

COMMITTEE REPORT

BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES
READING BOROUGH COUNCIL
PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE: 13th November 2019

Ward: Abbey

Application No.: 191096/FUL

Address: "Unit 16" North Street, Reading, RG1 7DA

Proposal: Redevelopment of site to provide 295sqm of office space (Class B1(a) and 6no. 1-bed apartments and 4no. 2-bed apartments (Class C3) including cycle and bin storage.

Applicant: Atlas Controls

Date Valid: 04/07/2019

Application target decision date: Originally 03/10/19, but extensions of time have been agreed until 30th November 2019

RECOMMENDATION

Delegate to Head of Planning, Development and Regulatory Services (HPDRS) to

- (i) GRANT full planning permission subject to the satisfactory completion of the S106 legal agreement and subject to outstanding sustainability (carbon off-setting) matters being satisfactorily resolved with these matters being delegated to Officers to further assess and determine; or
- (ii) to REFUSE permission should the S106 legal agreement not be completed and sustainability matters resolved by the 30th November 2019 (unless officers on behalf of the Head of Planning, Development and Regulatory Services agree to a later date for completion of the legal agreement or resolution of sustainability matters).

The legal agreement to secure the following heads of terms:

- Provision of 3 on-site residential units as affordable housing (1 x 1 bed unit and 2 x 2 bed units). Split in terms of tenure with 2 x social rented units and 1 shared ownership unit
- A cascade mechanism for payment of affordable housing financial contribution should a Registered Provider not be secured
- Financial contribution of £3,500 towards Traffic Regulation Order
- Financial contribution of £15,000 towards Car Club
- Employment Skills and Training for the construction phase (to be agreed as per the SPD formulae)
- Carbon off-set payment (tbc)

And the following conditions to include:

1. Time Limit - 3 years
2. Approved plans
3. Pre-commencement (except demolition) submission and approval of materials
4. Pre-commencement submission and approval of Construction Method Statement
5. Pre-commencement submission and approval of a cycle parking layout plan, pre-

- occupation provision of spaces and retention of spaces thereafter
6. Pre-occupation provision of approved bin stores
 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 SuDs scheme including implementation and maintenance details (consult EA)
 13. Pre-commencement submission of Design-Stage BREEAM assessment demonstrating compliance with BREEAM 'Excellent' standard.
 14. Pre-commencement submission of Design-Stage SAP assessment demonstrating compliance with Zero Carbon Homes standards
 15. Pre-occupation implementation of SuDs
 16. Pre-commencement submission and approval of hard and soft landscaping scheme, to include full details of proposed green wall to façade, and native species.
 17. Implementation of approved landscaping details.
 18. Landscaping maintenance, including to secure long-term retention of green wall as approved and details of pruning to maximise daylight penetration.
 19. Pre-occupation implementation and retention thereafter of the specifications within the approved noise mitigation scheme
 20. No mechanical plant to be installed until a noise assessment has been submitted and approved.
 21. Hours of construction: 8am-6pm (Mon-Fri); 9am-1pm (Sat); no Sundays/holidays
 22. No bonfires during construction
 23. Pre-occupation submission and approval of details of measures to prevent pests accessing the bin store
 24. Pre-occupation evidence of dwellings achieving zero carbon homes standards as built.
 25. Pre-occupation evidence of non-residential floorspace achieving BREEAM 'Excellent'
 26. Pre-occupation provision of approved electric vehicle charging spaces.
 27. Pre-occupation parking permits postal address
 28. No automatic entitlement to car parking permit
 29. Pre-occupation stopping up of existing vehicular access.

Informatives:

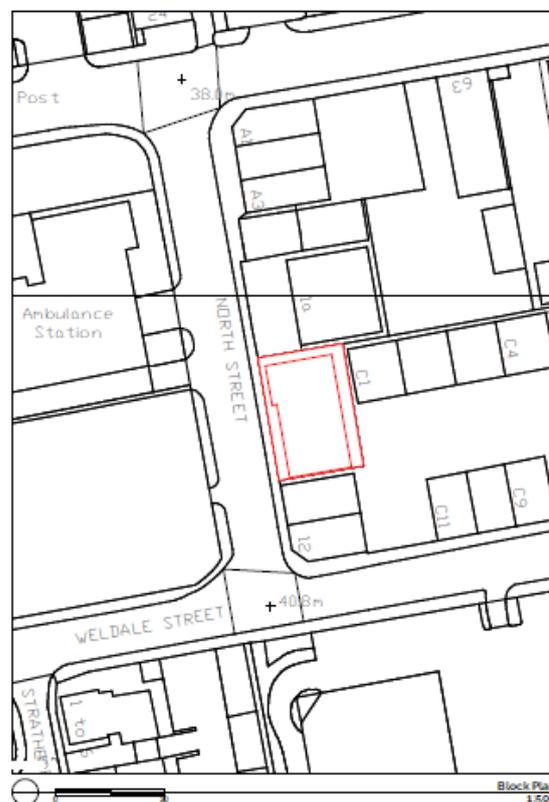
1. Positive and Proactive Statement
2. S106 Legal Agreement
3. CIL Liable
4. Terms and Conditions
5. Pre-Commencement Conditions
6. Works Affecting the Highway
7. Building Regulations
8. Thames Water Requirements
9. Encroachment
10. Parking Permits

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The application site relates to a two storey building “unit 16” located on the east side of North Street, west of Reading Town Centre, south of the railway line and a short distance from the Inner Distribution Road. The building has been converted and occupied as office accommodation (B1 use).
- 1.2 The surrounding area comprises a mix of uses; the immediate vicinity of the site features mostly light industrial and commercial uses. 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 recently gained planning permission for a residential development.
- 1.3 The site is located within the Reading Central Area Action Plan area. The site is also within the adopted West Side Major Opportunity Area (Policy RC2). The vision for the area is a ‘mixed-use extension to the west of the centre containing high quality mixed-use environments and fostering stronger east-west links into the central core’. Policy RC2 is structured with general points applicable to all sub-areas, then some individual guidance for each sub-area. The more general points that are particularly relevant specify that development will:
 - i) Contribute towards providing a mix of uses including residential;
 - ii) Help facilitate greater pedestrian and cycle permeability, in particular on key movement corridors and east-west links through the area and between development areas and the station, including the IDR;
 - iii) Provide additional areas of open space where possible, generally in the form of town squares;
 - iv) Give careful consideration to the areas of transition to low and medium density residential and conservation areas and protect and, where appropriate, enhance the setting of listed buildings.
- 1.4 More specifically at an individual level, the site is the southern half of the Great Knollys Street & Weldale Street Policy RC2b sub-area. Policy RC2b states:

“This area will be developed primarily for residential, although development resulting in the loss of small business units should seek to replace some of those units, preferably on site. Residential development should be located on the parts of the site at lower flood risk.”
- 1.5 The site is also within the Office Core (Policy RC6), and air quality management area (Policy DM19) and the site potentially includes contaminated land (Policy CS34).
- 1.6 The site is located outside the designated tall building clusters (Policy RC13) although it is located nearby. The site is also located outside of both the Primary Shopping Area and the Central Core (Policy RC6).

- 1.7 Within the emerging new Local Plan (Submission Draft March 2018) the overarching vision for the West Side MOA (Policy CR12) remains unchanged from the 2009 adopted RCAAP vision (Policy RC2). The more general points are similar too, with the relevant addition of:
“vii) Demonstrate that it is part of a comprehensive approach to its sub-area, which does not prevent neighbouring sites from fulfilling the aspirations of this policy, and which contributes towards the provision of policy requirements that benefit the whole area, such as open space”
- 1.8 In addition, in terms of the specific allocation, the site remains as the southern half of Great Knollys Street and Weldale Street sub-area, with CR12b (in comparison with RC2b) stating:
“This area will be developed primarily for residential. Any development which would result in the loss of small business units should seek to replace some of those units, preferably on site. There should be a careful transition to the lower density residential areas to the west. Listed buildings and their settings in the area will be conserved and where possible enhanced.”
- 1.9 As such, the emerging site specific allocation builds on that of the RCAAP, with additional references to the transition to the west and nearby listed buildings. The other site constraints identified in paragraphs 1.4-1.5 above are also carried over in the emerging Local Plan.
- 1.10 The application is referred to Committee owing to it being a ‘major’ development.



Site Location Plan (not to scale)



Site photograph taken from the west side of North Street

2. PROPOSALS

- 2.1 Full planning permission is sought for the redevelopment of the site so the proposal involves the demolition of existing building.
- 2.2 The proposed development seeks the erection of a five and a half storey building with accommodation in the roof space. 10 residential units are proposed; 6 x 1 bed units and 4 x 2 bed units (Class C3). Each flat features a private balcony.
- 2.3 In addition to the residential units, 295m² of office (Class B1(a)) is proposed; 149.5m² at ground floor and 145.5m² at first floor. Level access is provided at ground floor and the office features its own internal lift and stairwell.
- 2.4 The application proposes 3 affordable units; 2 of these being social rent units and 1 being shared ownership unit. These are shown as being located at the first, fourth and fifth floors.
- 2.5 The proposed development will bar car-free and cycle parking is to be provided at the front and rear of the building. In this respect, 18 cycle spaces are allocated to office use and 12 spaces allocated to the residential flats.

- 2.6 In terms of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), the applicant duly completed a CIL liability form as part of the submission of this application. As per the CIL charging schedule this proposal will attract a charge of £123,558.04 (833.5 x the 2019 CIL rate for residential developments).

3. PLANNING HISTORY

- 3.1 181290 Demolition of existing two storey building (Class B1) and erection of a seven storey building to provide 10 (2x1 & 8x2-bed) residential units (Class C3) at third to sixth floor level, office (Class B1a) at first and second floor level, and associated ground floor car parking, bin storage and cycle parking. Withdrawn

Surrounding Area:

- 3.2 181652 Outline - erection of a 2.5, 3.5 and 4.5 storey building comprising 47 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). Permitted subject to Legal Agreement 12/3/2019 (Committee 5/12/2018)
- 3.3 181653 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). Permitted subject to Legal Agreement 12/3/2019 (Committee 5/12/2018)
- 3.4 170326 - Demolition of all existing buildings (including 3 retail units) and structures, and erection of new buildings ranging between lower ground & 4 storeys to lower ground & 11 storeys in height, providing 427 (233x1, 182x2 & 12x3-bed) residential units (Class C3) and 1 flexible ground floor retail shop (Class A1) or restaurant and cafe (Class A3) unit, together with new public realm, landscaping, accesses, parking and associated works (amended description). Permitted following completion of s106 Legal Agreement 15/03/18 (Committee 8/11/2017)

4. CONSULTATIONS

- i) RBC Transport

No transport objections, subject to conditions and informatives and incorporation of TRO and Car Club into the S106 Legal Agreement.

- ii) RBC Environmental Health - Environmental Protection

No environmental protection objection in respect of noise, air quality or contaminated land subject to conditions and informatives.

Concern about light levels achieved to the residential flats in respect of the addition of the green wall; concerns minimised without the green wall.

iii) RBC Housing

Reading Housing officers are satisfied with the affordable housing contribution and tenure provide subject to completion of S106 legal agreement in this respect, and inclusion that the agreement contains cascade to a financial payment should the residential units not be sold to a Registered Provider.

iv) RBC Planning Natural Environment

No tree/landscape objections subject to conditions and informatives.

v) RBC Ecology

No ecology objections subject to conditions.

vi) Public consultation

4.12 Notification letters were sent to nearby occupiers on 16th July 2019. And a site notice was also put up. Three letters of representation received, concerned with:

- out of character/overdevelopment
- noise
- lack of parking

5. LEGAL AND PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

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

5.4 Accordingly, the application has been assessed against the following policies:

5.5 National
National Planning Policy Framework (2019)
National Planning Policy Guidance (2014 onwards)

5.6 Reading Borough Local Development Framework - Adopted Core Strategy (2008)
(Altered 2015)

- CS1 Sustainable Construction and Design
- CS2 Waste Minimisation

- CS3 Social Inclusion and Diversity
- CS4 Accessibility and the Intensity of Development
- CS5 Inclusive Access
- CS7 Design and the Public Realm
- CS9 Infrastructure, Services, Resources and Amenities
- CS10 Location of Employment Development
- CS12 Maintaining a Variety of Premises
- CS13 Impact of Employment Development
- CS14 Provision of housing
- CS15 Location, Accessibility, Density and Housing Mix
- CS16 Affordable Housing
- CS20 Implementation of the Reading Transport Strategy
- CS22 Transport Assessments
- CS23 Sustainable Travel and Travel Plans
- CS24 Car / Cycle Parking
- CS25 Scale and Location of Retail, Leisure and Culture Development
- CS26 Network and Hierarchy of Centres
- CS27 Maintaining the Retail Character of Centres
- CS29 Provision of Open Space
- CS30 Access to Open Space
- CS31 Additional and Existing Community Facilities
- CS32 Impacts on Community Facilities
- CS33 Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment
- CS34 Pollution and Water Resources
- CS35 Flooding
- CS36 Biodiversity and Geology
- CS38 Trees, Hedges and Woodlands

5.7 Reading Central Area Action Plan (2009)

- RC2 West Side Major Opportunity Area
- RC5 Design in the Centre
- RC6 Office Core
- RC9 Living in the Centre
- RC10 Active Frontages
- RC12 Terraced Housing in the Centre
- RC13 Tall Buildings
- RC14 Public Realm

5.8 Sites and Detailed Policies Document (2012) (Altered 2015)

- SD1 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- DM1 Adaptation to Climate Change
- DM2 Decentralised Energy
- DM3 Infrastructure Planning
- DM4 Safeguarding Amenity
- DM5 Housing Mix
- DM10 Private and Communal Outdoor Space

DM12 Access, Traffic and Highway Related Matters
DM18 Tree Planting
DM19 Air Quality
DM23 Shopfronts and Cash Machines
SA14 Cycle Routes

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
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

New Local Plan (Draft Reading Borough Local Plan): site is also identified as GREAT KNOLLY STREET & WELDALE STREET

5.9 Reading Borough Council Supplementary Planning Documents

Affordable Housing SPD (2013)
Employment, Skills and Training SPD (2013)
Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD (2011)
Revised SPD on Planning Obligations under Section 106 (2015)
Sustainable Design and Construction SPD (2011)

5.10 Other relevant documentation

Reading Tree Strategy (2010)
DCLG Technical housing standards - nationally described space standard (2015)

6. APPRAISAL

6.1 The main issues are considered to be:

- i) Principle of development and land use considerations, including housing mix/density and provision of affordable housing
 - ii) Design Considerations
 - iii) Trees, landscaping and ecology
 - iv) Quality of accommodation for future occupiers
 - v) Amenity for nearby occupiers
 - vi) Transport
 - vii) Sustainability, Zero Carbon Homes and SuDS
 - viii) Other matters - Archaeology, S106, CIL & Equality
- i) Principle of development and land use considerations, including housing mix/density and provision of affordable housing

6.2 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 sustainable development. As per the introduction section of this report, the site forms part of an allocated site within the West Side Major Opportunity Area which is allocated for residential development in the Reading Local Plan (2019) under Policy CR12 (Development in the West Side Major Opportunity Area). More specifically, the site forms part of the Great Knollys Street and Weldale Street Policy CR12b sub-area. In the wider sub-area the allocation details that the land will be developed primarily for residential use. In this respect, the proposed development accords with the policy objective of primarily proposing residential accommodation. In addition, the specific allocation outlines that residential development should be located on the parts of the site at lower flood risk. The entirety of the application site is located within Flood Zone 1. Accordingly, the proposal accords with this overarching principle too. Furthermore, as discussed in more detail throughout this report, the proposals also generally meet the relevant wider West Side Major Opportunity Area policy objectives as well.

6.3 The existing building has, until recently, been occupied by the Reading Youth Offending Service, in office use, as per the lawful use of the site and the Council's lease on the building expired 23rd September 2019. Given the existing/emerging site allocation, the principle of the loss of the existing building is accepted and, whilst residential led, the proposal, which includes office accommodation at ground and first floor level is therefore able to maintain the provision of existing office and employment opportunities on the site which is welcomed.

6.4 In relation to the proposed office space (Class B1(a)), an occupier has not been specified at this time by the applicant, but the open plan nature and location of the space means it is considered to be as attractive as possible to a range of occupiers.

- 6.5 In relation to the principle of residential accommodation at the site, as well as meeting the site and major opportunity area objectives outlined above, this proposal would also align with the broad objectives of Policy H1 (Provision of Housing) in assisting in meeting the annual housing targets. .
- 6.6 The proposed density of residential development at the site is 250dph. In this instance, owing to a combination of the factors mentioned above (with design / environmental impacts discussed elsewhere in this appraisal), officers are content that the density is, on balance, appropriate for this specific site and provides an efficient use of the land, appropriate for the sites location on the edge of the WMOA. In particular, the development would be making an extremely efficient use of brownfield land in a highly sustainable location, which tips the balance in favour of the density of development proposed. Furthermore, the proposal accords with the emerging indicative density range of providing over 100 dwellings per hectare in the town centre, as referenced by Policy H2 (Density and Mix).
- 6.7 In relation to the mix of units, 6 x 1 bed units and 4 x 2 bed units are proposed which is suitable and acceptable in this location close to the town centre.
- 6.8 In relation to affordable housing, Policy H3 (Affordable Housing), seeks that development proposals of 10 or more dwellings should provide a 30% on-site affordable housing provision. The scheme proposes 3 on-site affordable units which equates to 30% and provides a policy complaint scheme. In terms of the tenure mix of the affordable housing units, the applicant seeks for 2 social rent and 1 shared ownership unit to be provided on the first, fourth and fifth floors of the building. This will result in the provision of 1 x 1 bed and 1 x 2 bed social rented dwelling and 1 x 2 bed shared ownership. The tenure mix would be as close as possible to the 70% rented and 30% shared ownership split, reflective of current needs in the Borough and as agreed with by the RBC Housing department. The proposed dwelling mix for the affordable housing units is considered a good representation of the overall mix unit sizes within the scheme and is welcomed. This is considered to be a significant benefit of the proposed redevelopment of the site. Should it not be possible to secure a registered provider to manage the proposed units on site, then the equivalent financial contribution will be secured by S106 to provide offsite housing provision.
- 6.9 The re-development of this site represents an opportunity to enhance the quality of development in this area, but this necessitates a building which is of an appropriate scale, mass, location and materiality. The proposal is therefore considered to be acceptable in principle subject to the detail matters set out below.
- ii) Design Considerations
- 6.10 Policy CC7 (Design and the Public Realm) seeks to preserve or enhance the character of the area in which a development is located. This is in addition to the wider policy aims of the West Side MOA outlined above. The existing building at the site is a somewhat uninspiring two storey industrial looking building that is not

considered to be of any particular architectural merit to warrant its retention in its own right. Nevertheless, in terms of its scale it sits modestly within its context and sits comfortably within the street scene. The demolition of the existing building is considered to be acceptable subject to the replacement building being suitable in design and related terms as detailed further below.

- 6.11 In terms of the scale of the building, this has been subject to careful consideration by the applicant, as demonstrated during pre-application discussions. It is noted that the time of the previous application (181290) officer concerns were raised in relation to the overall height and design of the proposed building. There has been a significant reduction (and in comparison with the previously withdrawn application) from 10 storeys to 5 and half storeys plus accommodation in the roof and a more thorough analysis of the surrounding area has been provide as part of this submission.
- 6.12 Whilst the building would be no further forward in the site than the existing built form, it does significantly increase the built form within the site in terms of bulk and mass. In this respect, it would have 5 storeys plus accommodation in the recessed roof to minimise the bulk. Whilst not classified as a “tall building” (criteria being 10 storeys of residential/12 storeys of commercial), it is recognised that the building exceeds the height of the existing structure within the site and those immediately adjacent. It is also recognised, however, that the area, given its somewhat industrial appearance, is less sensitive (contextually). The siting of the building is located outside of but adjacent to the “Western Grouping Tall Building Cluster” to the south and is considered as a transitional site, where a “medium” height building is considered acceptable subject to its design.
- 6.13 Naturally, when compared with the two storey nature of the existing building, a five storey building is acknowledged to represent a significant change in appearance. A 3D visualization has been submitted as part of the Design and Access Statement submitted by the applicant, in order for officers to further consider the scale. Whilst the building would clearly alter the character of the area, it is not considered that any harm would be of such a substantial level which (which would warrant the refusal of planning permission) and any harm should be weighed against any perceived wider public benefits in the overall planning balance. On this matter, the proposal is considered to provide positive benefits by the removal of an uninspiring industrial looking building, provides a transitional building to tall buildings recently approved by Planning Applications Committee, to the west (181652 and 181653 - 4 and half storeys) and south east (170326 - between 4 and 11 storeys) as well as the tall buildings further to the south (Chatham Street), provides an appropriate active frontage to North Street and provides the appropriate 30% affordable housing, a key tangible planning benefit. In this respect, the proposal is considered to be a positive addition to the street scene.
- 6.14 Further to the above, the site marks the first plot within this West Side Major Opportunity Area (CR12b “Great Knollys Street and Weldale Street”) that has come forward for redevelopment and it is anticipated that through the new Local Plan

that other plots within the block will be brought forward. The scale proposed is not considered not to prejudice these adjoining plots, through inappropriate scale, or the overall site allocation itself from realizing its intended potential of medium density development.

- 6.15 Taking the above into account it is considered that the overall scale and design of the proposed development has been suitably justified that there is a suitable policy basis for a taller building of the scale proposed in this location. Although this will undoubtedly alter the context along this part of North Street, the emerging context to the west and south east helps mitigate the impact. It is considered that the appearance and detailed design accords with the specific major opportunity area requirements. However, officers also acknowledge and consider that the proposed height is the maximum permissible at this site, owing to the site constraints and surrounding characteristics of the immediate area.
- 6.16 In terms of its detailed design, the proposed plans, as submitted, include a 'green wall' on the front elevation, facilitated by vines growing on the balcony frames. When looking at the appearance of the proposed building without the green wall, the proposed steel façade framework has been designed as such to reflect a biscuit tin pattern, having regard to the history of Reading as the production centre for the Huntley and Palmer's Biscuit Tin. Notwithstanding, the somewhat simplified design approach, this has been informed by previous comments from officers and the Reading Design Review Panel. In this respect, it is a conventional rectangular building, geometric in form although it is noted that the ridges of the roofline are out of sync with the windows. Whilst not necessarily an ideal design solution in itself, this would allow for the addition of PV panels which are a positive sustainability benefit of the scheme and welcomed by the Council.
- 6.17 Further to the above, the front elevation is enlivened by full height glazing at the ground floor to serve the office accommodation element which also helps to break up the appearance of the front façade. The majority of the building's appearance comprises brick-coloured render, glazing (with PPC or Zinc surrounds) with steel framework on the frontage and grey, recycled slates). It is considered that the appearance of the proposed building is comparable to the indicative design of the approved development at the Former Reading Family Centre opposite the site (ref 181652). In this respect, the proposed materials palette would respond to its context, harmonizing with the design palette of more recently approved development within the area. Indeed, whilst the immediate area is currently somewhat industrial in appearance, the strong office feature and traditional materials are all appropriate to this rather transitional residential area.
- 6.18 Should the application be granted, conditions relating to materials are recommended to ensure that the quality of detailed design envisaged is achieved in the built scheme.
- 6.19 The green wall, as referenced above, would clearly alter the character and appearance of the street scene. Whilst it would potentially conceal the majority of the front of the building, it would also have the ability to add visual interest to the

building, with the potential to add a vibrant new addition that would add life and vitality to the area. Furthermore, a green wall provides a welcome introduction of greenery into a currently predominantly industrial area. As discussed further below, other benefits to the area may also arise through the support given to biodiversity, a reduction in rainwater run-off and an increase in energy efficiency, all of which are encouraged at national and local policy levels. Indeed, the Council welcome measures to adapt to Climate Change and the Council's draft Sustainable Design and Construction SPD considers a green wall to be a technique that can help with adaptation to climate change.

6.20 Furthermore, it is noted that, should it be installed, then for as long as the green wall is in place, there would be an obvious commercial imperative for the owner to keep it well maintained so that the building is an attractive proposition for occupiers and visitors.

iii) Trees, landscaping and ecology

6.21 Closely linked with the design of the proposed building area matters relating to landscaping, trees and ecology matters. The site has no tree constraints, yet, as it is situated within a 10% or less canopy cover area, ideally tree planting would be included. In this respect, the site specific circumstances and the proposal limit the ability to provide significant landscaping within the site.

6.22 Notwithstanding the above, the proposal has the capability for the addition of a green wall on the front elevation. Should this feature establish over a period of time, then, in principle, this is welcomed, as well as the benefits referenced above. The green façade treatment also has the added benefit of achieving net gain in street landscaping. Furthermore, The RBC Tree Strategy for Reading (2010) gives particular interest to the provision of greening of these areas.

6.23 There is a concern regarding the function of the green walling and how it would be delivered in practice. As the green walling essentially comprises planting, it is considered that the specifics could be dealt with in more detail via suitably worded soft and hard landscaping conditions.

6.24 Should the green wall be adopted, it is considered to provide several clear benefits to the scheme, over the alternative of a non-screened façade. These benefits include:

- In terms of sustainability:
 - The green walling forms a key element of the proposed sustainable design; it mitigates the need for less energy efficient mechanical cooling (which would also require some external infrastructure); and
 - The greenery would provide solar shading (and associated cooling) in the summer and would facilitate solar gains in the winter.
- In terms of design and landscaping:
 - The green walling would help generate a green street character and would soften the façade of the building; and

- The green wall would establish a positive precedent for further green walling in an area of Reading that is identified for long-term regeneration.
 - In terms of residential amenity:
 - The greenery also enhances the privacy of the proposed balconies by providing a sense of enclosure that helps define semi-private space.
 - It will help to improve the air quality while intercepting pollution and dust; and
 - Will deflect noise pollution
 - In addition, the green walling will:
 - Result in a net gain of biodiversity; and
 - Will establish a close relationship between the future occupiers and nature which is vital in providing general health and wellbeing benefits.
- 6.25 It is considered that green walls play in an important role in achieving sustainable development by, amongst other things, enhancing biodiversity, retaining rainfall, reducing water run-off and increasing insulation. This is supported by the Council's recent reaction to a Climate Change Emergency and afforded great weight in paragraph 131 of the NPPF (2019) which specifically promotes high levels of sustainability in decision making.
- 6.26 In terms of specific ecology matters, the Council's Ecologist considers that the bat survey report submitted with the application has been undertaken to an appropriate standard and that the proposals are unlikely to affect bats or other protected species. Furthermore, bat roosts are proposed on the roof which is to be welcomed as a positive biodiversity enhancement and to be secured via condition in any permission.
- 6.27 Further to the above, a green wall will likely have added value for wildlife when compared to both the existing buildings on site and proposed façade in isolation. The applicant will need to submit full details (via condition) of landscaping, in line with Natural Environment Officer comments.
- iv) Quality of accommodation for future occupiers
- 6.28 Policy H5 (Standards for New Housing) seeks that all new building housing is built to high standards. Policy EN16 (Pollution and Water Resources) seeks to protect future occupiers from the impacts of pollution and Policy H10 (Private and Communal Outdoor Space) seeks that residential developments area provided with adequate private or communal outdoor amenity space.
- 6.29 Considering first the size and shape of each of the residential units, a series of standardized layouts have been adopted and applied on each floor. All are regular in size and shape, whilst also having regard to the nationally described space standard guidance document (as well as Policy H5). Furthermore, there are regular floor to ceiling heights and the units are predominantly stacked from floor to floor (ie bedrooms above bedrooms) which is appropriate.

- 6.30 Concern was raised that the proposed green wall would affect the level of light afforded to each of the units, given they would be deep, single aspect units. As discussed above, the green wall, as soft landscaping, can reasonably be controlled via condition. A light survey has been submitted with the application which does indicate that some of the rooms would be below the guidelines for access to daylight provision, whilst the majority would be acceptable without the addition of the green wall. Officers recognise the uncertainty which surrounds the levels of growth and foliage from any landscaping scheme over time, and therefore the realistic level of daylight and sunlight experienced by the majority of future occupiers is considered to be adequate. It is expected that suitable pruning and long term maintenance to minimise daylighting issues can be addressed in the landscaping details which are recommended to be secured by condition.
- 6.31 In terms of amenity space for future occupiers, the residential units are provided with external balcony spaces on the front elevation of the building. Given the constraints of the site, this is considered to provide valuable outdoor space to the benefit of future occupiers.
- 6.32 Level pedestrian access to the units is proposed via the residential lobby area at ground floor, separate to the office accommodation which is considered acceptable. There is also a rear access to the lobby and lift to the upper floors, which is also separate to the lift associated with the office element.
- 6.33 In terms of privacy and overlooking, it is initially noted that the proposed accommodation is located sufficient distance away from existing nearby residential occupiers outside the application site. This is discussed in more specific detail in the 'amenity for nearby occupiers' section below (from the opposite perspective) but equally applies to future occupiers too. Given the nature of the proposal there would be loss of privacy or overlooking between different units at the site.
- 6.34 In terms of noise and disturbance, it is acknowledged that North Street is a relatively busy road, with the nearby Ambulance Station, bus depot and neighbouring industrial units. A noise survey and mitigation scheme has been submitted. Environmental Protection officers consider that the recommended standard for internal design can be met if the recommendations from the assessment are incorporated into the design in order to protect the amenity of future occupiers. This is recommended to be secured by condition. Furthermore, internal noise transmission would be covered under building regulations.
- 6.35 Similarly, in terms of noise, vibrations, dust and fume considerations, comments from Environmental Protection confirm that both during the demolition/construction phase, and subsequently, the proposals will be acceptable subject to a variety of conditions for any permission. In particular, a pre-commencement construction method statement will protect the amenity of future occupiers within the earliest phase of development.

- 6.36 In terms of air quality, an air quality assessment has been submitted with the application. Environmental Protection officers consider that this suitably demonstrates that the air quality at the proposed building will be acceptable and no further mitigation is necessary in this respect.
- 6.37 In terms of contaminated land matters, Environmental Protection officers advise that a series of standard contaminated land based conditions are necessary owing to the former uses at the site in order to ensure the land is suitable for the proposed end uses and does not create undue risks to future occupiers. Subject to these conditions, the proposals are appropriate in terms of contaminated land.
- 6.38 Conditions to ensure any pest or vermin issues on site are dealt with prior to construction are also recommended along with a condition to require details demonstrating how the proposed bin stores will be designed in terms of pest control.
- 6.39 With regard to the quality of accommodation for future non-residential occupiers, the office units are considered to be of a size and nature which would make them attractive to a wide variety of possible future occupiers. In particular, the open plan nature of the spaces, the double /largely glazed frontage will assist in height this regard. The potential impact of noise and disturbance of future occupiers from the non-residential elements will be mitigated by the Environmental Protection and Transport based conditions too. Should the future occupier seek to include any noisy plant in association with the future use of the unit, a noise assessment will be required, as secured via condition attached to any permission. With all of the above in mind it is considered that the unit would be of a suitable quality for a variety of Class B1(a) operators. It is also noted that no advertisement consent for signage has been sought at this time, as the future occupier has not been specified. Therefore an informative will remind the applicant of the possible need for advertisement consent in the future.
- 6.40 It is considered in overall terms that the proposals would provide a suitable standard of accommodation for all future occupiers, subject to the recommended conditions, in accordance with Policy CC8 in particular.
- v) Amenity for nearby occupiers
- 6.41 Another significant consideration in any proposal of this nature is the potential impact on existing adjoining and nearby occupiers to the application site. Accordingly, each of the matters outlined by Policy CC8, together with reference to other related policies of relevance, is considered in this section.
- 6.42 In terms of visual dominance, overbearing effects, it is acknowledged that the scale of the proposed building would result in a significant change in context for existing nearby occupiers. However, it is also recognised that there are limited existing residential units in the area and the impact of the proposed building on other adjacent commercial/industrial units is not considered to be significantly

adverse due to the commercial and industrial nature of these sites. Similarly the proposals would not result in harmful loss of daylight or overshadowing to surrounding properties.

- 6.43 In terms of privacy and overlooking, no windows are proposed on either flank elevation of the proposed building (towards the north and south of the site). On the west (front) side of the building, external balconies are proposed floors 1-5, which will be seen from other buildings in the area. However, in the context of nearby residential development, no significant material loss of privacy or overlooking is considered to occur. Furthermore, this is not considered to significantly impinge the future redevelopment of the site to the west.
- 6.44 In overall terms, the proposals are not considered to cause a significant detrimental impact to the occupiers of nearby properties or the wider area/uses, complying with Policy DM4 in particular. Similar to the conclusion reached in the quality of accommodation section above, this conclusion is subject to recommended conditions.

vi) Transport

- 6.45 The site is located in Zone 2, Primary Core Area, of the Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD. This zone directly surrounds the Central Core and extends to walking distances of 2 kilometres from the centre of Reading. This zone is well served by public transport, with buses continuing either into or out of the Central Core Area via this zone.
- 6.46 In accordance with the adopted Parking SPD, the development would be required to provide 1 space per 100m² of B1 office and 1 parking space per 1-2 bedroom dwelling plus 1 space per 10 dwellings for visitor parking. The residential element would generate a requirement for 11 parking spaces.
- 6.47 The site is proposed to be car-free which does not comply with the Council's Parking Standards. Therefore, mitigation measures would need to be offered if a full application is submitted. The recently approved residential development on the former Reading Family Centre located opposite the site secured a contribution towards a car club. Given that the proposed development has no on-site parking, car clubs allow members access to cars and reduce the need to own a car themselves. Therefore, a contribution towards the costs of funding a car club would be required which would be secured via S106 legal agreement.
- 6.48 Further to the above, a contribution would also be required to cover the costs of preparing, advertising and thereafter implementing a Traffic Regulation Order to alter the parking restrictions to provide an on-street reserved parking space for the aforementioned car club vehicle; this will also be secured via S106 legal agreement.
- 6.49 It should be noted that North Street and Weldale Street all within a Resident's Permit Zone; therefore future residents of the development would not be eligible

for a Residents Parking Permit. The standard parking conditions and informative would be applied if the application is approved.

- 6.50 Cycle parking should be provided in line with Council's adopted Parking Standards and Design SPD Section 5. The SPD notes 0.5 cycle spaces is required for 1 or 2 bedroom dwellings and 1 space per 200sqm of B1a office use. Good quality cycle storage must be incorporated into the design of scheme in order for a car-free development to be considered.
- 6.51 In this respect, the residential cycle store is located with a shed at the back of the property and accessed from a side alleyway. This is acceptable in itself; however, it is not clear whether the shed will be equipped with a Sheffield type stands as these types of stands should be set back 650mm from the back of the store which may make the store inaccessible. Therefore, clarification is required to ensure the cycle parking provision complies with design standards and it is considered that this can be dealt with by way of a suitably worded condition.
- 6.52 The office use will provide cycle parking across the site frontage. Again, whilst this in itself is acceptable, there is some concern that the spaces are somewhat exposed to the elements in respect of security and weather which may discourage use. It would be appropriate for a minimum of 2 spaces to be covered and it is considered that this can be dealt with by way of a suitably worded condition.
- 6.53 The existing vehicular access to the site will not be required and must be stopped up with the footway reinstated to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority. This can be dealt with by way of condition.
- 6.54 On the basis of the above, the proposals are considered to be satisfactory from a transport perspective, subject to a number of conditions and elements to be secure through the Section 106 Legal Agreement.

vii) Sustainability, Zero Carbon Homes and SUDS

- 6.55 The Planning Statement submitted in support of the proposal considers that the proposed development has been designed to achieve the highest levels of sustainability, as indicated in the Design and Access Statement. The DAS includes significant commentary in respect of sustainability and energy matters and, indeed, it is noted that should the green wall be adopted, it would enhance the suitability of the building through natural temperature management. Notwithstanding this, with regard to the office element proposed, Policy CC2 states that "All major non-residential development or conversions to residential are required to meet the most up-to-date BREEAM "Excellent" standards". It is therefore considered necessary to secure the standard two-part condition. The first, a pre-commencement condition, seeks a final design stage assessment and certificate to demonstrate that the units would achieve the required 'Excellent' rating. The second element, secured prior to first occupation, will secure final BREEAM domestic refurbishment certificate of compliance with the 'Excellent' rating.

- 6.56 In respect of the residential elements proposed, Policy H5 seeks that all new building housing is built to high standards. In particular new housing should adhere to zero carbon homes standards. Policy CC2 (Sustainable Design and Construction) and CC£ (Adaption to Climate Change) seeks that proposals should incorporate measures which take account of climate change. Specifically, Policy H5 states that “All major new-build residential development should be designed to achieve zero carbon homes”. In this respect, this will mean as a minimum 35% improvement over the Target Emissions Rate over the 2013 Building Regulations plus a contribution of £1,800 per tonne towards carbon offsetting within Reading (calculated as £60 per tonne over a 30 year period).
- 6.57 The Council would expect the applicant to submit an Energy/Sustainability assessment as part of the application submission, demonstrating how the energy related aspects of the proposed development actually meet the requirements of Policy H5. Furthermore, a financial contribution to offset remaining carbon emissions to zero should be included with the S106 Legal Agreement.
- 6.58 Given the time the application was submitted and validated, and that the application was originally due to be determined at the 9th October Planning Applications Committee, the above did not form part of the original assessment of the application. However, as the new Local Plan is due to be adopted 4th November 2019, this does now form a material planning consideration, with significant weight held due to the imminent adoption of the Plan. The applicant is aware of the change in policy context and an update report will be provided in respect of the above. As set out in the recommendation box at the start of the report, Officers seeks that, should planning permission be granted, agreement of the level of the carbon off-setting contribution is delegated to Officers once review of the calculations has been completed.
- 6.59 In terms SuDs, officers are satisfied with the information submitted as part of the application. This is subject to, in the event of permission being granted, pre-commencement conditions for a final implementation, maintenance and management plan, as well as the measures proposed being implemented prior to first occupation of residential units.
- 6.60 The comments of Thames Water are noted and can be addressed by their suggested informative.
- viii) Other matters - Archaeology, ESTP, S106, CIL & Equality
- 6.61 The site has previously been developed in respect of the existing unit and the Berkshire Archaeologist has confirmed that there are no concerns in respect of buried archaeological heritage and no further detail or action is required in this respect.
- 6.62 A construction phase Employment Skills and Training Plan would be secured which identifies and promotes employment opportunities generated by the proposed

development, or other developments within Reading, for the construction phase of the proposed development. Sometimes this requires a payment to Reading UK CiC, the Council's partner, to prepare the plan usually payable at least 1 month prior to implementation and index linked from the date of issue of planning permission. As such, the S106 will secure this in a flexible manner covering both options.

6.63 As already outlined in this report, a number of matters are to be secured via S106 Legal Agreement. Policies CS9 and DM3 allow for securing the necessary contributions to ensure that the impacts of a scheme are properly mitigated. The recommended heads of terms, in addition to affordable housing matters, are as follows, as also set out in the recommendation above.

- An Employment Skills and Training Plan (construction phase only)
- Contribution of £3,500 to cover the costs of preparing, advertising and thereafter implementing a Traffic Regulation Order
- Contribution of £15,000 toward the costs of funding a car club
- A financial contribution to offset remaining carbon emissions to zero - figure to still be agreed with the LPA

6.64 A S106 Legal Agreement is in the process of being prepared to secure these contributions.

6.65 It is considered that the obligation referred to above would comply with the National Planning Policy Framework and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) in that it would be: i) necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms, ii) directly related to the development and iii) fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.

6.66 Separately, the proposal would be a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) liable development. The applicant has provided the appropriate CIL Additional Information Form. An informative would be attached to the decision notice to advise the applicant of their responsibilities in this respect.

6.67 Pre-commencement conditions - In line with section 100ZA(5) of the Town and Country Planning Act (as amended) discussions are being undertaken with the applicant regarding pre-commencement conditions. To be updated.

Equality

6.68 In determining this application the Council is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. 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.

Matters Raised in Representation

6.69 All matters raised are considered to be covered within the appraisal section above.

7. Conclusion

7.1 The proposals are considered to be acceptable within the context of national and local planning policies, as detailed in the appraisal above. Ultimately, when applying an overall critical planning balance of all material considerations, the benefits are considered to outweigh the conflicts. As such, full planning permission is recommended for approval, subject to the recommended conditions and completion of the S106 Legal Agreement.

Case Officer: Ethne Humphreys

Drawings and documents:

Plans and Documents submitted:

Drawing No: Existing Building and Maps (Location and Site Plan) Rev 7.4

Drawing No: Proposed Elevations: Structure Rev 7.4

Drawing No: Proposed Elevations: Summer Rev 7.4

Drawing No: Proposed Elevations: Winter Rev 7.4

Drawing No: Proposed Floorplans Rev 7.4

Drawing No: Comparative Sections Rev 7.4

Drawing No: Long Section Rev 7.4

Drawing No: Streetscene Rev 7.4

Received 10th October 2019

Contaminated Land Risk Assessment

Noise Report

Transport Statement

Air Quality Report

Bat Survey Report

Affordable Housing Statement

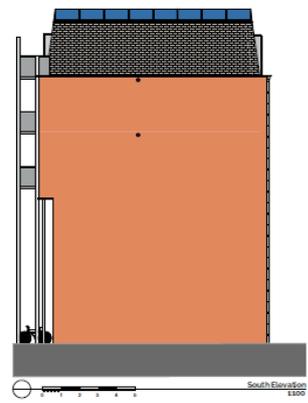
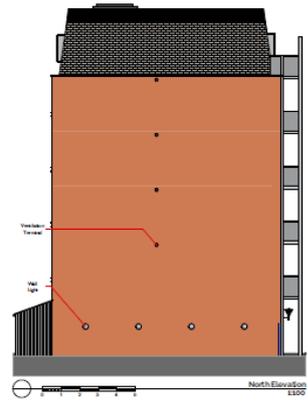
Open Space Statement

Surface Water Drainage Statement

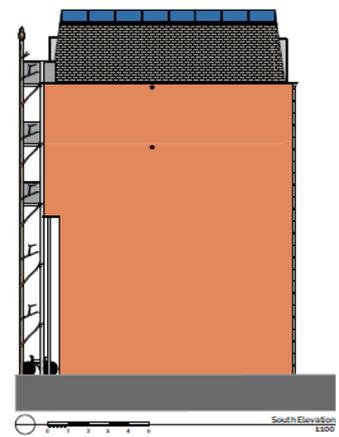
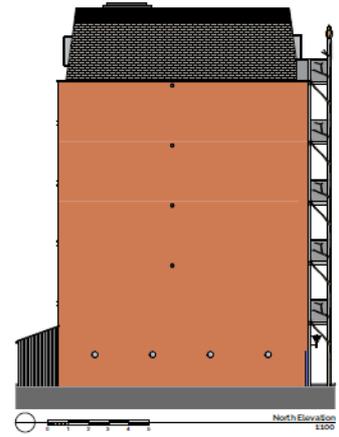
Received 3rd July 2019

Design and Access Statement

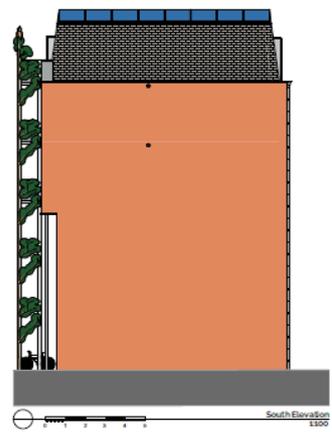
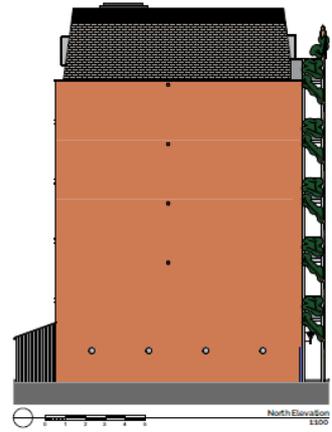
Received 10th October 2019



Proposed Elevations (Structure)



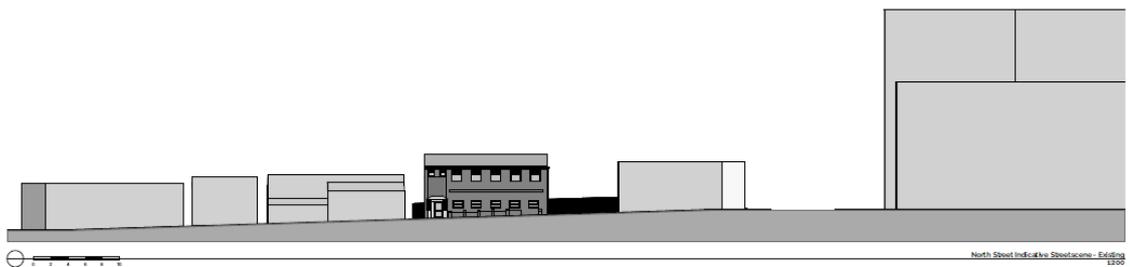
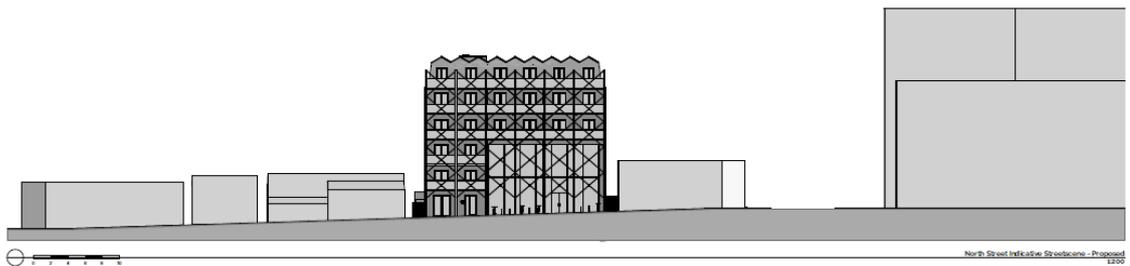
Proposed Elevations (Winter)



Proposed Elevations (Summer)



Proposed Floor Plans



Streetscene