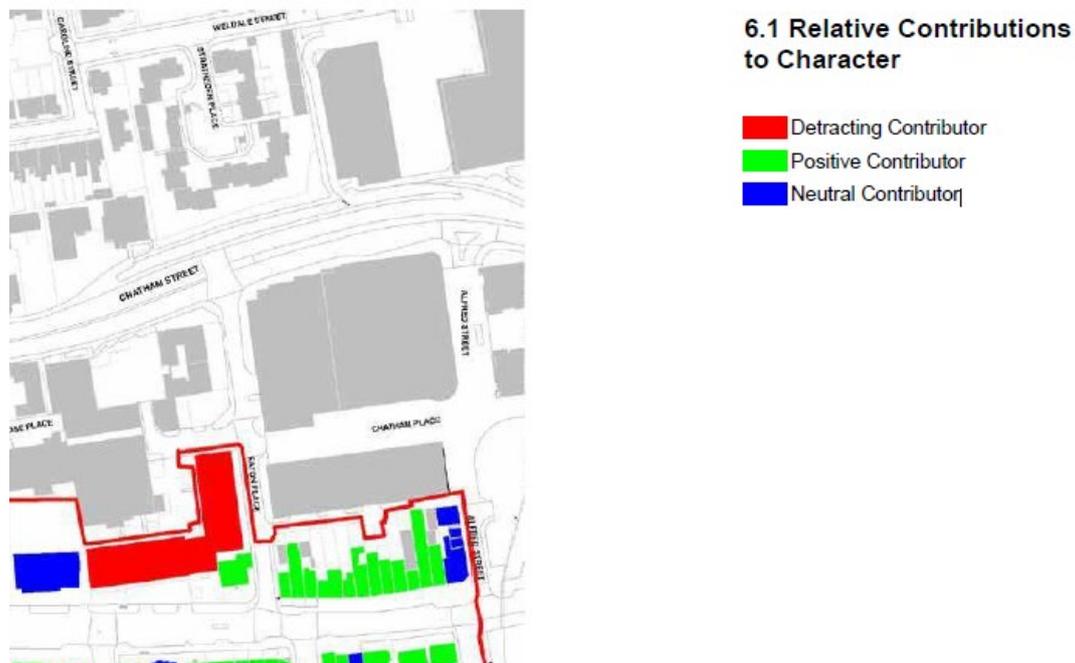


Figure 2

- 2.8 The site is located within the limits of the Reading Central Area as defined by Policy CR1 (Definition of Central Reading), within the West Side Major Opportunity Area as defined by Policy CR12 (West Side Major Opportunity Area) and within an 'area of potential for tall buildings' as defined by Policy CR10B (Tall Buildings – Western Grouping). The site is also located within an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA).



Figure 3 - View of the existing building looking north across Oxford Road from Howard Street



Figure 4 - View of the existing building looking west along Oxford Road



Figure 5 - View of the existing building looking south along Alfred Street



Figure 6 - View of the existing building looking East along Oxford Road

3. The Proposal

- 3.1. The application seeks full planning permission for demolition of the existing building and erection of a new six storey building containing 3 x ground floor retail units (Use Class E(a)) and 13 x flats (6 x 1 bed, 6 x 2 bed and 1 x 3 bed) (Use Class C3 – Dwellinghouses) to the upper floors of the building with associated enclosed communal areas, bin store, services room and cycle storage.
- 3.2. The recent planning history for redevelopment of the site started with pre-app advice being provided in 2014 and an application in 2016. This application was withdrawn following officer concerns regarding integration of the proposals with the existing building resulting in internal overlooking and a clumsy appearance to the development. Design Review Panel advice at the time was that the concrete structure of the existing building made internal alterations difficult and that a complete redevelopment of the site was more likely to enable a high-quality development. In terms of visual appearance and standard of accommodation, to be provided.
- 3.3. The current application was submitted in May 2019. The initial proposal and iteration of the proposed plans was for *Demolition of existing building containing GF retail and 4 dwellings over to be replaced with 14no. residential dwellings (3xstudio, 5x1bed, 5x2bed, 1x3bed)*.
- 3.4. Concerns were raised by officers regarding the appearance of the proposed development, in particular its integration with the rest of the terrace and shopfronts, as well as concerns regarding the proposed unit mix. There followed a series of amended plans cumulating in the latest proposals that are under consideration as part of this report with final amendments submitted in December 2025. With the appearance and mix becoming more acceptable to officers, attention turned to the financial viability of the scheme and negotiating an acceptable affordable housing offer.
- 3.5. The main changes between the original plans submitted under the current application and the amended plans subject of this report are:

- Revised approach to massing with increasing set back of massing to floors above third storey level from both the Oxford Road and Alfred Street elevations, but with overall massing increased to six storeys.
- Revised approach to shopfronts with reduced glazing and more traditional shopfront proportions proposed.
- Revised approach to design and appearance with smaller windows with more regular proportions to upper floors and overall reduced levels of glazing and balconies. Use of red brick to lower floors with lighter grey/buff brick to recessed upper floors.
- Reduction in number of flats proposed from 14 to 13 with the proposed unit mix changing from 3 x studio, 5 x 1bed, 5 x 2 bed and 1 x 3 bed to (6 x 1 bed, 6 x 2 bed and 1 x 3 bed).



1. Existing Street View



2. Proposed Street View



1. Existing Street View



2. Proposed Street View

Figure 7 - Visuals of proposed development subject of this report – existing on left and proposed on right.

- 3.6 Submitted plans and documentation:
- Design & Access Statement (including Heritage Statement)
 - CA-125-01-01-3-Site Location Plan
 - CA-125-02-01-3-Existing Site Block Plan
 - CA-125-09-01-2-Existing Ground Floor Plan
 - CA-125-09-02-2-Existing First Floor Plan
 - CA-125-09-03-2-Existing Second Floor Plan
 - CA-125-09-04-2-Existing Roof Plan
 - CA-125-09-05-2-Existing South Elevation
 - CA-125-09-06-2-Existing East Elevation
 - CA-125-09-07-2-Existing North Elevation
 - CA-125-09-08-2-Existing West Elevation
 - CA-125-09-09-1-Existing Ground Floor NIA Measure

CA-125-02-02-4-Proposed Site Block Plan
 CA-125-03-01-4-Proposed Ground Floor
 CA-125-03-02 Rev 5 – 1st floor plan
 CA-125-03-03 Rev 5 - 2nd floor plan
 CA-125-03-04 Rev 5 – 3rd floor plan
 CA-125-03-05-4-Proposed Fourth Floor
 CA-125-03-06-4-Proposed Fifth Floor
 CA-125-03-07-4-Proposed Roof Plan
 CA-125-03-08-5-Proposed Area Schedules
 CA-125-03-09-2-Proposed GIA Area Plans Sheet 1
 CA-125-03-10-2-Proposed GIA Area Plans Sheet 2
 CA-125-03-11-2-Proposed GIA Area Plans Sheet 3
 CA-125-03-12 Rev 2 – Ground and 1st floor plans
 CA-125-03-13 Rev 2 – 2nd & 3rd floor plans
 CA-125-03-14 Rev 2 – 4th & 5th floor plans
 CA-125-03-15 Rev 1 – Highway turning plan
 CA-125-04-01 Rev 5 – Sections sheet 1
 CA-125-04-02 Rev 4 - Proposed Sections Sheet 2
 CA-125-04-03 Rev 4 - Proposed Sections Sheet 3

 CA-125-05-01 Rev 8 - East and south street elevations
 CA-125-05-02 Rev 6 - Proposed South Elevation
 CA-125-05-03 Rev 8 -East elevation
 CA-125-05-04 Rev 7 -North elevation
 CA-125-05-05 Rev 7 -West elevation
 CA-125-05-06 Rev - Proposed Street Level View 1 elevation
 CA-125-05-07 Rev -Proposed Street Level View 1 elevation
 CA-125-05-08 Rev 6 -Street view looking south along Alfred Street
 CA-125-05-09 REV 1 – Photo images
 CA-125-05-10 Rev 1 – Photo images
 Amended plans received 15 December 2025

Retail Sequential Test – received 3rd November 2025

4. Relevant Planning history

- 4.1. PL/89/1316 – Change of use of ground floor from retail (A1) to restaurant (A3) - Granted
- 4.2. PL/05/0014 - Extension and refurbishment to provide 10 flats and cafe front – Granted with s106
- 4.3. PL/07/0831 – Alterations to the frontage of the building – Granted.
- 4.4. PL/16/1860 - Part second floor rear extension plus addition of third floor to existing building fronting Oxford Road. Partial demolition and conversion of existing and new build in linked 4/5 storeys element addressing Alfred Street to provide mixed use comprising a total of 13no. residential units (7no. one bedroom flats and 6no. two bedroom flats) and 4no. ground floor retail units with associated enclosed bin store and cycle storage facility in semi-covered rear courtyard – Withdrawn

5. Consultations

- 5.1. RBC Transport – No objection subject to conditions to secure submission and approval of a construction and demolition method statement prior to commencement of development, submission and approval of cycle store details prior to occupation of the development and to require the applicant to notify future occupiers of the development that they would not be automatically entitled to a parking permit.

- 5.2. RBC Environmental Protection – No objection subject to conditions to secure submission and approval of a noise assessment and mitigation scheme and a construction and demolition method statement prior to commencement of development, that no mechanical plant is installed until an appropriate noise assessment has been submitted and approved, to control that noisy construction and demolition work is only carried out during standard working hours (0800 to 1800 Monday to Friday, 0900 to 1300 Saturdays and not on Sundays or Bank Holidays) and to control that no waste is burned on site.
- 5.3. RBC Natural Environment – The property is centrally located in Reading and in an area identified as having tree canopy cover of 10% or less. There will be no new opportunity for tree or landscape enhancement as a result of this proposal however, as there is currently no landscaping associated with the site it would be unreasonable to object to the application on these grounds. Consideration must be given to the enhancement of the ecology and green credentials of the development by other means. This could be by including a green roof onto the flat roof element and by providing opportunity for landscape planting by incorporating planters within the rooftop terrace.
- 5.4. RBC Ecology Adviser – No objection, it is unlikely the proposals would impact upon protected species, and the site contains no existing vegetation such that there would be not net loss in biodiversity.
- 5.5. RBC Waste Services – The residential bin store provides sufficient capacity for the required number of bins for 13 flats. The size and location of the bin stores within each of the commercial units is not shown on the proposed plans and details of this should be secured by condition. Details of how and from where refuse will be collected from the site is required to be agreed and a waste management and collection strategy should therefore also be secured by way of condition.
- 5.6. RBC Conservation Officer – Comments provided as an addendum to previous comments on the application. Previous comments on the original plans raised objection to the proposals on the basis that its scale, height, forms, design, and appearance, would be a dominating, competing, and distracting element within the conservation area. The proposed development would have less than substantial harm (at a moderate level) to the character and appearance of the conservation area, including the setting of the listed building and views from the entrance of the conservation area. The proposal would result in value loss, and the replacement building's design quality fails to make a positive contribution to the local character and distinctiveness.

I note there have been revisions to the design of the proposed building. I list and comment on them as follows:

- The replacement building would be finished with red bricks following the form of the original/historic building, but incorporating contemporary materials and appearance. The use of grey bricks between the first and second floor windows would refer to Reading's brickwork and would be in harmony with the proposed third and fourth floors to the rear.
- Due to the horizontal arrangement /design of the ground floor's rusticated finish and continuous string courses on Alfred Street elevation, the focus would be shifted to horizontality rather than verticality, resulting in a perception of the proposed massing as lesser or lower.
- Similarly, because of the use of two-colour bricks, with the emphasis on the red, the design and appearance of the building would sit more comfortably in the historic environment in which it lies.

- The proposed retail units, given their basic lines, forms, dark grey frames and recessed fascia signage, would not dominate but possibly positively enhance the historic shopfronts on Oxford Street.
- Likewise, the proposed roof terraces with steel balustrades, because of their scale and matching grey colour with the proposed fenestration, would not be oppressive additions to the conservation area.
- The proposed PV arrays and plants, due to their location and position, would relate to Alfred Street, rather than Oxford Road, resulting in minimal harm to the character and appearance of the area.
- I find the proposed design much more appropriate, although I would still prefer some natural elements to be considered for the application site to increase the beneficial impacts of the scheme.
- I would conclude that the harm to the significance of the conservation area would be at a low level due to the loss of a historic building and the proposed scale of the new development.

5.7. Conservation Area Advisory Committee (CAAC) – Object:

- The proposal does not conserve or enhance but causes harm to the character and appearance of the Russell Street/Castle Hill/ Oxford Road Conservation Area by its height, design and materials and therefore conflicts with Policy EN4.
- This is a new development in a conservation area and conflicts with Policy EN6 as it does not make a positive contribution to the conservation area. Its scale, height, mass and proportions are not sensitive to the historic context of the corner plot.
- The proposed red and grey brick are a poor substitute for the current brickwork. Brick facades in themselves do not make a new development acceptable.
- The concept of the design shows no imagination nor desire to enhance the street or this area of the conservation area.
- There is a high risk that it will set up a chain of redevelopment along this section of Oxford Road.
- The HSHAZ project did much good work to enhance and encourage improvements to this run of properties. If approved, this application would undermine that and have a significant negative impact on the street.

Public Notification

5.8 A site notice was displayed at the application site in May 2019 and neighbours notified plus notices in local press as a major application. A further site notice was displayed on 11th July 2025 to notify that amended plans had been received.

5.9 No letters of representation have been received.

6. Legal context

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

- 6.2 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.
- 6.3. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy framework (NPPF) - among them the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'. However, the NPPF does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making (NPPF paragraph 12).
- 6.4. In this regard, the NPPF states that due weight should be given to the adopted policies of the Local Plan 2019 according to their degree of consistency with the NPPF (the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the NPPF, the greater the weight that may be given).
- 6.5. Accordingly, the latest NPPF and the following development plan policies and supplementary planning guidance are relevant:

National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024, as amended February 2025).
The following chapters are the most relevant (others apply to a lesser extent):

Section 2 - Achieving sustainable development
Section 4 - Decision-making
Section 6 - Building a strong, competitive economy
Section 7 - Ensuring the vitality of town centres
Section 8 - Promoting healthy and safe communities
Section 9 - Promoting sustainable transport
Section 11 - Making effective use of land
Section 12 - Achieving well-designed places
Section 14 - Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change
Section 15 - Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
Section 16 - Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

National Planning Practice Guidance (2014 onwards)

Reading Borough Local Plan 2019

Policies:

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
EN1: PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT
EN3: ENHANCEMENT OF CONSERVATION AREAS
EN6: NEW DEVELOPMENT IN A HISTORIC CONTEXT
EN12: BIODIVERSITY AND THE GREEN NETWORK
EN15: AIR QUALITY
EN16: POLLUTION AND WATER RESOURCES

EN17: NOISE GENERATING EQUIPMENT
EN18: FLOODING AND DRAINAGE
TR1: ACHIEVING THE TRANSPORT STRATEGY
TR3: ACCESS, TRAFFIC AND HIGHWAY-RELATED MATTERS
TR5: CAR AND CYCLE PARKING AND ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING
RL1: NETWORK AND HIERARCHY OF CENTRES
OU5: SHOPFRONTS AND CASH MACHINES
CR1: DEFINITION OF CENTRAL READING
CR2: DESIGN IN CENTRAL READING
CR3: PUBLIC REALM IN CENTRAL READING

Supplementary Planning Documents:

Sustainable Design and Construction (2019)
Revised Parking Standards and Design (2011)
Design Guide to Shopfronts (2022)

Local Plan Partial Update

- 6.6 The current version of the Local Plan (adopted in November 2019) turned five years old on Tuesday 5th November 2024. The Local Plan was reviewed in March 2023 and around half of the policies in the plan are considered still up to date. However, the rest need to be considered for updating to reflect changing circumstances and national policy. The submission draft of the Local Plan Partial Update was submitted on 9th May 2025.
- 6.7 Although there is a five-year period for carrying out a review of a plan after it is adopted, nothing in the NPPF or elsewhere says that policies automatically become “out of date” when they are five years old. Officer advice in respect of the Local Plan policies pertinent to this application and listed above is that they remain in accordance with national policy and that the objectives of those policies remains very similar in the draft updated Local Plan. Therefore, they can continue to be afforded weight in the determination of this planning application and are not considered to be ‘out of date’

7. Appraisal

- 7.1 The main matters to be considered are:

A. Land Use Principles
B. Development density, unit mix and affordable housing
C. Design considerations and effect on character and heritage
D. Amenity Matters
E. Transport
F. Natural Environment
G. Sustainability
H. Other Matters
I. Equalities impact

A. Land Use Principles

Retail use

- 7.2 At ground floor level the proposals seek to replace the four existing retail units with three, slightly larger retail units. This engages consideration against local plan policy CR1 which

requires a sequential test is carried out. While the floor area is reducing an assessment of the impact on the retail vitality is still required as per Policy CR1 with the default position being that retail floorspace should where possible be directed to more central locations.

- 7.3 The applicant has submitted a retail sequential test report carried out to an acceptable standard. Officers can confirm that whilst the total number of retail units would reduce by one, the total floor space within the proposed development for retail use would remain very similar to the existing situation, with a total of 140m² retail floorspace compared to 144m² existing retail floorspace. The site lies strategically near to the core retail area though its location would provide affordable commercial space in an area historically associated with retail-use. Current vacancy rates in the core locations indicate demand can be met by existing spaces.
- 7.4 In addition, the provision of slightly larger retail units could help increase interest in the units from potential future occupiers given the smallest existing unit has been vacant for some time.
- 7.5 In overall terms, retention of the ground floor level commercial uses would 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

Residential use

- 7.6 The application site lies close to amenities and public transport links and is located in the West Side Major Opportunity Area (MOA) as defined by Policy CR12. The site does not form part of the specific sub-areas identified under Policy CR12 within the MOA but nonetheless is still located within the larger MOA area where the general principles for new development outlined under Policy CR12 apply and support development that provides *“a mix of uses including residential, gives careful consideration to the areas of transition to low and medium density residential areas and conserve, and, where possible, enhance listed buildings and conservation areas and their settings”*.
- 7.7 Therefore, the broad principle of the proposal for residential development in this accessible town centre location aligns with Policies CC6 (Accessibility and Intensity of Development), H1 (Provision of New Housing) and CR12 (West Side Major Opportunity Area). The details of the proposed development are now considered within the rest of this report.

B. Development density, unit mix and affordable housing

Density

- 7.8 The application proposes a high development density of 542 dwellings per hectare, however, there is no prescribed local policy density upper limit for town centre sites. While Policy CR12 includes some figures for indicative development capacity it should be noted that development capacity can vary significantly on town centre sites.
- 7.9 In addition, Policy H2 (Density and Mix) outlines 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. The sustainable town centre location of the site, and proximity to other nearby high-density developments, such as Chatham Place point towards the development density proposed being appropriate for the site but the other relevant factors described above will be considered in more detail later in this report to fully inform this

viewpoint. Notably Part v) of Policy CR12 states that development within the West Side MOA should “give careful consideration to the areas of transition to low and medium density residential areas and conserve and, where possible, enhance listed buildings and conservation areas and their settings”. This will be assessed in more detail in the design and heritage section of this report.

Unit mix

- 7.10 In terms of unit mix Policy CR6 (Living in Central Reading) requires that residential developments within the Central Area should contribute towards providing a mix of different sized units with a mixture of one, two and three bedroom units. The application proposes 6 x one bedroom, 6 x two bedroom and 1 x three bedroom flats. Policy H2 explains that the mix of residential development proposed should contribute towards meeting the identified housing needs of the Borough. Figure 4.6 within the supporting text to Policy H2 sets out that there is most need within the borough for family sized units of 2 and 3 bedrooms. In this respect while 46% of the new units are 1 bedroom dwellings, 54% are two bedroom, including one 3 bedroom flat.

Affordable housing

- 7.11 In terms of affordable housing, Policy H3 (Affordable Housing) states that development proposals of 10 or more dwellings should provide 30% on-site provision of affordable housing. The policy goes on to state that *‘In all cases where proposals fall short of the policy target as a result of viability considerations, an open-book approach will be taken and the onus will be on the developer/landowner to clearly demonstrate the circumstances justifying a lower affordable housing contribution’*. The Applicant submitted a viability appraisal which has been subject to reviews by both RBC Valuations and an independent consultant. The conclusion is that it is not viable for the development to provide or contribute towards affordable housing. In fact, the development is unviable to the extent that it would not be commercially viable to carry out and in this respect RBC Valuations advice to Officers is that it is not the need to provide affordable housing that is making the scheme unviable rather that the wider scheme itself is already unviable as result of the scale of the existing building and relatively modest increase in floor area proposed as part of the development.
- 7.12 Given the above conclusions Officers have sought clarification from the Applicant as to why they would wish to carry out such an unviable scheme which under normal circumstances would not be commercially deliverable. The Applicant has advised that the building has been owned by their family for many years, having been bought by the Applicant’s father in the 1980’s and that they are adopting a long-term view of the scheme financially, which they see as a family investment for future generations and a way in which to affirm his father’s footprint in Reading. This reasoning is acknowledged by Officers however, given the need to provide affordable housing is not the reason why the scheme has been found to be unviable, RBC Valuations Officers have held long running negotiations with the Applicant in respect of affordable housing provision. These negotiations have resulted in the Applicant offering a financial contribution equivalent to the provision of 10% of the dwellings as affordable housing. This equates to a financial contribution of £142,500 towards provision of off-site housing within the Borough to be secured as part of a section 106 legal agreement. A deferred payment mechanism would also be included within the section 106 agreement to ensure that if any positive gains were made in viability due to lower construction costs and/or an expected uplift in values the Council would share in that uplift in value of the development. The ‘cap’ for these contributions would be equivalent to the Gross Development Value derived maximum

contribution for the development which could mean that the equivalent financial contribution of 30% affordable housing could be achieved. Advice from RBC Valuations to Officers is that this offer should be accepted given the overall unviable nature of the proposed development.

- 7.13 Therefore, securing via s106 a financial contribution (£142,500) equivalent to the provision of 10% of the proposed dwellings as affordable housing is considered to be acceptable given the significant unviable nature of the proposed development, whilst agreement to a deferred payment mechanism to ensure the Council shares in any future, albeit unlikely, uplift in value of the scheme is welcomed in accordance with Policy H3.

C. Design considerations and effect on character and heritage

- 7.14 Local Authorities are required by Section 66 and Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of Conservation Areas and effects upon listed buildings or their setting when considering development proposals that affect the setting or views into it. This is reflected locally within Policies EN1 (Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment) and EN3 (Enhancement of Conservation Areas) which requires proposals to protect and where possible enhance the character and appearance of heritage assets including listed buildings and conservation areas. More generally Policy CC7 (Design and The Public Realm) requires that new development maintains and enhances the character of the surrounding area and Policy CR2 (Design in Central Reading) requires that development in the town centre is of high quality and respects the area surrounding the site.
- 7.15 The Russell Street/Castle Hill/Oxford Road Conservation Area Appraisal (2020) identifies that the building falls within the Oxford Road sub-area of the Conservation Area. The Appraisal document identifies key positive features that contribute to the sub-areas significance as part of the Conservation Area which include the presence of no. 101 Oxford Road, a Grade II listed good quality example of an early Georgian residence as well as Providence Chapel and its polychrome brick façade, a Building of Townscape Merit, both of which are sited directly opposite the application site on Oxford Road. The Conservation Area Appraisal also identifies key negative features that detract from the sub-areas significance as part of the Conservation Area which include modern shopfronts and loss of original 19th century shopfronts, roller shutters, brightly illuminated and irregularly sized retail signage particularly within the terrace of buildings between Aldred Street and Eaton Place which the application site forms part of, poor statement of repair of many properties including presence of modern uPVC windows and satellite dishes.
- 7.16 In the first instance it is necessary to consider the proposed demolition and loss of the existing three storey building. Whilst not an unpleasant building visually, with use of some attractive brick work detailing to the upper floors and particularly around windows, the building is not considered to be of significant architectural merit. Indeed, in terms of the building's contribution to the surrounding Conservation Area it incorporates a number of features identified within the Conservation Area Appraisal as detracting from the Conservation Areas significance, including poor quality modern shopfronts and signage, modern uPVC windows and visual clutter from satellite dishes. The building's appearance, with large parapet roof and proportion of upper floor windows is also at odds with the rest of the buildings within the wider terrace within which it is located as well as

those on the opposite side of the street. The buildings current contribution to the significance of the Conservation is therefore considered to be limited.

- 7.17 Some of the features in the building detracting from the significance of the Conservation Area would appear to be minor and relatively easily rectified (i.e. removal of modern windows, shopfronts, signage and satellite dishes). However, it is noted, as mentioned above within this report, that a Design Review Panel commenting on a previous development proposal at the site, which incorporated retention of the existing building, highlighted concern that the concrete structure of the building provides limited scope for successful internal alteration or sympathetic extension of the building for modern residential standards. The panel's advice was that a complete redevelopment of the site is likely to provide a better opportunity to provide a high quality development both in terms of visual appearance and also in terms of standard of accommodation to be provided. In this respect Officers do not raise objection to demolition of the existing building, subject to any replacement building being of suitable high quality in terms of design and development overall.
- 7.18 The existing building fills the footprint of the site at ground, first and second floor level and the proposed replacement building would do the same. The ground floor layout proposes that three commercial units would front Oxford Road and then turn the corner to Alfred Street providing activation to both frontages. Service areas (commercial and residential bin stores, cycle stores and access to the upper floor flats) to be located further along Alfred Street. The three proposed commercial units would present well-proportioned shopfronts incorporating glazed frontages, brick pilasters and consistent stall riser, fascia and window bar/mullion proportions and layout, which would align with advice in the Design Guide to Shopfronts SPD (2022). The proposed shopfronts are considered to be appropriate within the Conservation Area, in keeping with the improvements sought by the High Street Heritage Action Zone project.
- 7.19 The proposed building, at six storeys, would be a significant increase in scale and massing compared to the existing three storey building. The design and access statement submitted with the application presents justification for this with reference to the larger buildings to the north of the site within Chatham Place and along Chatham Street within the MOA. This relationship of the application site and Chatham Place is most visible when approaching the site from the east crossing the IDR bridge and looking north west, as shown below. From this perspective, the justification for a taller building than the existing can be accepted.



Figure 8 – view from the east across the IDR bridge and looking north west

7.20 However, the site is in a position which is at the southern and western edge of the MOA and Central Area where there is a transition from higher to lower density development. This is reflected within MOA Policy CR12 under part v) which requires that developments within the MOA 'Give careful consideration to the areas of transition to low and medium density residential and conservation areas and conserve and, where possible, enhance listed buildings and conservation areas and their settings'. The application site has a direct relationship with the lower scale and density development along either side of this part of Oxford Road, including the terrace of buildings which the application site is part of.



Figure 9 – the application site and adjacent terrace

7.21 As discussed in the introduction section of this report the existing application building's form and scale is very different to the rest of the terrace. The proposals would present an overall significant step up in scale compared to the existing building and a much more significant bookend to the terrace. This is shown in the Oxford Road street-scene section in the next image.



1. Oxford Road (South Elevation)

Figure 10 – street scene view.

7.22 To mitigate this effect the proposed design provides the ground, first and second floor level within a structure that reflects the existing building in terms of its relationship with the street by continuing the building line of the terrace of buildings along Oxford Road and Alfred Street, and also in terms of height. The parts of the proposal that would project above the height of the existing building, at third, fourth and fifth floor, would be set back from the Oxford Road and Alfred Street elevations and use grey brick to introduce a lighter contrast. The set back of the upper floors would be most pronounced on the Oxford Road elevation, where the third and fourth floors would be set back 3.8m from the Oxford Road frontage whilst the fifth floor would be set back 10.5m from the Oxford Road frontage. The

set back of the upper floors and latest proposed use of grey brick for contrast can be seen on the visuals (figures 11 & 12 below). The protective railings for the terraces, which appeared incongruous before, have now been set back from the edge to hide from view when looking from the street.



Figure 11 - Visual of latest proposed development with upper floors in grey brick looking west along Oxford Road



Figure 12 - Visual of previous proposed development with just red brick and prominent railings looking east along Oxford Road for comparison.

7.23 It is considered that the significant set-back of the upper floors of the building helps to soften and integrate the larger scale of the proposals at the end of the terrace, whilst also aligning with the increase in scale that occurs to the rear (north) of the site with the existing development that has taken place around Chatham Place, as well as the existing larger scale development to the east over the IDR bridge with the Pentahotel and Travelodge hotels. In this respect it is considered that the scale of the proposals reflects the transitional nature of the site at the edge of the MOA and Reading Central Area.



Figure 13 - Pentahotel and Travelodge buildings on the east side of the IDR bridge

7.24 In terms of the detailed design of the proposals is it considered that the use of redbrick with use of a lighter grey/buff tone brick to the upper recessed floors of all elevations is an appropriate choice reflective of the appearance of prominent brick buildings within the town. More specifically the red brick to the lower floors aligns with the rest of the terrace and buildings on the opposite side of Oxford Road where these brick tones are prevalent whilst the grey/buff tone brick to the recessed upper floors reflect the lighter colour tones and different materials to the taller more modern buildings to the rear of the site within Chatham Place. The appropriate design of the proposed shopfronts was discussed earlier in this report. The upper floors of the building are also considered to incorporate an appropriate level of detailed design with further variation in brickwork tone provided by string line brick course detail between ground, first, second and third floors. The parapet roofs to second, fourth and fifth floor level also incorporates brick line detailing below and along the coping level. Proposed windows to the upper floors show consistency in terms of proportions and align vertically up the building presenting well balanced elevations. Proposed windows are proposed to be slim framed aluminium windows, incorporating window bar detailing whilst there is also detailing proposed around and between the windows to different floors and second and third floor level and between the windows to different floors at third and fourth floor level. Simple and low level black metal railing balustrades would also be visible set behind the parapet roofs third and fifth floor levels where private terrace areas would be. A condition is recommended to secure full specifications and samples of all proposed external materials.



Figure 14 - Close up view of part of proposed Alfred Street Elevation

- 7.25 Overall, the Officer view is that the proposals would present an appropriate addition to this site at the edge of the Reading Central Area within the West Side MOA. Whilst the proposals present a significant step up in scale compared to the existing building and terrace, the significant setback of the upper floors is considered to mitigate the visual impact of this additional scale from within the Oxford Road street-scene to the west and south but whilst aligning with the step up in scale that occurs beyond the rear (north) of the site around Chatham Place and to the east along Oxford Road over the IDR bridge. The proposals are considered to present a detailed design which is appropriate to its location, and it is considered that both the proposed shopfronts and appearance of the upper floors would enhance the contribution the building makes to the mixed character of the surrounding area, in accordance with Policies CC7, CR2 and CR12.
- 7.26 It is also considered that the recessed nature of the massing to the upper floors would ensure that the setting and views of the Grade II listed no. 101 Oxford Road and Building of Townscape Merit at the Providence Chapel which are opposite the site on the other side of Oxford Road would be preserved. The significance of both these heritage assets is derived from their individual appearance, being good examples, which retain some original features, of a former Georgian family home and a Victorian Chapel. There is also a group value to their significance from the two buildings being sited so close next to each other. The set back of the upper floors of the proposals which would project above the height of the existing building and rest of the terrace, together with the location of the application site on the opposite side of the busy Oxford Road is such that it is not considered there would be any significant detrimental overbearing impact to the setting of either of these heritage assets which would retain their presence and their individual and group value would not be impacted.
- 7.27 Comments received from the RBC Conservation Officer and CAAC object to the proposed development primarily as a result of its scale and perceived visual dominance within this part of the Russell Street/Castle Hill/Oxford Road Conservation Area where building heights are predominantly lower at around 3 storeys. The RBC Conservation Officer concludes that harm to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area would be Less than Substantial at a low level. The Conservation Officers latest comments note that changes to detailed design of the proposed building within the amended plans, including introduction of grey/buff brick to the upper floors and the shopfront designs as discussed above, are improvements to original proposed design and result in more of a horizontal as opposed to vertical emphasis to the buildings appearance which help it sit more comfortably within its context. Comments from the CAAC maintain that the building design is poor and unimaginative and does not contribute positively to the Conservation Area or street scene. Officers note the conclusions of the RBC Conservation Officer and CAAC and identification of Less than Substantial Harm to the character and appearance of the conservation area. For the reasons discussed in the above section of this report officers concur that this harm would be at a low level.
- 7.28 In accordance with Policy EN1 and Paragraph 215 of the NPPF (2025) the low level of 'less than substantial harm' identified to the character and appearance of the Russell Street/Castle Hill/Oxford Road Conservation Area falls to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposed development as part of the wider planning balance assessment. This weighing up exercise will be undertaken within the conclusion section of this report.

D. Amenity Matters

7.29 Policy CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity) seeks to protect the amenity of existing surrounding occupiers, whilst Policy CR6 (Living in Central Reading) specifically requires development within the Central Area to demonstrate how future occupiers will be protected from noise and air quality impacts of existing town centre uses. Equally Policy EN15 (Air Quality) and Policy EN16 (Pollution and Water Resources) seek to protect future and existing surrounding occupiers from the impacts of pollution. Policy H5 (Standards for New Housing) requires that all new build housing is built to the higher water efficiency standards under Regulation 36(3) of the Building Regulations and is accessible and adaptable in line with M4(2) of the Building Regulations.

Standard of Accommodation for Future Occupiers

7.30 The 6 x one bedroom flats proposed would be between 36.2m² and 36.6m². This is marginally less than the minimum size for a one bedroom unit set out within the Nationally Prescribed Space Standards which is 37m². Whilst this is disappointing in terms of standard of accommodation to be provided for future occupiers it must be noted that Policy H5 (Standards for New Housing) only requires that new dwellings adhere to the Nationally Prescribed Space Standards when they are located outside of the Reading Central Area. Therefore, given the application site is located within the Central Area there is no conflict with Policy CR6 identified in respect of the size of the proposed flats. More generally Policy CC8 requires that the residential amenity of future occupiers is safeguarded in terms of other matters such as noise, air quality and access to light so an assessment of these matters later in this section of the report will inform whether the one bedroom flats proposed would provide a suitable standard of residential amenity for future occupiers. The 6 x two bedroom flats proposed would be between 61m² and 77m² and the 1 x three bedroom flat would be 81m² and would all either meet or exceed the minimum floor size for these types of flat within the Nationally Prescribed Space Standards.

7.31 All the flats would be well served in terms of windows and outlook with all habitable rooms having one or more windows and are considered to be well served in terms of receipt of daylight and outlook. The flats would also provide inclusive access with level access from Alfred Street and a lift proposed within the building to access the upper floors of the building. A condition is recommended to ensure that all flats would be accessible and adaptable in line with M4(2) of Building Regulations as required by Policy H5.

7.32 The site is located in a busy location on Oxford Road and there is potential for noise impacts to future occupiers from traffic noise and the nearby commercial uses on Oxford Road, which includes a number of hot foot takeaways. The application is accompanied by a noise assessment and mitigation scheme which has been reviewed by RBC Environmental Protection Officers who are satisfied that the mitigation measures proposed (glazing and a scheme of mechanical ventilation) would ensure that future occupiers would be adequately protected from noise and that internal noise levels within the flats would not exceed recommended levels. A condition is recommended to secure submission and approval of the full specifications of the noise mitigation measures prior to commencement of development, implementation prior to occupation and retention of the measures thereafter. Conditions are also recommended to secure details of any plant equipment to be installed as part of the proposed ground floor commercial uses as well as an odour assessment prior to first use of any cooking or food preparation elements of the ground floor uses to ensure that future (and existing surrounding) occupiers would be adequately protected from plant noise and odour. Subject to the above condition it is

considered that the proposals would provide a suitable standard of amenity for future occupiers in respect of noise and odour matters.

- 7.33 The application site is located within an air quality management area (AQMA) where Policy EN15 requires that proposals which would introduce new sensitive receptors, such as residential occupiers, should provide appropriate mitigation. In this respect the development proposes to provide mechanical ventilation to provide future occupiers which appropriate air flow when windows are closed. Subject that the infill to the ventilation is located to the rear of the building away from Oxford Road, then it is considered that this would mitigate any adverse air quality impacts to future occupiers. RBC Environmental Protection Officers recommend a condition secure a scheme of air quality mitigation, including details of the proposed mechanical ventilation and location of inlet flues prior to commencement of development. Subject to this condition it is considered that the proposals would provide adequate mitigation to future occupiers in rest of air quality.
- 7.34 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 13 proposed flats being all on the upper floors of the building, these dwellings would not all be served directly by private or communal amenity space. This situation is not uncommon for town centre developments with the flats instead being well served by leisure and recreation facilities within the town centre. The closest open space to the site would be Victoria Park, located a 10 minute walk away. In addition to this, two flats (one of the two-bedroom flats at third floor level and the three bedroom flat at fifth floor level) would be served by their own good size private amenity roof terrace. Given the location of the site Officers are satisfied that future occupiers would be served by suitable access to outdoor space.
- 7.35 Overall, it is considered that the proposal flats would provide an acceptable standard of amenity for future occupiers. Whilst the proposed one bedroom flats being slightly below the Nationally Described Space Standards is disappointing this is not a policy requirement (Policy H5) for new flats within the Reading Central Area. The one bedroom flats are considered to be served adequately in all other respects and are also only very slightly below the recommended size and not to the extent that it is considered that the accommodation would be cramped to a harmful extent.

Surrounding Occupiers

- 7.36 The closest existing residential occupier to the application site are in the first floor flat to no. 80 Oxford Road, which adjoins the application site to the west. There are also residential flats at Mayer House, an adjacent block of flats to the north of the site within Chatham Place.
- 7.37 The single first floor flat at no. 80 Oxford Road is a one bedroom flat with two rear facing windows; a window serving a WC and small kitchen (non-habitable rooms) located closest to the boundary with the application site, which is also partly obstructed by a large external flue related to the ground floor hot food takeaway use at no. 80, and then a window serving a living room/bedroom (habitable room) set further back and away from the shared boundary with the application site. The larger scale of the proposed development compared to the existing building would present a different and more dominant relationship with no. 80. However, given the siting of neighbouring windows to

the first floor flat it is not considered that the proposal would result in any significant adverse impact in terms of receipt of daylight or outlook to this flat. As shown on the annotated aerial photograph, in figure 15 below, the single rear facing first floor habitable window to the flat currently obtains its outlook and daylight directly to the rear and looking west, with the outlook looking east towards the application site already obstructed by the existing first floor rear WC/kitchen element at no. 80 as it projects further back. As such it is not considered that the proposals would result in a significant or unacceptable change in relation to this window and the amenity of occupiers of the flat.

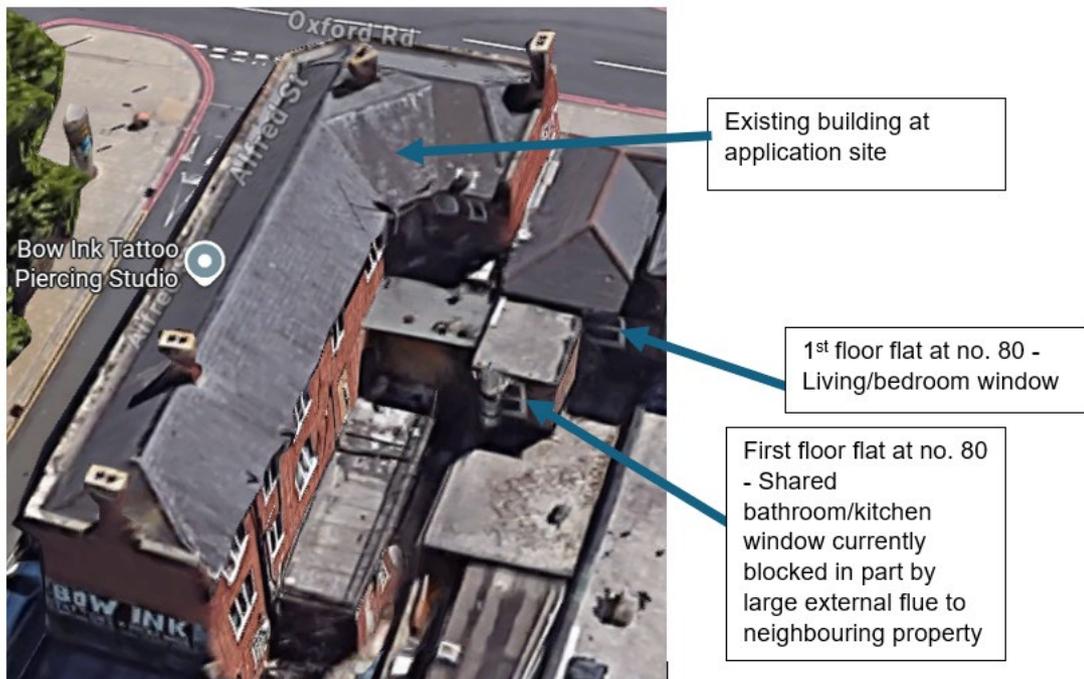


Figure 15 – Aerial view showing relationship with no. 80 Oxford Road

7.38 The proposals would result in a back to back relationship with the existing block of flats at Mayer House which is a building of between 5 and 7 storeys. There would be a separation distance of 13m between proposed habitable room windows to the flats at second floor and above within the proposed development and the existing south elevation windows to flats within Mayer House. Policy CC8 sets out that a back to back separation distance of 20m is usually appropriate to ensure no detrimental impacts on privacy. Notwithstanding this, within the Central Area it is not uncommon for there to be closer relationships between windows, particular in areas of higher density development, such as within the MOA's. For example, it is noted that within the Chatham Place development there are windows facing each other across Alfred Street with a separation of 14.5m. In terms of the application proposals, it is also noted that the facing windows at Mayer House are small, secondary and high level windows as the flats served by those windows have their primary and larger windows facing to the east and west and as such less impacted by the proposed development. Given the secondary nature of the adjacent windows it is considered that the 13m separation proposed would be adequate to prevent any significant overlooking or loss of privacy between the existing and proposed developments. Similarly, given the facing flats at Mayer House obtain their primary daylight and sunlight from windows to the east and west elevations, facing away from the proposal development it is not considered that the proposals would result in any significant loss of daylight or overshadowing to Mayer House.

7.39 The existing flats on the upper floors of Shillingford House currently present a number of windows on its west elevation which overlook (and also borrow daylight from) land to the

rear of and within the curtilage of no. 80, as well as from other nearby buildings within the wider terrace (as can be seen on the aerial photograph above). Notably, as the proposed development only shows a single window at each floor which would serve the communal stair core, and which would be obscurely glazed, there would be minimal overlooking of no. 80 or the rest of the. A condition is recommended to secure the provision of obscure glazing of the west facing windows prior to first occupation of any proposed flat. No adverse or material impacts are identified from the proposed development upon the existing ground floor hot food takeaway at no.80 or back of house areas within the rear yard area.

Waste

- 7.40 The bin store for the residential flats is provided at ground floor and accessed directly from Alfred Street. The store is of sufficient size to accommodate all necessary bins for 13 flats. The size and location of the bin stores to be provided within each of the commercial units is not shown definitively on the proposed plans given occupiers of these units are not yet known to determine the internal layout of the units. A condition is therefore recommended to require full details of the layout of the bin stores to be submitted and agreed prior to occupation of each of the commercial units to ensure these are of adequate size and suitably located within each unit. A condition is also recommended to secure submission and approval of a waste management and collection strategy in relation to both the residential and commercial bin stores to detail management of the bin stores, including how the bins would be protected and made secure to ingress from pests and vermin, from where and how the bins would be collected and when and by whom the bins would, if necessary, be returned to the stores.

E. Transport

- 7.41 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.
- 7.42 The site is located on the corner of A329 Oxford Road and Alfred Street. The A329 Oxford Road has parking restrictions preventing on-street parking and forms part of the Red Route 'no stopping' corridor. There are also short stay limited waiting bays on Alfred Street and Oxford Road in close proximity to the site. The Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD (2011) defines that the site is located within the Zone 2, which lies at the heart of Reading Borough, consisting primarily of retail and commercial office developments with good transport hubs. This area is well served by rail and bus links and also contains the largest proportion of public car parking spaces.
- 7.43 The existing site has no vehicular access and does not provide any off-street vehicle parking spaces. A vehicular access or vehicle parking spaces are not proposed to be provided as part of the development which would be car free. Therefore, the main transport consideration for this application is the non-provision of parking for the residential units. Given that Oxford Road and the surrounding road network all have parking restrictions preventing on-street parking, RBC Transport Officers consider that the non-provision of parking is acceptable in this location. This is because the existing parking restrictions would prevent any vehicles associated with future occupiers of the development from impacting on the highway network as a result of on-street parking. An informative is also recommended to inform future occupiers that they would not be automatically entitled to an on-street Residents Parking Permit given the existing high demand for on-street parking in this location.

- 7.44 In accordance with the Council's adopted Parking Standards and Design SPD, cycle parking should be provided at a ratio of 0.5 spaces per unit and 1 space per 6 staff and 1 space per 300m² of retail in the form of Sheffield type stands. The development includes the provision of secure cycle storage accessed from the side alley off Alfred Street. The proposed location and size of the store is acceptable to provide the required number of cycle parking spaces. A condition is recommended to secure full details of the specification and layout of the cycle store.
- 7.45 The short stay limited on-street parking bays near the site on Alfred Street and Oxford Road would allow for servicing and deliveries to the building to be undertaken. Refuse collection and deliveries will take place on-street as per the current arrangements from Alfred Street, where the proposed bin store is also proposed to be located and this arrangement is considered to be acceptable.
- 7.46 Given the location of the site within the busy Reading Central Area, a condition is recommended to secure submission and approval of a Construction and Demolition Method Statement prior to commencement of the development to ensure the impact of this works upon the highway network will be adequately managed and mitigated.
- 7.47 The proposals are considered to be acceptable from a Transport perspective and would comply with Policies TR1, TR3 and TR5.

F. Natural Environment

- 7.48 Policy EN12 (Biodiversity and the Green Network) seeks that development should not result in a net loss of biodiversity and should provide for a net gain of biodiversity wherever possible by protecting, enhancing and incorporating features of biodiversity on and adjacent to development sites and by providing new tree planting and wildlife friendly landscaping and ecological enhancements wherever practicable. Policy EN14 (Trees, Hedges and Woodland) states that individual trees, groups of trees, hedges and woodlands will be protected from damage or removal where they are of importance, and Reading's vegetation cover will be extended. Policy CC7 (Design and the Public Realm) sets out that good design should incorporate appropriate landscaping.
- 7.49 The application site is entirely covered in building and hardstanding and does not contain any existing vegetation, trees or biodiversity value. The RBC Ecology adviser has reviewed the site and advises that the building very unlikely to house protected species, including bats and that the proposals would not be detrimental in terms of ecology.
- 7.50 The application site is located in a part of the Reading Central Area that is identified as within the Reading Tree Strategy (2021) has having tree canopy cover of 10% or less. The proposals reflect the footprint of the existing building and as such would provide no new opportunity for tree planting. However, given there is currently no landscaping at all associated with the site and its position within an existing terrace of buildings within an established building line it would be unreasonable to object to the application on these grounds.
- 7.51 Notwithstanding the above, the proposals include significant flat roof areas and amenity terrace area which provided scope for roof level landscaping to be provided in the form of planters of green roof areas. The RBC Natural Environment Officer recommends that full details of roof level hard and soft landscaping details, including details of a green

roof, are secured by condition and submitted and approval by the Local Planning Authority prior to commencement of the development. Given the site is currently devoid of biodiversity value securing provision of these roof top landscaping elements would ensure the proposals would satisfy the requirements of Policy EN12 and provide for a net gain in biodiversity on the site. The application was submitted prior to the introduction of statutory biodiversity net gain requirements but given there is no existing biodiversity at the site the proposed development would be exempt from these requirements.

G. Sustainability

- 7.52 Policy CC3 (Adaption to Climate Change) seeks that proposals should incorporate measures which take account of climate change. Policy H5 (Standards for New Housing) seeks that all major new build residential development is built to zero carbon homes standards, which as per the adopted Sustainable Design and Construction SPD (2019) requires development to achieve a minimum 35% improvement above the dwelling carbon emission rate target defined in the Building Regulations with a financial contribution to off-set the carbon performance of the development to zero. Policy CC2 (Sustainable Design and Construction) requires new non-residential development to achieve a minimum BREEAM Very Good Standard. Policy CC4 (Decentralised Energy) also requires development to demonstrate how consideration has been given to securing energy for the development from decentralised sources whilst EN18 (Flooding and Sustainable Drainage Systems) requires development to incorporate drainage systems which should ensure that run off rates do not exceed existing conditions.
- 7.53 The application includes details of sustainability and energy measures to be incorporated within the development to satisfy the above requirements. This includes design to maximise heating and natural light from glazing, high rated insulation and high efficiency building materials to prevent heat loss, use of A rated and efficient water fittings and appliances and providing an improvement in the drainage conditions at the site through introduction of roof top level soft landscaping and green roof areas. Conditions are recommended to secure that the commercial parts of the development achieve a minimum BREEAM Very Good standard in accordance with Policy CC2.
- 7.54 The proposals include provision of photovoltaic panels at 5th floor roof level which would also provide an on-site form of decentralised energy provision. Taking into account all of the above measures the Applicant has confirmed that the proposals would achieve the minimum 35% improvement above the dwelling emission rate defined by 2013 The Building Regulations as required by Policy H5 (latest version of The Building Regulations already require new development to exceed this improvement over the 2013 dwelling emission rate). A condition is recommended to secure submission and approval of a full design stage SAP assessment prior to the commencement of development to confirm the level of improvement the development is projected to achieve in the dwelling emission rate (and requiring a minimum improvement of 35%). A further condition is recommended to secure submission and approval of an as built SAP assessment prior to occupation of the development to confirm the as built performance. In addition, a s106 obligation is also recommended which would ensure that the development achieves zero carbon standards as required by Policy H5 and would require the developer to pay a contribution to off-set the performance of the development to zero carbon in line with the RBC Sustainable Design and Construction SPD (2022), once the as built SAP performance level is known.

- 7.55 Subject to the above recommended condition and s106 obligation the proposals are considered to be acceptable from a sustainability perspective and to comply with Policies CC3, CC4, H5 and EN18.

H. Other Matters

Employment Skills and Training

- 7.56 As a major category residential development and in line with the adopted Employment Skills and Training SPD (2011), the development is expected to provide or contribute towards a construction phase employment and skills plan to benefit the local employment market. The developer has offered to make a financial contribution towards providing this training and officers have calculated the required amount to be £2,647. Securing this as an obligation in the S106 would enable compliance with Policy CC9 (Securing Infrastructure) which requires development that would provide employment to provide mitigation in line with its impacts on labour and skills.

Archaeology

- 7.57 The application site is not located within an identified area of archaeological potential and therefore is considered unlikely to result in any detrimental impacts in terms of archaeological remains.

I. Equality implications

- a. Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to—
- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- b. The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation. It is considered that there is no indication or evidence that the protected groups have or will have different needs, experiences, issues, and priorities in relation to this particular application.

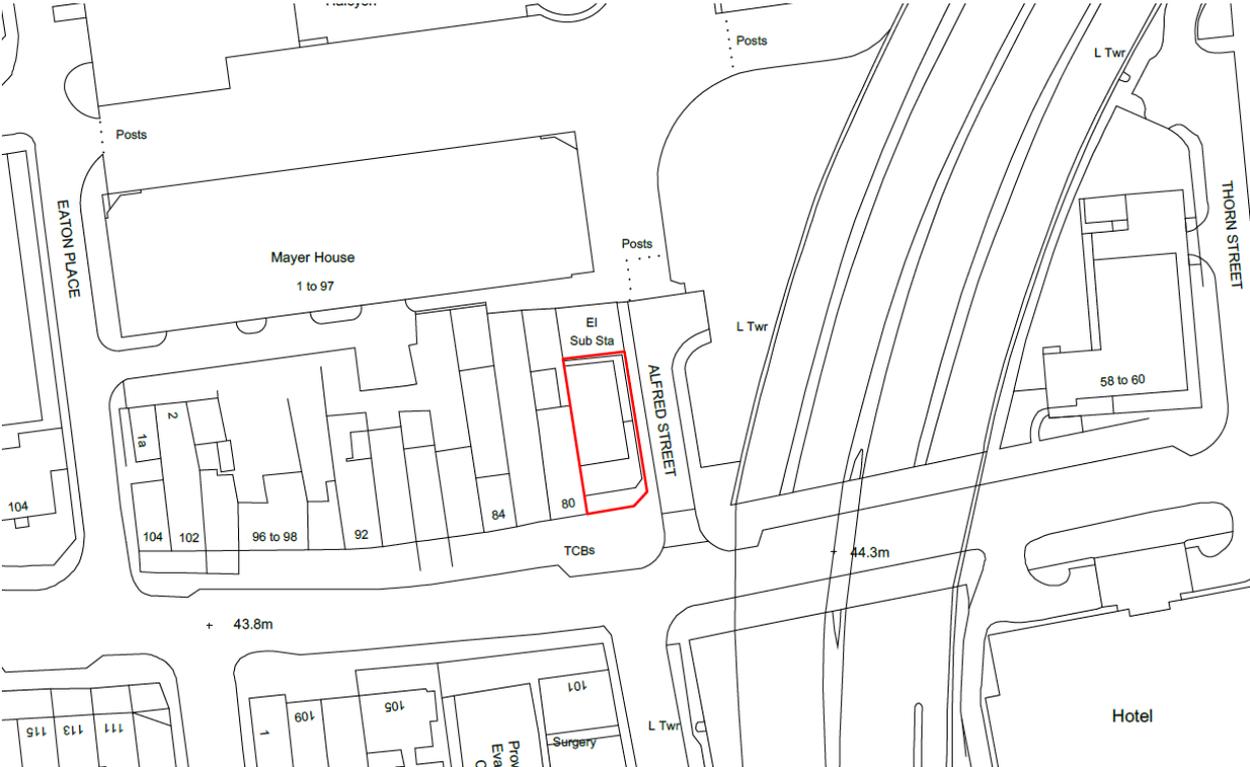
8. CONCLUSION

- 8.1 The proposal would see a residential scheme provided within the Western Major Opportunity Area. The principle of development in land use terms is therefore considered acceptable providing an appropriate mix of uses in this location as per the Policy CR12.
- 8.2 In terms of the social role, the proposals would fulfil one of the NPPF's core aims to 'boost significantly the supply of housing' (para. 60). The proposal would contribute to meeting the Borough's identified housing need in an accessible and sustainable location in accordance with Policies CC6, H1 and CR6. The commuted sum, equivalent to 10% of the dwellings being affordable units, is low, but in this case considered suitable given the economics of the development which have been confirmed following independent viability review. The proposed deferred payment mechanism allows the Council to share in any uplift in the viability position of the development in future.
- 8.3 Economically, during the construction and end user phase the proposed development would contribute to and encourage associated economic activity by directly sustaining

jobs in the Borough. This would be supported further by a construction phase Employment Skills and Training Plan to be secured via the Section 106 legal agreement. In the longer term, future occupants of the proposed dwellings will contribute to the viability and vitality of businesses in local area. Other related economic benefits include CIL contributions and the matters set out in the S106 Heads of Terms. The development would therefore clearly perform a positive economic role.

- 8.4 In terms of health and wellbeing, as described, the development is considered to create an acceptable level of residential accommodation that would not prejudice or prevent future or existing surrounding occupiers from enjoying a good quality of life. A series of planning conditions are recommended to secure detailed measure to protect future occupiers from any adverse noise or air quality impacts and subject to this the proposals would comply with Policy CC8.
- 8.5 With regard to the natural environment and the role this development will play in meeting the challenge of climate change a section 106 obligation is proposed to ensure the development achieves zero carbon homes standards and the proposals include provision of an on-site source of decentralised energy provision with roof level photovoltaic panels. The proposals would also provide a net gain in on-site landscaping and by utilising allocated previously developed land, the proposal will meet the Council's spatial strategy for the location of new development by reusing land of low environmental value. The proposals would comply with Policies CC2, CC3, CC4, H5 and CC7.
- 8.6 In terms of sustainable transport and supporting the Council's key objective of reduced car usage and improved air quality, the proposal would be car free and provide appropriate cycle facilities for residents.
- 8.7 In appearance terms, it is considered that the proposals would present an appropriate addition to this site at the edge of the Reading Central Area within the West Side MOA. Whilst the proposals present a significant step up in scale compared to the existing building and terrace, the significant setback of the upper floors is considered to mitigate the visual impact of this additional scale from within the Oxford Road street-scene to the west and south but whilst aligning with the step up in scale that occurs beyond the rear (north) of the site around Chatham Place and to the east along Oxford Road over the IDR bridge. The proposals are considered to present a detailed design which is appropriate to its location, and it is considered that both the proposed shopfronts and appearance of the upper floors would integrate with and preserve the mixed character of the surrounding area, in accordance with Policies CC7, CR2 and CR12
- 8.8 With regard to the historic environment, the proposals would on the whole have a negative impact and is considered to result in a low level of Less than Substantial harm to the character and appearance of the Russel Street/Castle Hill/Oxford Road Conservation Area primarily as a result of the proposed buildings scale. As described earlier in this report, para 215 of the NPPF states that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. As concluded above, officers are of the view that the above public benefits of the development would in this instance outweigh the low level of 'less than substantial harm' caused to the conservation area in accordance with Policy EN1.
- 8.9 When applying an overall critical planning balance of all material considerations presented, the application is recommended for approval, subject to the recommended conditions and completion of a S106 Legal Agreement.

Plans & Appendices



Location Plan

1. Existing and proposed elevations



Existing East Elevation (Alfred Street)



Existing South Elevation (Oxford Road) and Corner Elevation with Alfred Street



Existing West Elevation



Existing North Elevation



Proposed Oxford Road Street Scene



1. South Elevation (Oxford Road)

2. Corner Elevation

	Project: Alfred House Reading, RG1 7UL	 Chartered Practice
	Drawing: Proposed South Elevation	
Collaborating with: Recky Group	Date: Nov '25	Station: Information
Scale: 1:25	Section: 6	Sheet No: 01
Drawing No: 125-05-02		Checked by: [Signature]

Proposed Oxford Road Elevation (Front/South)



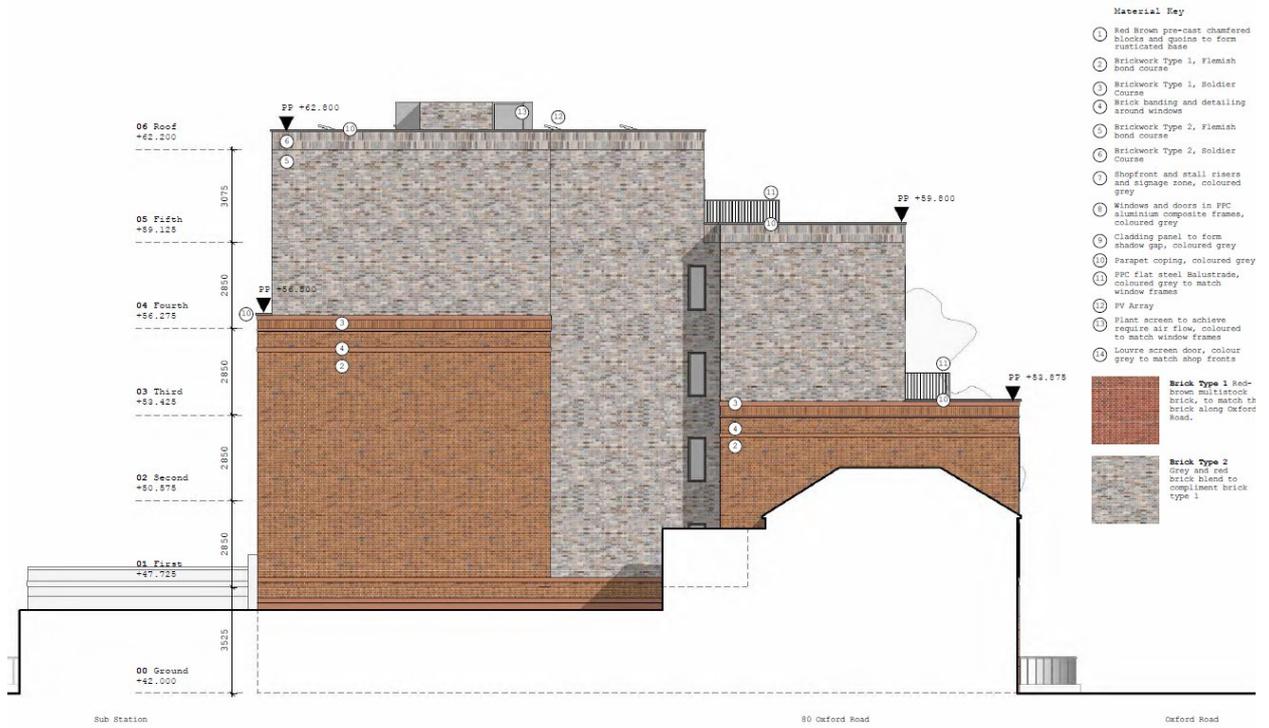
East Elevation (Alfred Street)

	Project: Alfred House Reading, RG1 7JL	
	Drawing: Proposed East Elevation	
Collaborating with: Sanjay Sharma	Date: Nov '25	Colony Architects Ltd. The Mill Store, Brewery Court, Church, Reading, RG1 5AF +44 (0)118 260 0200 info@colonyarchitects.com www.colonyarchitects.com
Date: 12/05/23	Revision: 8	Chartered Practice
Drawn By: MC	Checked By: EM	



1. North Elevation

	Project: Alfred House Reading, RG1 7JL	
	Drawing: Proposed North Elevation	
Collaborating with: Sanjay Sharma	Date: Nov '25	Colony Architects Ltd. The Mill Store, Brewery Court, Church, Reading, RG1 5AF +44 (0)118 260 0200 info@colonyarchitects.com www.colonyarchitects.com
Date: 12/05/23	Revision: 7	Chartered Practice
Drawn By: MC	Checked By: EM	

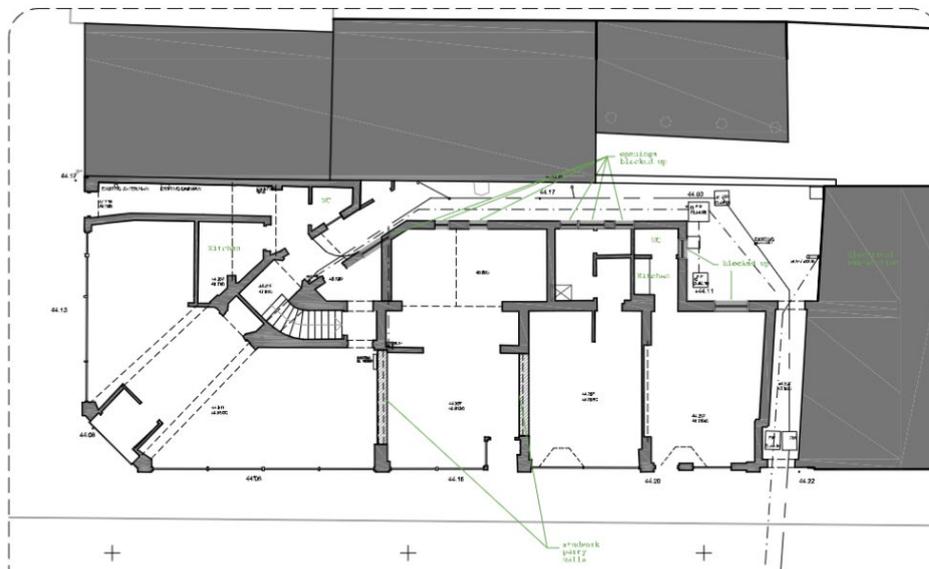


1. West Elevation

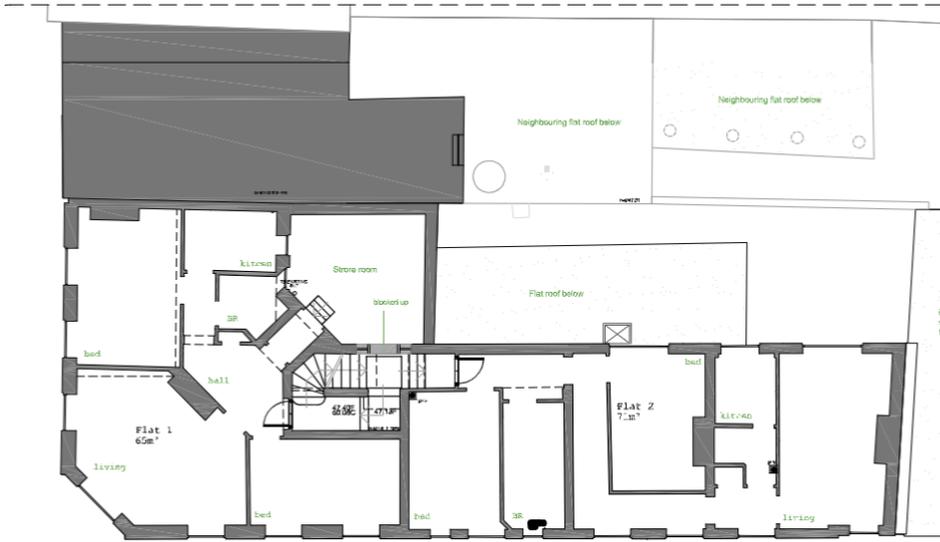


	Project: Alfred House Reading, RG1 7UL	 Chartered Practice
	Drawing: Proposed West Elevation	
Collaborating with: Saujey Sharma	Date: May '25	Status: Information
Job: 125	Drawing: 05-08	Revision: 7
	Drawn By: MC	Checked By: EM
Colony Architects Ltd. The Old Mill, Broom's Barn, 100, The Old Mill, Reading, RG1 5AJ +44 (0)118 389 0300 info@colonyarchitects.com www.colonyarchitects.com		

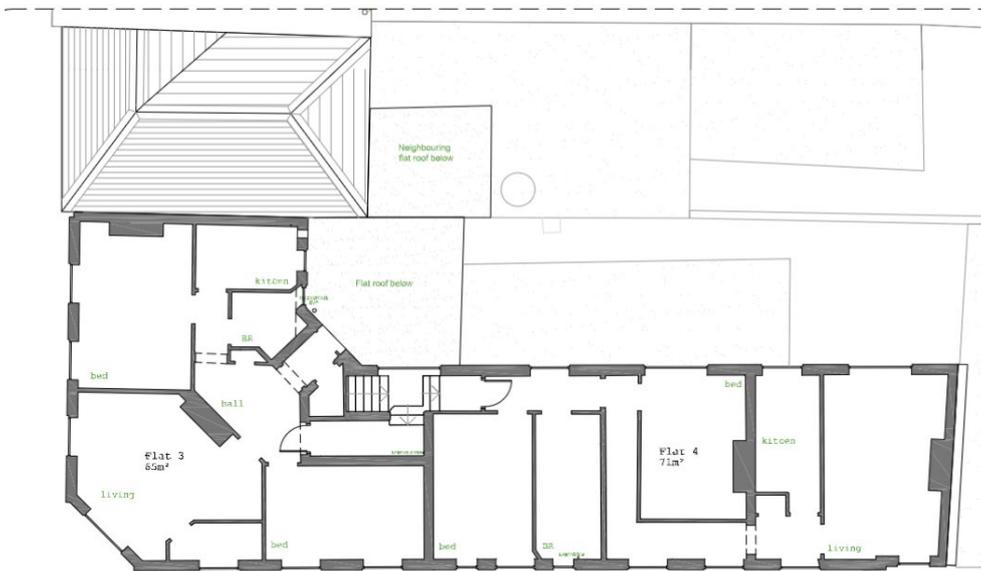
2. Existing and Proposed Floor Plans



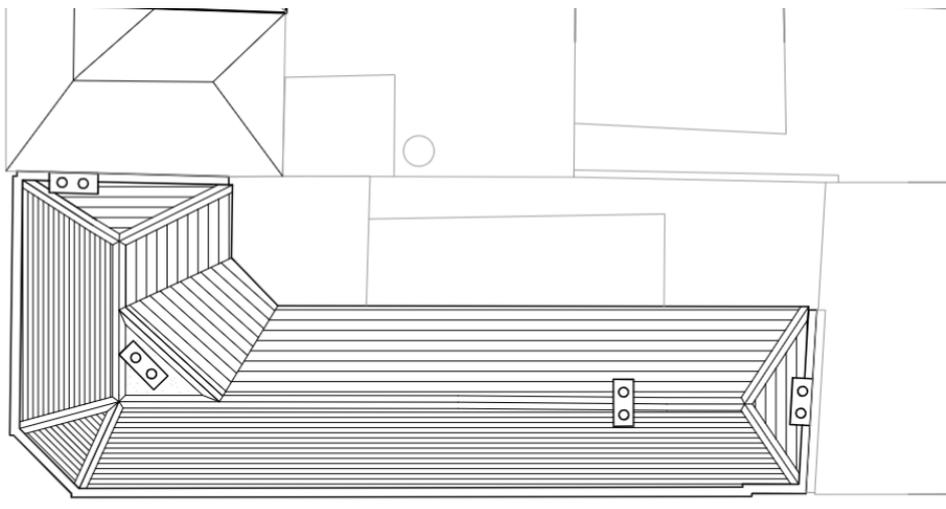
Existing Ground Floor Plan



Existing First Floor Plan



Existing Second Floor Plan

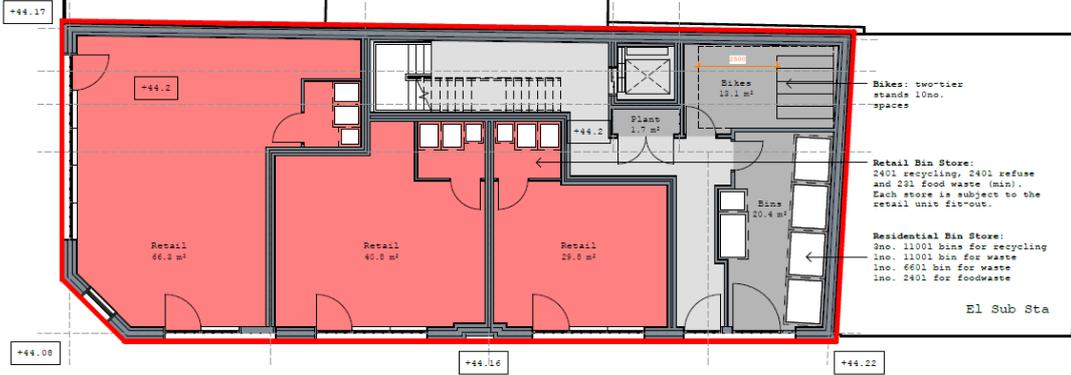


Existing Roof Plan

OXFORD ROAD

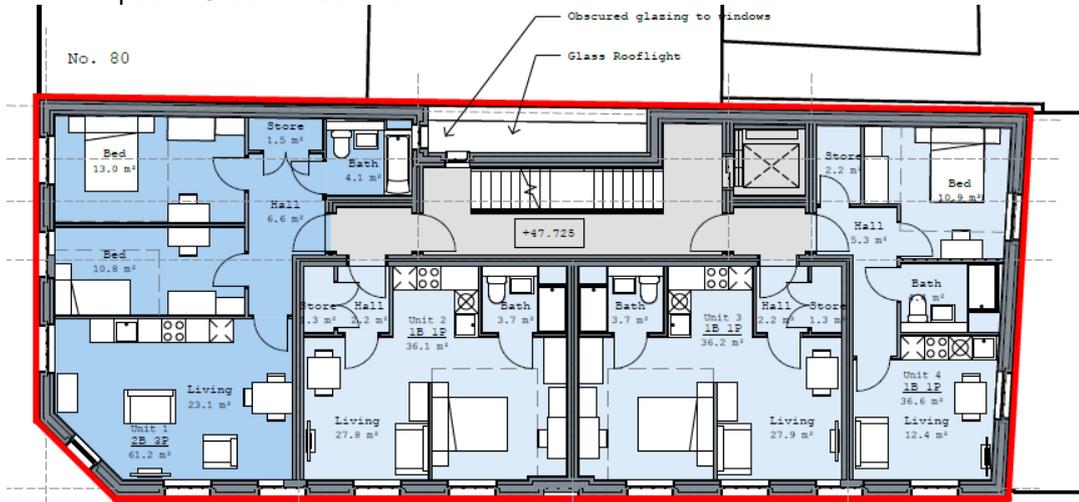
No. 82

No. 80

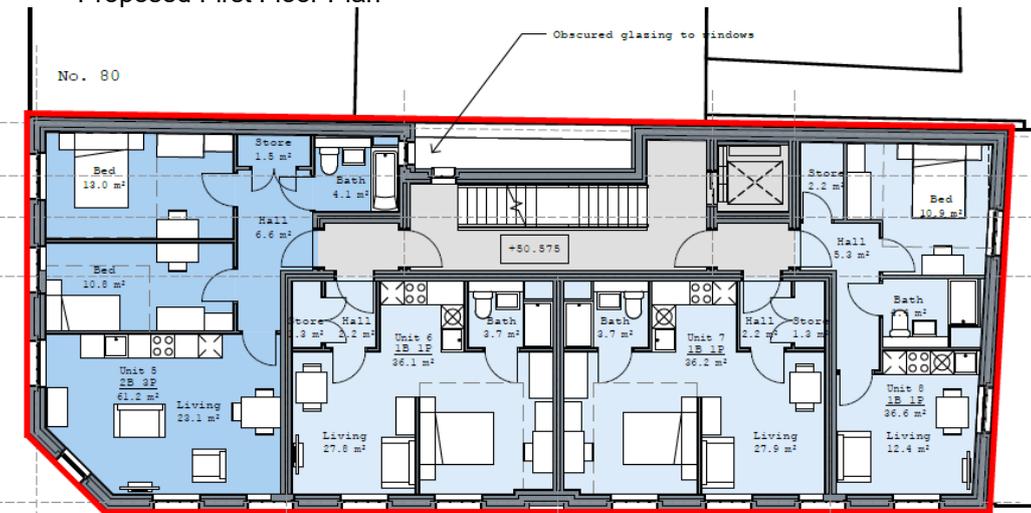


ALFRED STREET

Proposed Ground Floor Plan



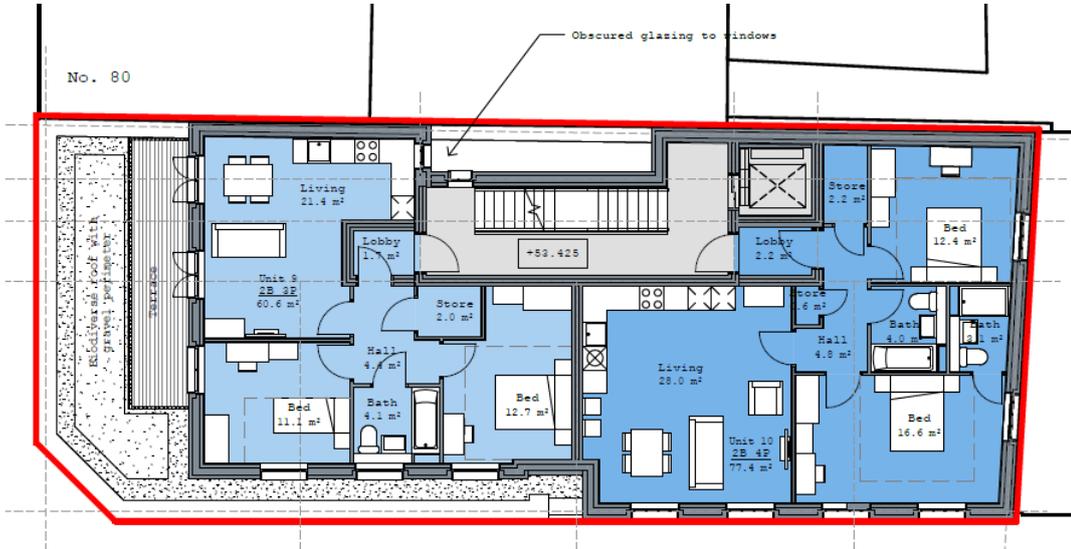
Proposed First Floor Plan



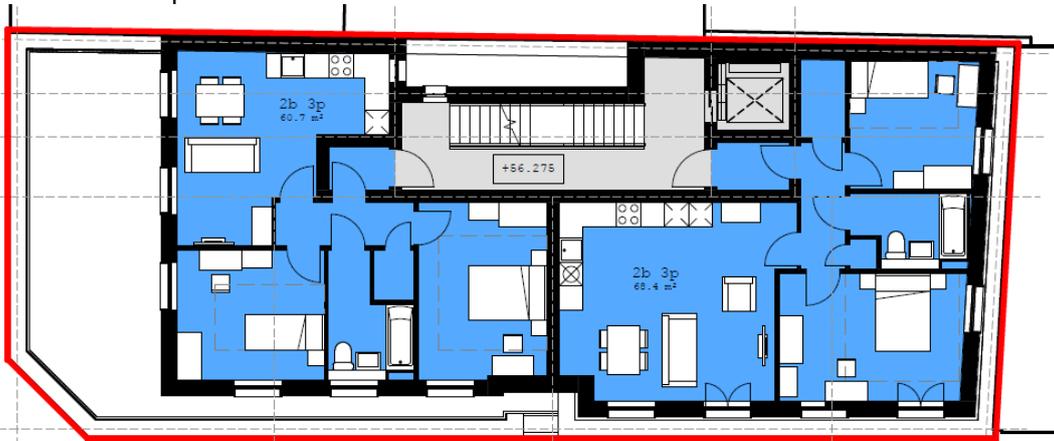
Proposed Second Floor Plan

No. 80

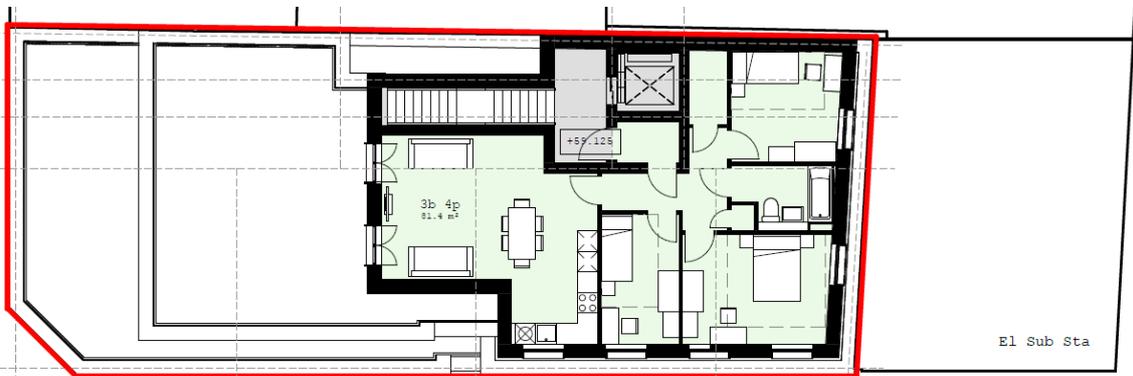
Obscured glazing to windows



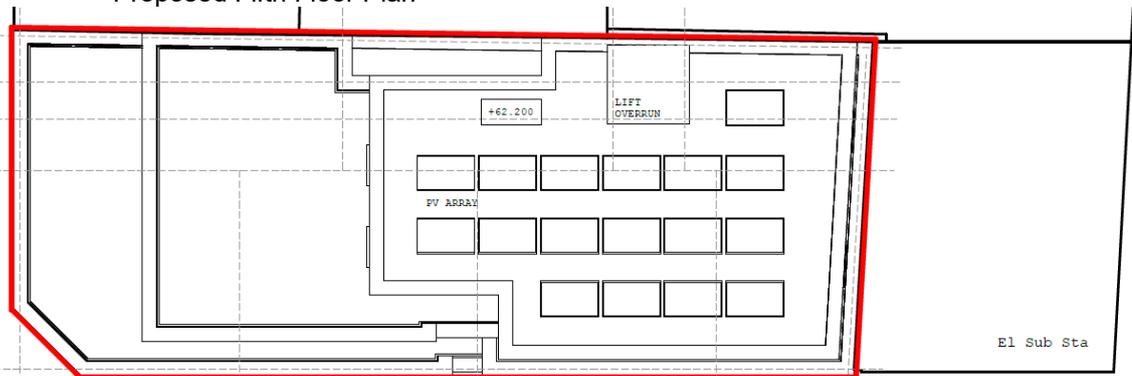
Proposed Third Floor Plan



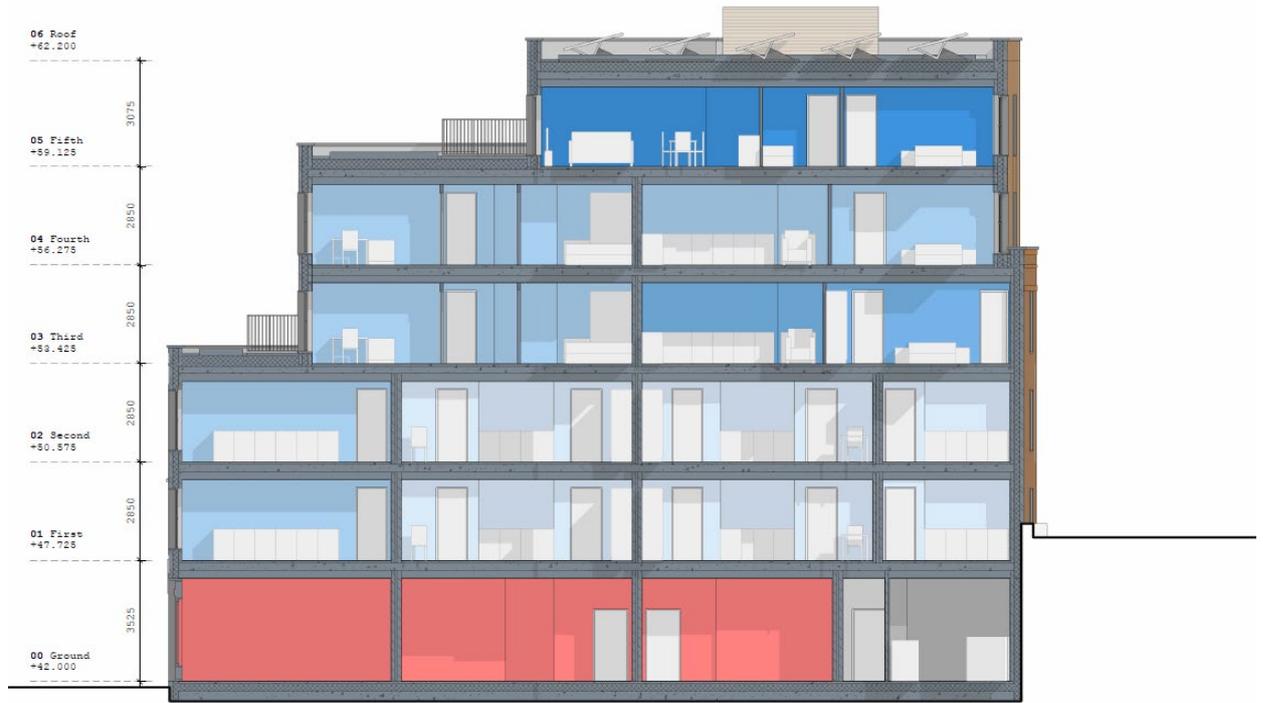
Proposed Fourth Floor Plan



Proposed Fifth Floor Plan



Proposed Sixth Floor Plan



Proposed building section

Figure 91. Map Showing Relative Contributions to Character Within Character Area 6.1

© Crown copyright and database rights 2021 Ordnance Survey 100019672

