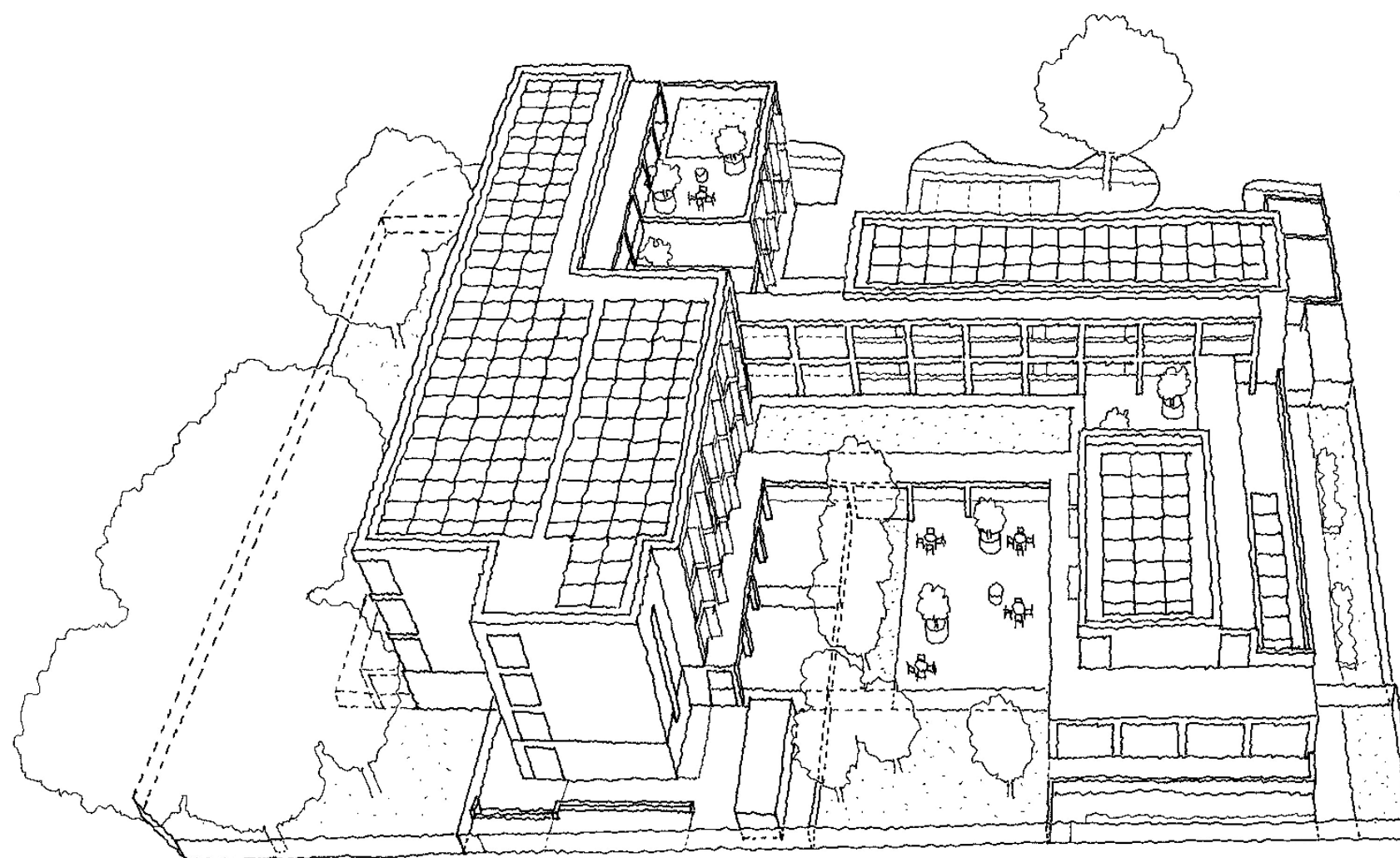


Hexham Road

Design & Access Statement

February 2023



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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Overview
- 1.2 Key Principles
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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Overview

This Design and Access Statement accompanies a planning application submitted on behalf of Reading Borough Council (RBC) for a day centre providing social care services (Use Class E(f)) and specialist housing (Use Class C3) with landscaping, car parking and access.

The redevelopment of the site will result in the erection of one new building, ranging in height from one to four storeys, containing 42 dwellings and a Day service for adults with Profound and Multiple Learning Disabilities (PMLD) and associated infrastructure. The 42 dwellings are 1-bed flats including 36 specialist units aimed at people typically over 55 (sheltered housing) and 6 units for general needs. It is intended that 100% of the units will be affordable at affordable rents

The structure of this Design and Access Statement begins with a description and analysis of the site and its context followed by an explanation of the proposals and how they respond to the site and its immediate context. The final section on Access explains how the site will be accessed by pedestrians, bicycles and vehicles and how the proposals will enable inclusive access for occupants.

The proposals have been presented at pre-application meetings with planning officers, the Reading design review panel, council members and public consultation events. Feedback has been gathered from all meetings and events have been recorded and responded to throughout the design development.

This application seeks full planning permission to provide a mix of the following accommodation:

PMLD Day Service (Class E (f))

- | | |
|----|---|
| 36 | Nr 1 bed Sheltered Flats (Class C3, Cat 2) |
| 4 | Nr 1 bed General Need Flats (Class C3, Cat 2) |
| 2 | Nr 1 bed General Need Flats (Class C3, Cat 3) |

42 Nr Dwellings in total

Figure 1 shows an aerial photograph of the site, outlined in red.



Figure 1. Site Location Aerial View

1.2 Key Principles

Below is a summary of the key principles that have helped inform the design. Further details on each element are described in greater detail in the report.

The Need

Existing outdated Sheltered housing and Day Care Services for Adults with PMLD will be relocated from other sites around Reading onto one site closer to the centre of Reading.

Consultation

Regular consultation meetings with RBC Members, Planning Officers, the Reading design review panel, Care Staff and Public Consultation events has ensured that the proposal responds to the wider needs within Reading.

Location

The site has good local transport connections with a 24-hour bus service on Northumberland Avenue and Hexham road, providing links into central Reading and the train station. Good local amenities, shops, schools, doctors, dentists, parks etc. are all within easy walking distance.

Scale and Massing

The scale of the different parts of the proposed building respond to various surrounding building heights and also the mature copse of trees to the south-western edge of the site. The 4 storey wing of the building on the west side reflects the the 4 storey residential blocks of flats to the east and the building steps down from 4-3-2-1 storeys in a clock-wise direction responding to the immediate neighboring building heights. The proposed form is based on the development of a perimeter courtyard block to provide a development that addresses the street frontages of Hexham Road and Northumberland Avenue, stepping down in scale in order to maximise light into the courtyard, creating external roof terraces and minimising impact on adjacent houses.

Orientation

The site is not adversely affected by overshadowing. The predominate boundaries face North onto Hexham Road and West onto Northumberland Avenue. The more open southern edge faces Bede walk and the Reading Girls School.

Overlooking Mitigation Strategy

The proposed layout has been developed to ensure that it does not negatively impact on the existing residents living in the surrounding area. The distance between the proposed and the existing buildings as well as the locations of windows has been carefully considered to prevent overlooking into any existing properties. Careful consideration to massing means that there is no increased overshadowing to existing residents.

Movement & Access

The site layout has been designed to improve vehicular and pedestrian routes into and within the site and connecting to the wider area. A one way vehicular route through the car parking area will improve safety of movement within the site. Pedestrian access across the corner of Hexham road and Northumberland Avenue has been improved, forming a more open public space. Bede walk will be improved, creating a more open, brighter and safer pedestrian route. This has been achieved by opening up the boundary with a secure but semi-open fence, so you can see into the development. Entrances to the housing are provided off Bede Walk and windows are placed strategically to provide over-looking onto Bede Walk

Layout

Each user group has their independent entrances with clear delineation of lifts and stairs. Most flats are single aspect and are orientated North, East and West. The amount of glazing and solar shading is dependent on the orientation to optimise daylight and heat gain and to minimise heat loss.

Appearance

Historically dwellings in Reading have been built predominately with red bricks and more expensive buildings have silver grey at the front and entrances. To reflect this, we are using red bricks with grey bricks for the prominent ground floor elements, entrances and walkway structures.

Landscape

The site retains the predominant trees along Northumberland Avenue, which are a strong natural feature along this primary route towards the town centre. Private gardens will be provided to the general housing flats on the ground floor. Sheltered flats have Juliet balconies and have access to a number of roof terraces. A central courtyard is split and provides garden space for two ground floor flats and a dedicated secure area for the PMLD Day Care Service, with a more open garden facing Bede Walk. A large existing mature tree is maintained on Hexham Road to mark and frame the entrance into the development.

Sustainability

RBC have declared a climate emergency. The proposal has been designed to achieve Zero Carbon in use using Passivhaus principles incorporating features such as air source heat pumps, PV panels, increased insulation, air tightness and triple glazed windows. The approach to sustainability is not limited to energy performance, the integration of cycle stores for every dwelling along with improved cycle and pedestrian routes supports active lifestyles and reduces reliance on car use. Easily accessible recycling facilities are intended to encourage waste recycling, whilst enhanced tree planting and vegetation will help improve air quality, health and wellbeing.

1.3 The Need

The application is the culmination of a detailed and wide ranging ‘Adult Social Care Asset Review and Capital Strategy’ undertaken by Reading Borough Council. This is summarized in the Planning Statement. Phase 1 of the Strategy was to undertake a review of the current suitability and condition of Adult Social Care’s property assets alongside analysing projected needs in the medium to longer term and reviewing service delivery models. This included consultation with service users, carers, families, staff, partner organisations and anyone with an interest in these services.

PMLD Day Care Service

The service provides support to people with complex learning disability and physical disability needs who require a high ratio of care, many needing one staff member to support them all the time that they are at the service (1:1 care). This service is currently provided at Strathy Close. However, the current building is no longer fit for purpose and has limited room to expansion to meet expected future needs.

Hexham Road has been identified as the best place to provide day services for adults with profound and multiple learning disabilities. Services will be offered between 9am - 3pm. Service users are supported to meet their personal care needs and to participate in activities within the centre and local community.

36, 1-Bed Sheltered Flats.

Occupants will have support/contact but no services are provided on site. Residents will be typically over 55 years of age. It is intended that 100% of the units will be affordable at affordable rent. There are three existing blocks of sheltered housing flats which do not meet the needs of all older people. Two of the blocks are far from local services and amenities and all three do not have the facility to install lifts and as such are unsuitable for those who are frail, have mobility issues or who are disabled. The service ambition is to re-provide new homes for older people within modern facilities that meet the needs of existing tenants and new tenants including those who wish to downsize from family sized homes.

6, 1-Bed General Needs Flats

Again, it is intended that 100% of the units will be affordable at affordable rent

Shaping the Services

RBC carried out Public consultations in terms of shaping the future services in relation to Service users, carers, families, staff, partner organisations and anyone with an interest in these services were encouraged to engage in the consultations (carried out Nov/Dec 2018). The key findings have been used to identify and shape their brief.

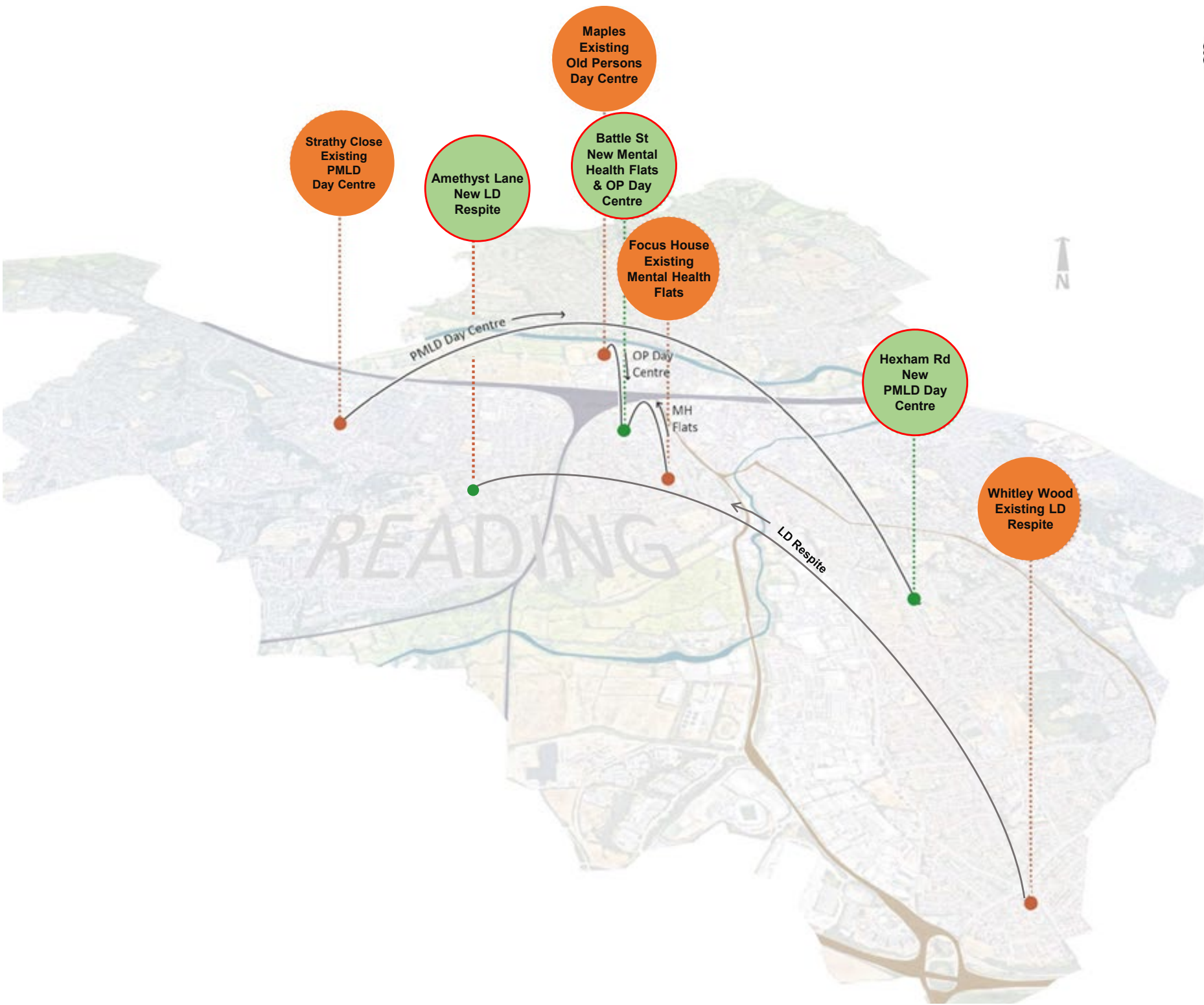


Figure 2. Map of proposed Adult Services relocations

Figure 2 shows the outcome of the Strategy. It shows the Hexham Road site in the Context of two other projects; Battle Street & Amethyst Lane. Hexham Road has been identified as the best place to provide day services for adults with profound and multiple learning disabilities as well as specialist housing. ‘Developing new homes for older people alongside the provision of older persons day services provides an opportunity to provide a dynamic and exciting new model of delivery with a level of cross fertilisation of services that improves the wellbeing of customers of both services.’ (Officer Report to Policy Committee (18 January 2021), Section 4.9)”

1.4 Consultation & Community Involvement

Consultation with Local Authority

During the design process proposals were submitted to the local authority planning team for comment and discussion, this was followed by further meetings and submissions amended each time to reflect the comments and suggestions of the local authority planning team. This helped us to arrive at an agreed submission in principle.

Design Review Panel

During the pre-app process, the design was presented to RBC's Design Review Panel on the 22nd September 2022. This was a positive process with some valuable comment provided on the design. Some key design aspects relating to massing, shadowing, access, surveillance to Bede Walk and articulation were raised that we have incorporated into the final design.

Public Consultation

A Public Consultation event was held at the local Community Building (figure 3), Hexham Road Community Centre on 10-11th November 2022. RBC arranged a newsletter drop prior to the event outlining the proposals and details of the Public Consultation to all the local residents. Over the two days the event was attended by members of the local community and council officers and design consultants. There were also comments received via the online portal. All comments were recorded and some key issues were raised about overlooking, the suitability to accommodate a large Readibus vehicle, security along Bede Walk and sustainability. However, the general consensus was positive, with many local residents supportive of the scheme.

Strathy Close Consultation

A consultation event was held at Strathy Close day care service on 17th November 2022. Throughout the course of the afternoon, staff and service users viewed and commented on a series of boards that explained the proposal. The main areas of focus were around the layout of the PMLD day care service and suitability of drop-off and parking arrangements.

Access Working Group

The scheme was presented to RBC's Access Working Group on 24th November 2022, consisting of Councillors, council staff, members of the public and other interested local community groups and businesses. This group focused on the accessibility of the scheme, including flat layouts, landscape treatments, way finding and specification. All comments were either addressed at the meeting or has been incorporated into the final design.

Refer also to the Consultation Tracker for details.



Figure 3. Public Consultation at Hexham Road Community Centre



Figure 4. Consultation at Strathy Close Day Service

2.0 Site and Context

- 2.1 Site Context
- 2.2 Location
- 2.3 Site History
- 2.4 Site Photos
- 2.5 Surrounding Building Heights
- 2.6 Surrounding Building Materials
- 2.7 Site Analysis
- 2.8 Flood Risk

2.0 Site and Context

2.1 Site Context

The Hexham Road site, formally the Willows Care home, is located to the South of Reading City Centre along a key spine road, Northumberland Avenue. The site is serviced by a good 24 hour bus service from Northumberland Avenue and along Hexham Road. The public transport links the site into the city centre, the train station and out to other suburban areas of Reading.

The site area is 0.46Ha and is a brownfield site which previously accommodated the Willows care home. In September 2018 Reading Borough Council's Adult Social Care undertook a consultation about the future of The Willows. The consultation proposed closing the residential care home and moving the intermediate care/ rehabilitation beds to Charles Clore Court (an Extra Care provision) on the basis that this would deliver better outcomes for users as the alternative options would be better suited to meeting their needs. As a result the Willows closed in 2020 and was demolished in 2022. It is currently overgrown scrubland with the hardstanding remaining from the footprint of the building and the associated car parking areas. It contains a number of trees and shrubs..

The surrounding residential streets Hexham Road, Northumberland Avenue, Canterbury Road and Morpeth Close consists of predominantly 2 storey terrace houses. There are also a number of 4 storey maisonettes and apartment blocks at the Eastern end of Hexham Road.

Reading Girls Schools is directly to the south with a distinctive 2/3 storey training block adjacent to the site and the main block of 3/4 storeys further south. The schools playing fields are directly south of the site across from a pedestrian walkway, Bede walk.

Figure 5 shows an aerial view of the site and context viewed from the South East.



Figure 5. Aerial View

2.2 Location

Suitability of Hexham Road

The Council identified the Hexham Road site as giving key benefits to meet their aims.

- A suburban location with a good connection into to Reading town centre
- Shops, Restaurants, Post Office, Dentists, Doctors and other local amenities are all a short walk away along Northumberland Avenue or Basingstoke Road.
- 24 hour bus routes along Northumberland Avenue.
- Transport links to support all people who live, attend services or work at the site with easy access via walking, cycling, mobility scooter or public transport.
- Long Barn Lane Recreation Ground is a 3 minute walk away.
- Access public transport and medical and health facilities easily.
- A community centre to the East of the site with regular clubs and church / interest groups.

Figure 6 shows the site illustrating the local access, facilities, amenity areas and transport links to the site.

For further details of the local transport, highways and access links, refer to the Transport Statement.

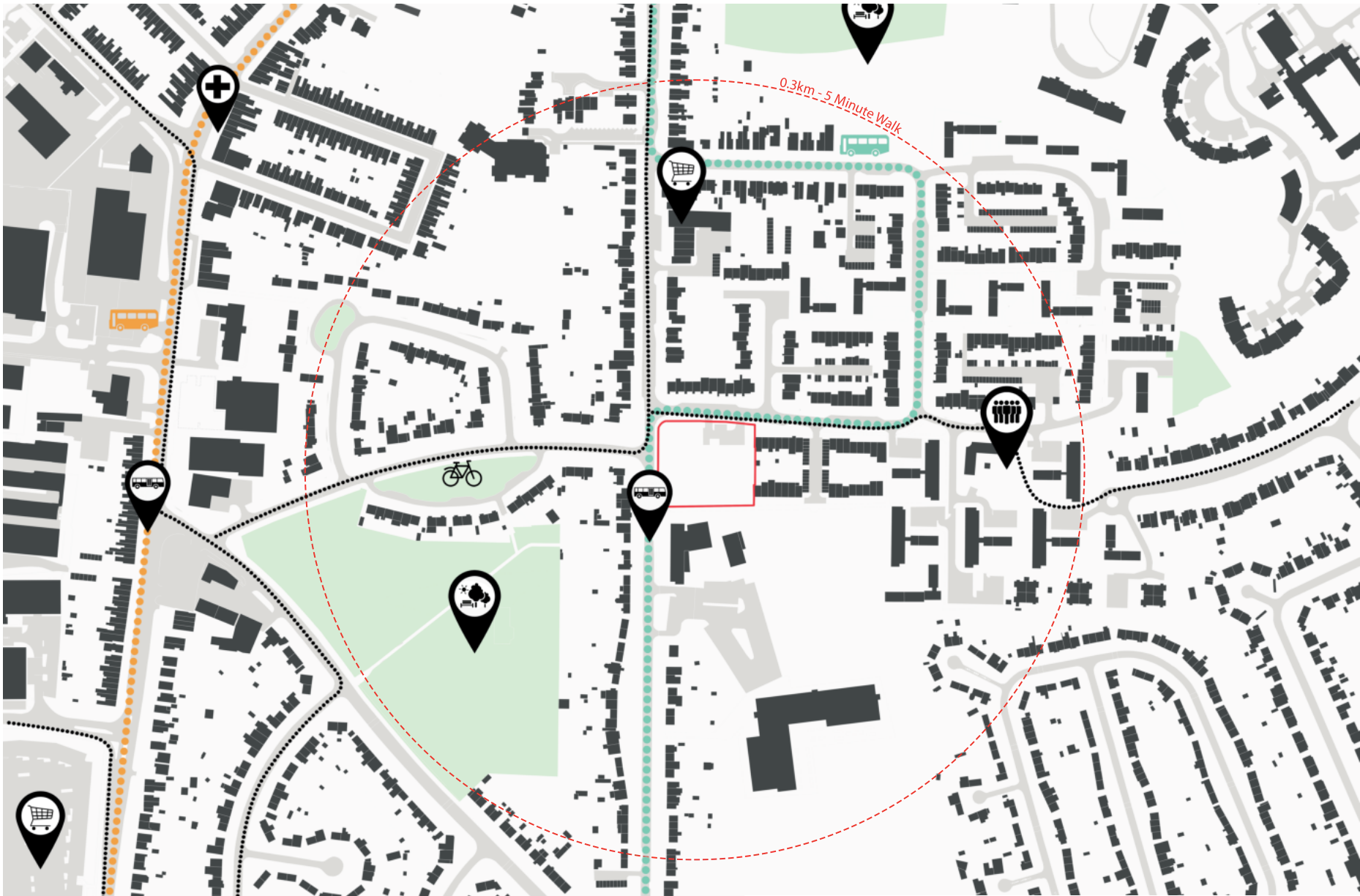
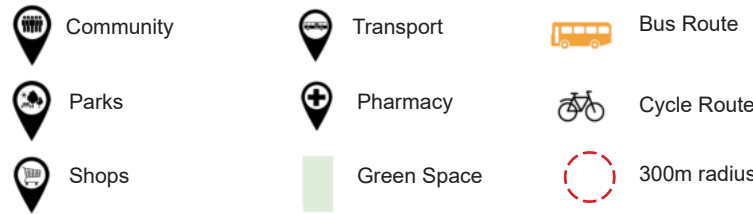


Figure 6. Local Amenity Plan



2.3 Site History

Figure 7 illustrates the historical maps of the site, showing the gradual development progress over time.

1899
The site and the surrounding area is undeveloped and is arable land associated with the local farms and allotments. A small crop of trees are located to the north of the site. The road network through the area is informal however does run north/south and east/west adjacent to the site.

1911
Northumberland Avenue has been established, formalising the north south road network adjacent to the site. The site and surrounding area remains undeveloped.

1957
Northumberland Avenue is established as a residential street with housing spread across the western edge of the site. The open green areas to the south and west have been established. The site and the area to the east remains undeveloped land.

1966-1969
Hexham Road and the housing to the east of the site has been established. The site itself remains undeveloped. The school to the south has been formed in a building which has now been demolished.

Key

100m Radius (Inner Ring)

250m Radius (Outer Ring)

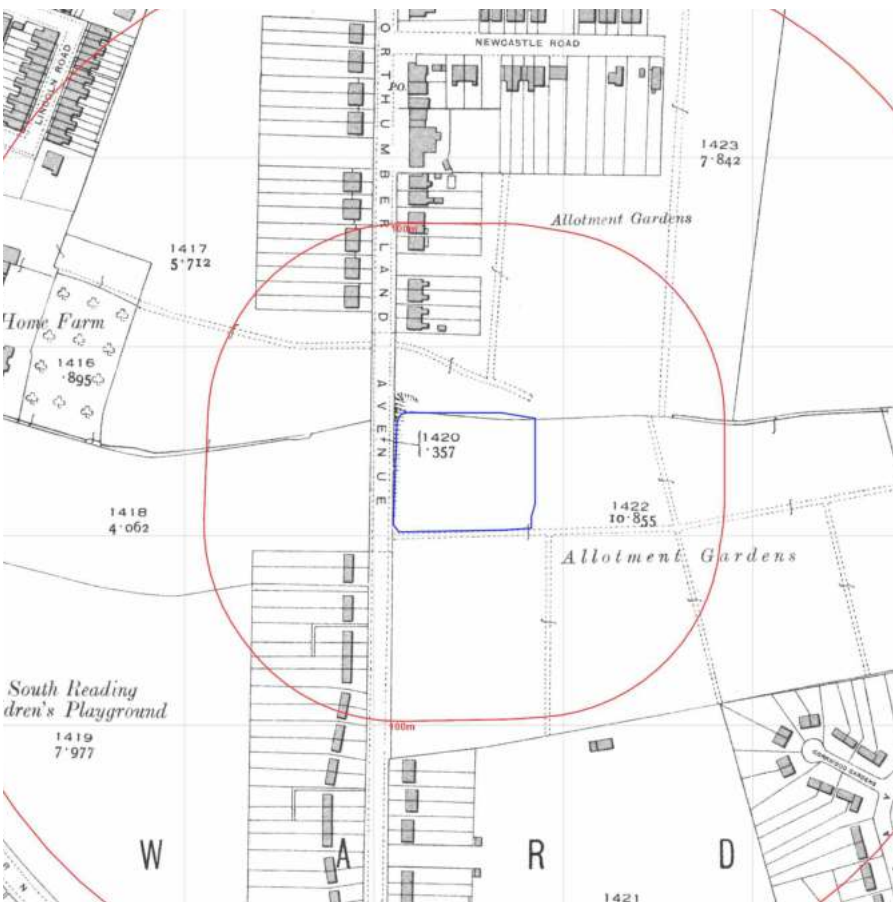
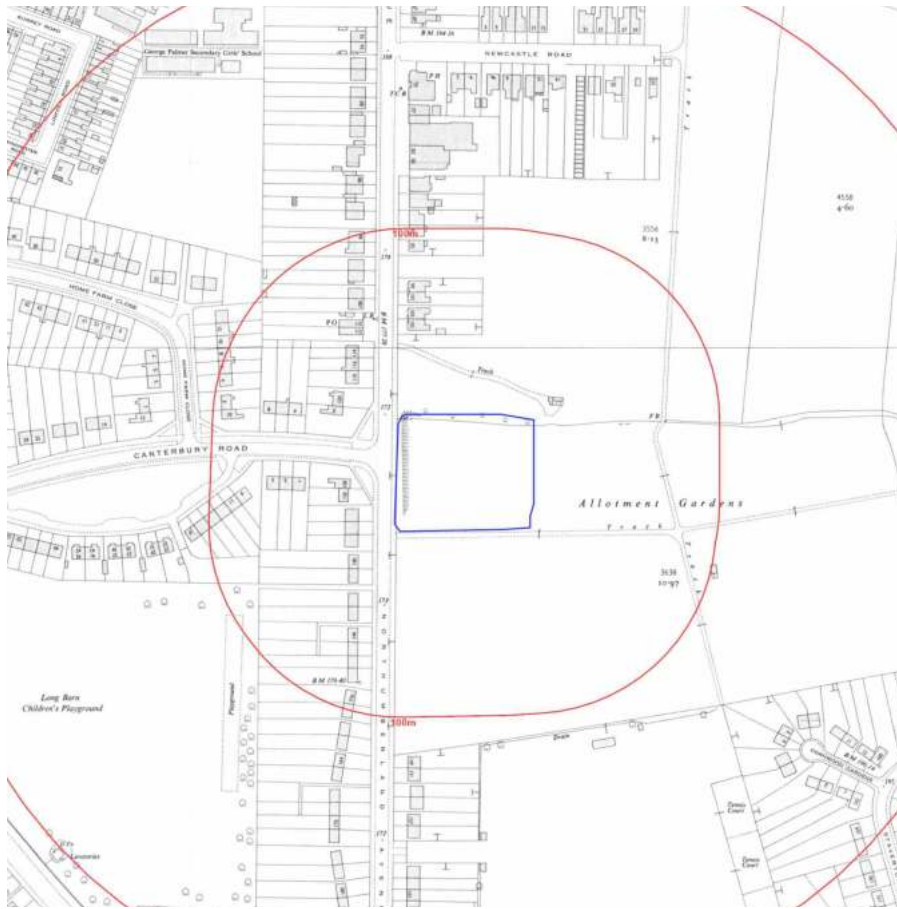
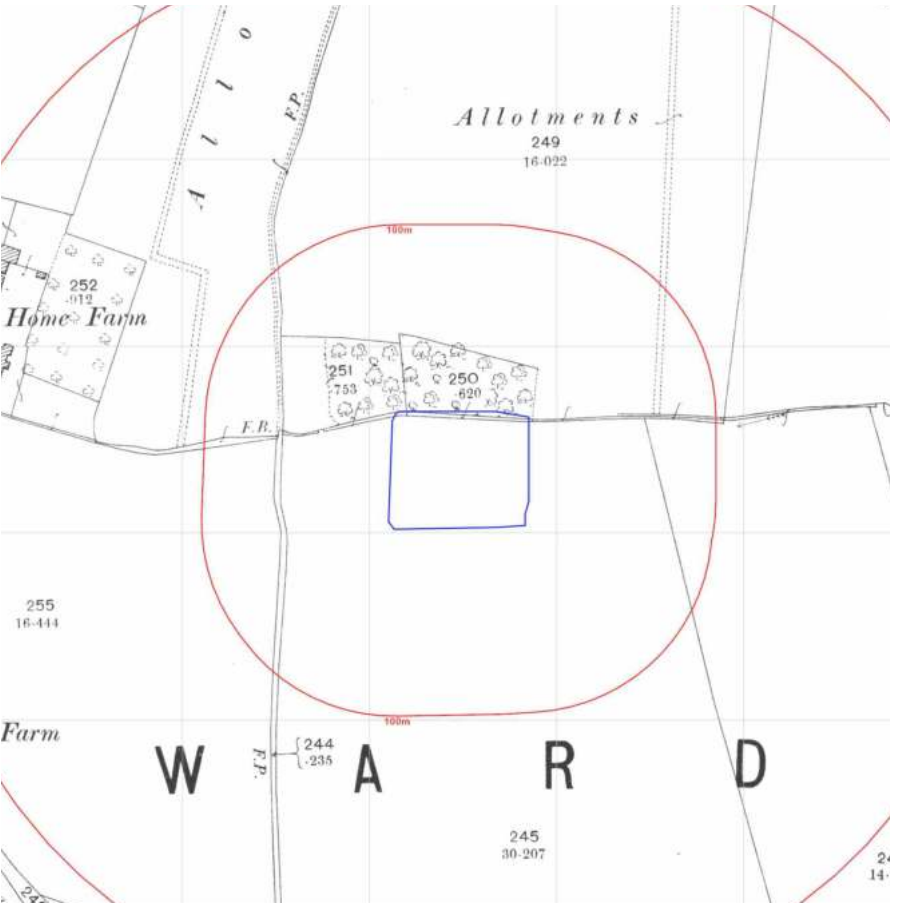


Figure 7. Historical Maps

2.4 Site Photos

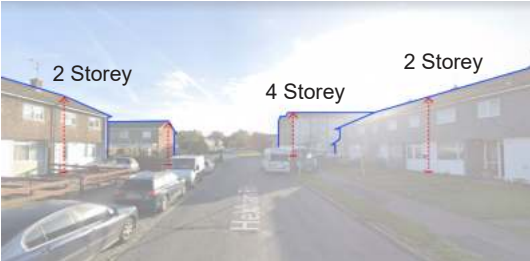


Figure 8. Site Photos

2.5 Surrounding Building Heights



A. Northumberland Avenue (North)



B. Hexham Road (East)



C. Hexham Road (West)



D. Newcastle Road (West)



E. Canterbury Road (East)



Figure 9. Surrounding Heights Analysis



2.6 Surrounding Materials

Existing Materials

Figure 10 illustrates the current mix of materials locally to the site. Generally red brickwork and a mix of blue, grey and brown concrete hanging tile is the predominant material in the surrounding area of Hexham road to the east. Along Northumberland Avenue the material pallet is prominently red brick with some properties using a combination of red and grey brick in decorative patterns. The school building on the south is a coordination of render to the ground floor and grey zinc cladding to the upper facade and roofs.

Reading Red Brick and Silver Bricks

Red bricks have their unique colour due to ingredients local to Reading geology, like iron-oxide in the clay, which give the strong red brick colour. Historically the majority of dwellings and other buildings in Reading have been built with red bricks. More expensive dwellings have silver grey at fronts and entrances and more elaborate brick detailing with red bricks to the sides and backs.

Development Materials

The geology of the area has clay on top of chalk, so we are looking at a material strategy to reflect this by positioning red bricks above silver grey bricks. We are using red bricks for the Sheltered housing on the upper floors and silver grey for ground floor, canopies and access walkways to the upper floors.



Figure 10. Surrounding Building Materials Analysis



2.7 Site Analysis

Key features and aspects of the existing site are illustrated on Figure 11, Detailed Site Analysis Plan. These key features are described below.

Topography

The site is relatively flat with a 1m fall across the site from South to North. The land rises to the north and slightly to the south, placing the building in a shallow valley. The land also falls in an East West direction towards the West. We have utilised the existing ground levels where possible to minimize cut and fill.

Existing Trees

There are a number of trees across the site, predominantly along the western edge; Northumberland Avenue, significantly contributing to the quality of the urban setting on this part of Northumberland Avenue. These trees and other specimen trees such as a Norway maple to the front of the site will be retained as part of the proposals. A number of new trees will be planted as part of the scheme to enrich the proposals and provide replacement canopy to the southern edge and courtyard, enhancing the quality of the landscaped spaces (see also separate landscape proposals and Arboricultural Impact Statement). As the overall development footprint is larger than the existing property, additional tree planting is being proposed off site in the local area, with an overall net gain in the number of trees as part of the development compared to existing.

Orientation

The site is not adversely affected by overshadowing. The predominate boundaries face North onto Hexham Road and West onto Northumberland Avenue. There are limited options to face East due to the existing terraced houses on Hexham Road and Bede walk.

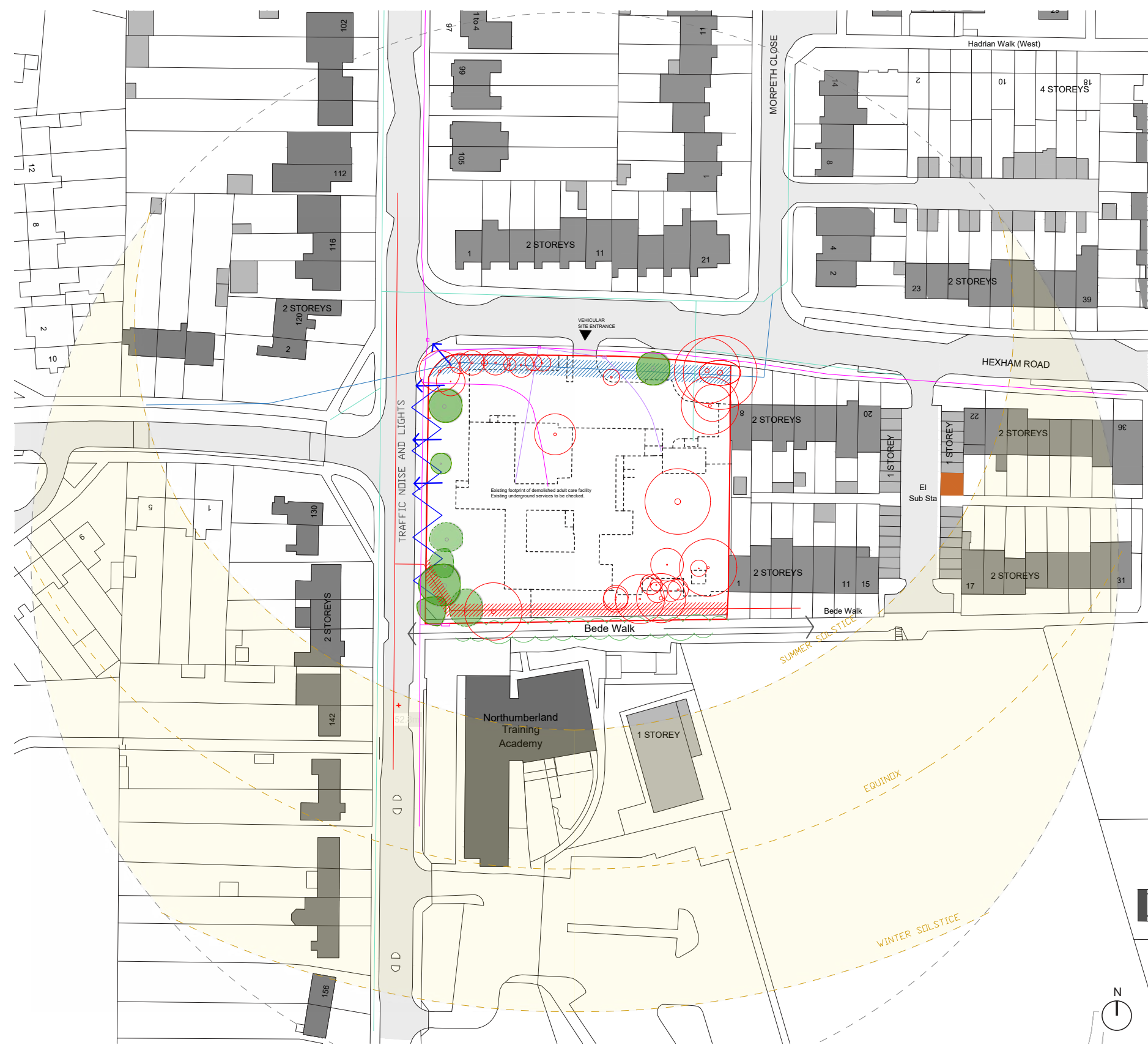
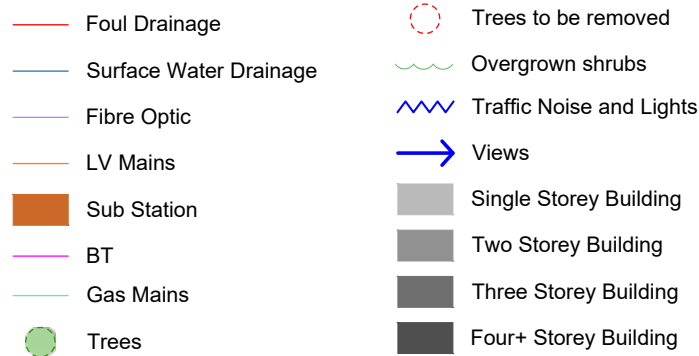


Figure 11. Detailed Site Analysis Plan

Views

Due to the developed nature of the area and significant tree coverage, views into the site are limited and only short distance views from the immediate context are possible. At higher levels, views would be achieved down Canterbury Road.

Northumberland Avenue

A green landscape zone edges this part of the site, contributing to the green boundary of the street that starts to the South at the Grammar School. The existing edge has a low fence, creating a defensible space.

Hexham Road

The demolished care home on the site was set back from the frontage to Hexham Road to allow for a car parking area. Housing to the north and East of the site is terraced two storey with a pitched roof.

Bede Walk

This 3m wide walking route connects the 4 storey housing further East to Northumberland Avenue with house entrances facing the walk with parking areas and garages linking Hexham Road to Bede Walk. The walk is currently overgrown adjacent to the site, creating a darker and narrower walk, with no overlooking to the southern boundary or passive surveillance which doesn't promote walking along this route.

Pedestrian Access

There is no pedestrian access through the site currently. The proposal looks to improve pedestrian access along Bede walk. Pedestrian access from Hexham Road is adjacent to the existing vehicle entrance.

Vehicular Access

The site is in a residential area and when it was used as a dementia care facility it had a private staff car park. The site had one vehicular access point which was accessed from Hexham road via an opening in the perimeter fence with no gates. There are currently gates securing the site from access whilst the site is unoccupied.

Figure 12 shows the site overlaid to illustrate the above points.



Figure 12. Site Analysis Plan Overlay

2.8 Flood Risk

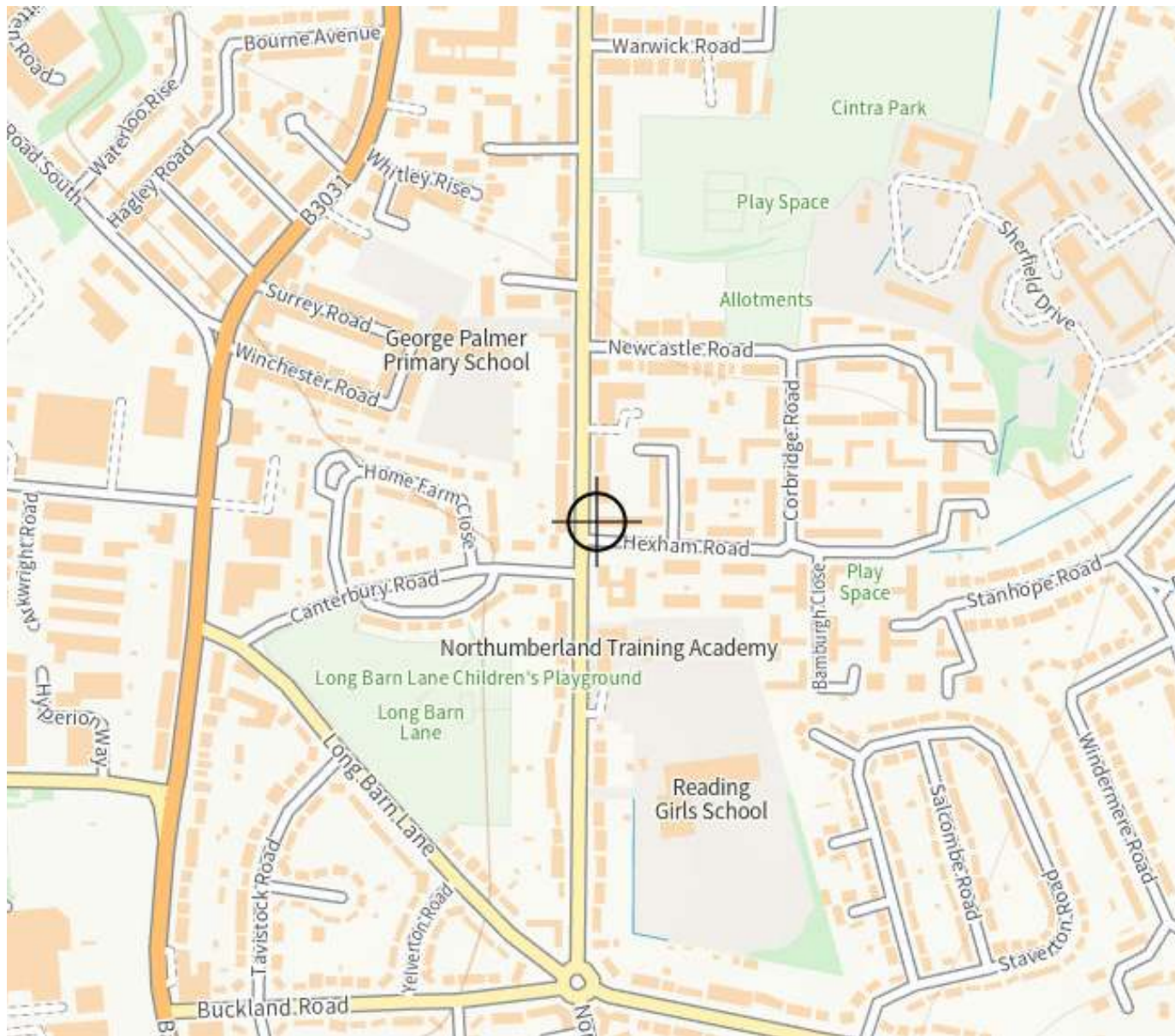


Figure 13. Flood Risk - Low

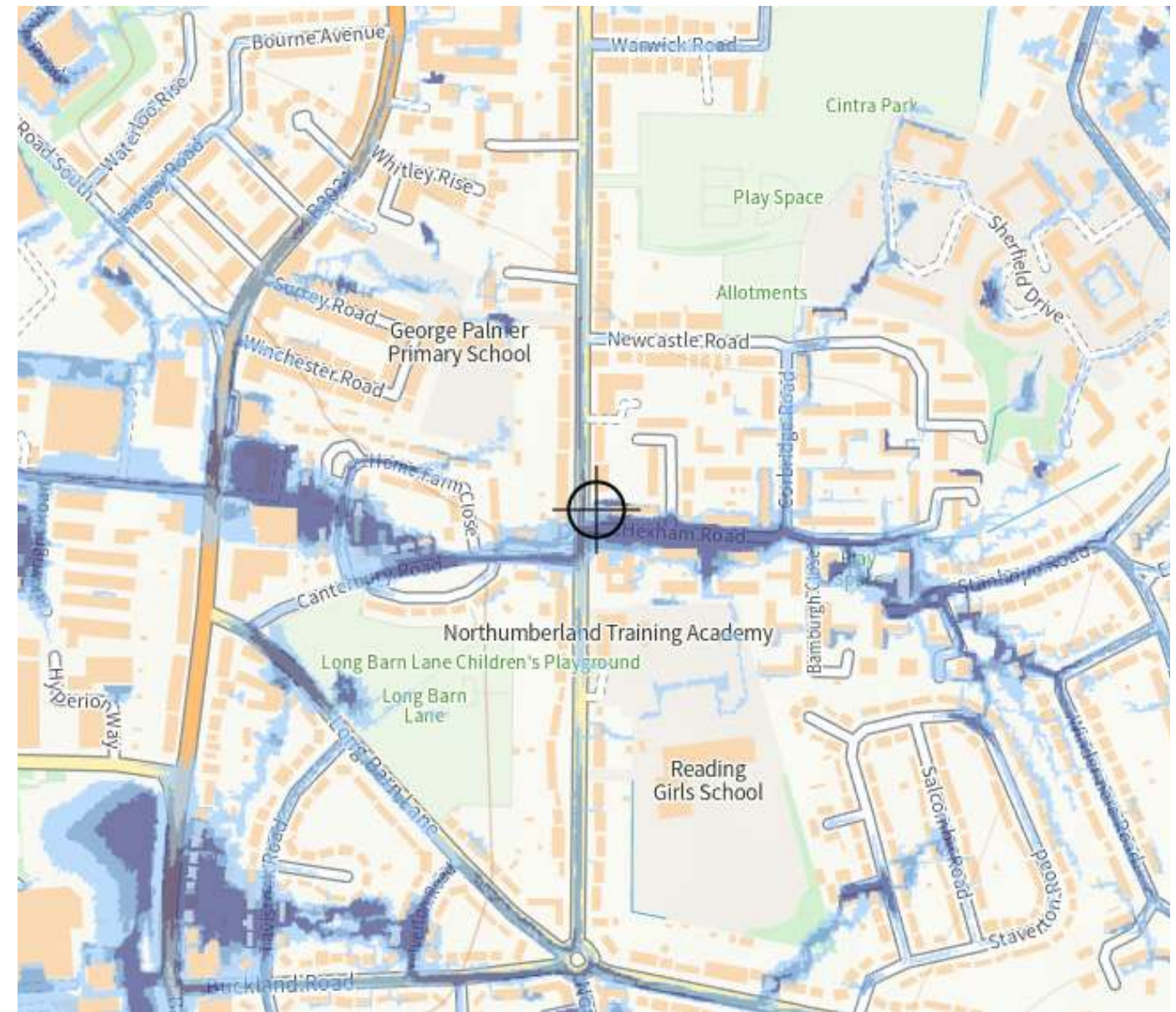


Figure 14. Flood Risk - High

Drainage Strategy

The site lies within a topographical plateau that falls away to the west. The site is located within flood Zone 1, illustrated in figure 13

The surface water flooding risk is greater, indicating high risks along the northern edge of the site. A detailed topographical survey of the site and local area indicates that there is a low point approximately 50m to the East of the site which is illustrated by the darker blue areas on figure 14. Northumberland Avenue, to the West acts as a bund for this surface water, with lower levels further along Canterbury Road.. The building has therefore been designed with the ground level above the apex level of Northumberland Avenue. In addition the building has been designed following Thames Water's guidelines and flow rates with significant on site attenuation. Green roofs have been included across the scheme to increase water attenuation and impermeability. Refer also to Separate SUDS and drainage strategy report.