



**Battle Street**  
**Heritage Statement**  
September 2022

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## Opening Statement

This document has been prepared by Hampshire County Council Property Services to accompany a planning application for the development of the former Central Swimming Pool site in Central Reading.

The proposed development is partially located within the Russell Street / Castle Hill Conservation Area. This statement therefore comprises a heritage assesment of the conservation area and an analysis of the potential impact of the proposed development on it and the listed buildings in the vicinity including; 120 and 122 Oxford Road, 124 Oxford Road, 149 to 161 Oxford Road, 163 and 165 Oxford Road, 167 and 169 Oxford Road, 171 to 177 Oxford Road, 187 to 193 Oxford Road, 195 and 197 Oxford Road, 199 to 203 Oxford Road, Church of the Holy Trinity & Oxford Road Primary School. The majoritiy of these listed buildings are either Georgian and Victorian terraced houses (now mixed use) which create a consistant hard edge along Oxford Road's southern elevation, and Victorian villas and civic buildings on the northern elevation. These buildings and their defining heritage features are further analysed in the report.

As the main element of the project within the conservation area, the statement places particular focus on the proposed 3-storey block of general needs flats on Oxford Road. This has been designed as a simple, well proportioned, high-quality building with open and inviting landscape features at street level leading into the Battle street site.

Both the building and landscape are open and inviting and the angle of the chamfered bay window (a key characteristic of the buildings in the area) leads into a low brick retaining wall that opens out at the front at the pavement edge. The building form is simple, which is a key requirement of a sustainable Passivhaus design, however to fit into its context the form has been broken down and articulated to minimise the mass and impact on the neighbouring buildings in terms of views out and rights of light. As the building sits within the conservation area the design has been developed to respect the past, sit comfortably in the present and with its sustainable design, be fit for the future.

## 1.0 Assessment of Heritage Significance

### 1.1 A Brief History of the Battle Street Development Site and Oxford Road, Reading

Up until the early 19th Century, the scheme's site sat within Battle Farm; an area of open agricultural land, fields and market gardens. The farm took its name from Battle Abbey in Hastings, so called after William the Conqueror built an abbey on the land claimed on the battle site in Hastings as penance to Pope Alexander II for those killed during the Norman conquest. By 1071, the Norman king had gifted the farmland in Reading to Battle Abbey, hence the naming of the farm, as well as other neighbouring sites in later years such as Battle Street and the former Battle Hospital.

By the turn of the 1800's, Oxford Road had been established, running through this agricultural land as a main route leading west from Reading's medieval town centre towards Pangbourne and Oxford (fig 1).

In 1840, the completion of Reading Station marked the introduction of the railway to the area; a pivotal inclusion on the Great Western Railway, reducing travel time to London from Reading to one hour and five minutes. With this came an increase in commerce and Reading grew rapidly from a market town to a prominent manufacturing centre, including a major iron works and growth in the already established brewing trade. As a result of this, Reading's population more than doubled from 9,400 to 21,500 between 1801 and 1851.

As can be seen in fig 2, the primary route of Oxford Road (also known as Pangbourne Road) became populated with 3-4 storey Georgian terraces, developed as an elegant suburb for members of the town's elite. By 1870, the increase in population from Reading's employment boom in the newly established manufacturing industries resulted in a greater demand for housing, and so infill streets of terraced housing split off from the main Oxford Road route (fig 3) including Battle Street, George Street and Bedford Road. As well as this, two-storey shops had filled vacant plots between the earlier residential terraces, creating a consistent street front on the Southern side of Oxford Road. On the north side, Victorian villas were constructed. From 1880 to 1883, Oxford Road Community School was constructed. The school was designed by local architects Morris and Stallwood in a neo-gothic style popular during this period for civic buildings, and was constructed from local red brick and terracotta tiles set behind low walls and railings.

From the late 19th Century to the 1970s, the centre of the site was occupied by Victoria Nurseries, consisting of a number of greenhouses and outbuildings that reduced significantly post-war. The nursery moved to the vacant site after its previous location next to the railway on Oxford Road was developed for housing between 1880 and 1890. Oxford Road as a primary transport link was further emphasised by the 1890s, with the introduction of a regular tram service, first by horse and then electrified. This allowed for greater movement around the town, allowing home owners in the neighbouring streets to commute further afield to industries elsewhere in Reading, such as Suttons Seeds and Simonds Brewery. Between 1939 and 1968, this service became a trolley bus system, which also brought trade to the shops and small businesses along Oxford Road. The service was later decommissioned with the increase in car ownership and presence on the roads.

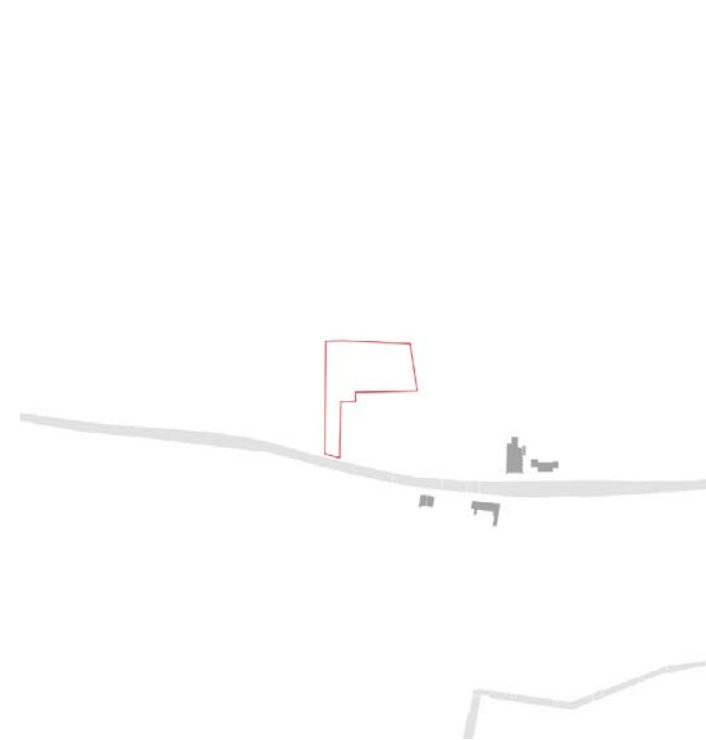


Fig 1: Site in 1813



Fig 2: Site in 1840



Fig 3: Site in 1870



Fig 4: Site in 1890

By the 1990's, Reading's road infrastructure had been developed dramatically, with the construction of a number of dual carriageways and motorways into the town, including the nearby A329 in the mid-1970s. With these came new commerce and, as can be seen in figures 6 and 7, the outskirts of the commercial town centre grew closer to the residential areas around the proposed site.

Reading Central Pool was constructed on the proposed site in 1966, and closed to the public in 2018. Shortly after, the pool was demolished and part of the site has been used for public parking, briefly occupied by a Covid-19 temporary walk-in vaccination centre until 2022.



Fig 5: Site in 1930

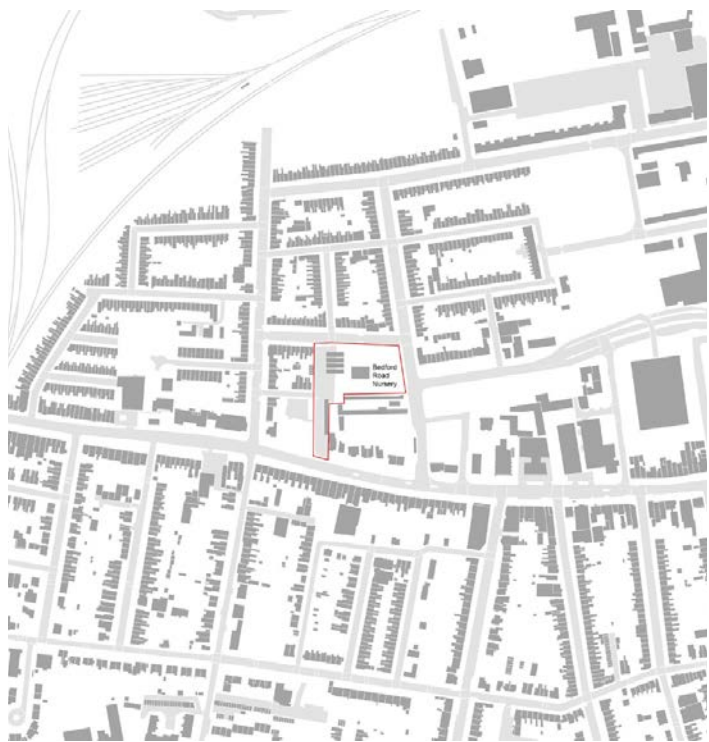


Fig 6: Site in 1960



Fig 7: Site in 1990



Fig 8: Site in 2020

## 1.2 Heritage Description

The immediate site has no listed buildings or buildings of townscape merit situated on it, however the southern part of the site sits within the 2019 revision of the Russell Street/Castle Hill Conservation Area Appraisal. With this in mind, the below extract is from the Appraisal and describes the historical and conservational significance of the surrounding context.

*The Conservation Area is a microcosm of Reading's residential building styles in a concentrated area... It encompasses a range of Georgian villas, terraces and artisan housing. The long Victorian era is evident in the development of substantial Victorian single-family terraces and the later polychrome patterned two-up, two-down terraces. Arts and Crafts influences appear in the area's large Victorian and Edwardian villas.*

Russell Street/Castle Hill Conservation Area Appraisal, Reading Borough Council. March 2020

Oxford Road's inclusion within the appraisal is described as having 'a distinctively different character from the remainder of the Conservation Area...defined by both its busy use and its diversity of cultures'. This illustrates the complexities of Oxford Road in its nature as a multi-cultural, high energy area of Reading. However, architecturally, it does have defining historical features that incur a distinctive aesthetic to the area. It's fine examples of Georgian and Victorian architecture; primarily 2 and 3-storey Georgian terraces and villas interspersed with Victorian shops and houses with some civic buildings, particularly Oxford Road Community School, echo the area's historical importance as a key residential area since the turn of the 1800's. The buildings' materiality and craftsmanship is also noted within the appraisal, referring to 'solid Arts and Crafts influences...apparent in the many attractive polychrome brick and terracotta facades in the area'.

According to Historic England, there are a number of key listed buildings along the Oxford Road. Below outlines those within the immediate area of the proposed site and their defining features. Historic England List Entry Numbers are at the end of each description for reference:

- **120 and 122 Oxford Road** (N. side) Grade II. Pair of houses, 2 storeys plus semi basement, circa 1830–40, plain red brick with central pediment, arched windows to central bays, hipped slate roof. 1302871.
- **124 Oxford Road** (N. side). Grade II. Detached circa 1850s chalet type. 2½ storeys over basement. Rendered. 1st floor cill band. Gabled break to right with round headed attic window. Glazing bar sash windows. On 1st floor 2 round headed windows to left and tripartite window to right with cornice. Below is a similar window with pediment to centre, cornice, and wrought and cast iron balcony. Windows have bracketed cills and flat surrounds, round headed windows and door have bracket surrounds to arches. 6 panel ½ glazed door with radiating fanlight.
- **149 to 161 Oxford Road**, Grade II. Terrace of seven houses, 2 storeys plus semi basement, early-mid 19th century. Red brick, stucco cornice, slate roofs, steps to principal storey, two as shops. 1113546.
- **163 and 165 Oxford Road**, Grade II. Pair of houses, early-mid 19th century, 3 storeys plus semi basement, with flanking 2 storey set back entrance bays, steps to principal storey, red brick, hipped slate roofs. On axis with Bedford Road. Inappropriate advertising fascia as with others in road. 1113546.
- **167 and 169 Oxford Road**, Grade II. Terrace of two houses continues in the style of 149161 Oxford Road, early-mid 19th century red brick, stucco cornice, slate roofs and tall chimneys. One basement now a shop. 1113546.

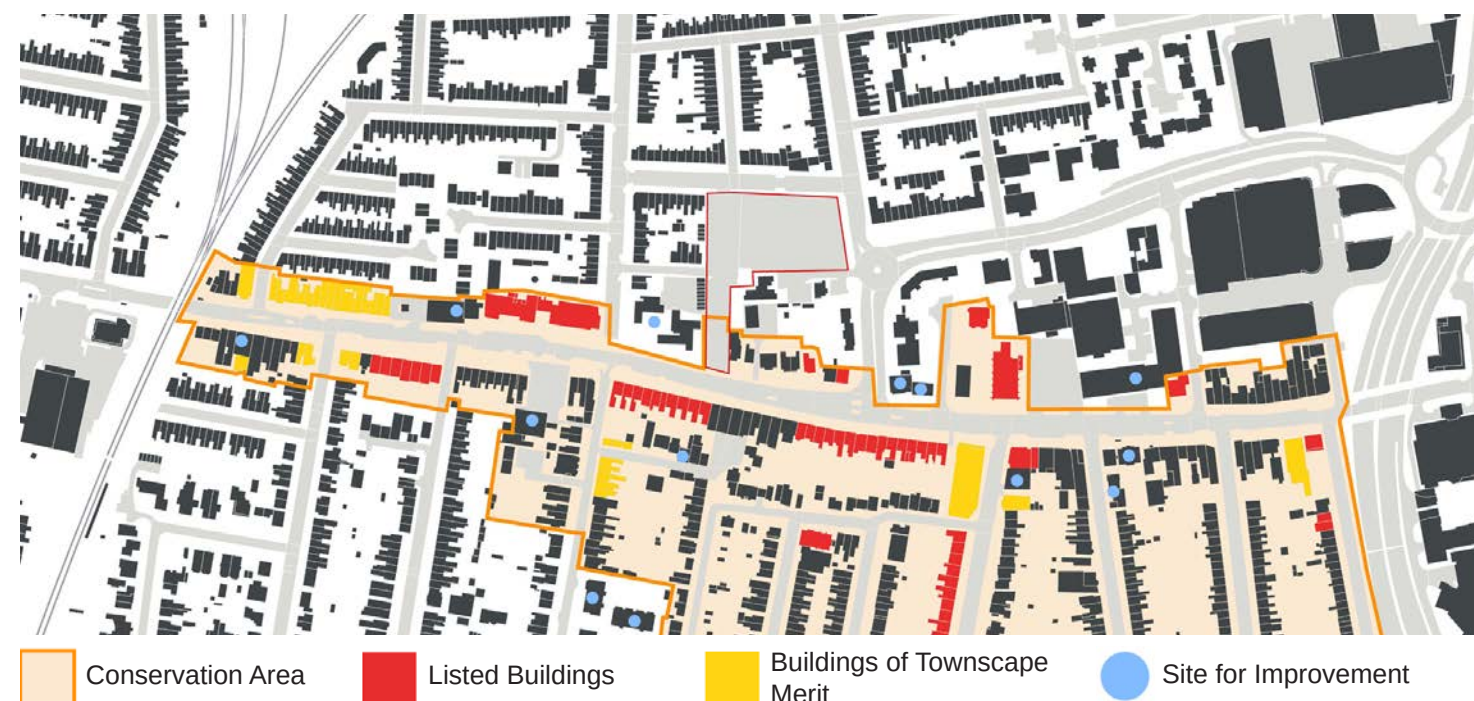


Fig 9: Conservation Area - Buildings and site classification

- **171 to 177 Oxford Road**, Grade II. Terrace of 4 houses, 3 storeys plus semi basement, early 19th century, steps to principal storey, red brick, slate roofs, ridge chimneys, original railings to two. 1156337.
- **187 to 193 Oxford Road**, Grade II. Terrace of four houses, 3 storeys plus semi basement, early-mid 19th century, steps to principal storey, red brick, stone string course, hipped slate roof, ridge chimneys. 1113547.
- **195 and 197 Oxford Road**, Grade II. Pair of houses, 3 storey plus semi basement, early 19th century Georgian red brick, slate roof. Elegant door cases and Greek fret lintels. No loss of windows at 195. 1321911.
- **199 to 203 Oxford Road**, Grade II. Terrace of three houses, early- mid 19th century, 3 storeys plus semi basement. Rendered with parapet, mouldings to windows and steps to principal storey. 1302906.
- **Church of the Holy Trinity, Church of England**. Built 1826 to the design of Edward Garbett (local man). West front owes its present appearance to the 1845 improvement by John Billing (local architect/builder). Plain brick building oriented north-south, stone fable end capped by octagonal belfry with spirelet corbelled out at apex. 3 stepped lancets and below, 3 arched doors, centre taller with impost string carried over and string above. Side buttresses. 4 Bath stone piers to street wall. Interior: Commissioners' Gothic 5 bay nave, galleries removed, chancel apse and side chapels. Excellent chancel screen by Augustus Pugin from it Chad's Roman Catholic Cathedral, Birmingham. (Graded for this reason)
- **Oxford Road Primary School**. 1880-83 and 1894, Grade II. A complete and homogenous group of buildings, 1.5 to 3 storeys plus tower, set behind wall and railings of the period. Red brick, moulded decorative drip moulds and string courses, part tile hung. Steeply pitched tiled roofs with decorative ridge tiles. 1392867.



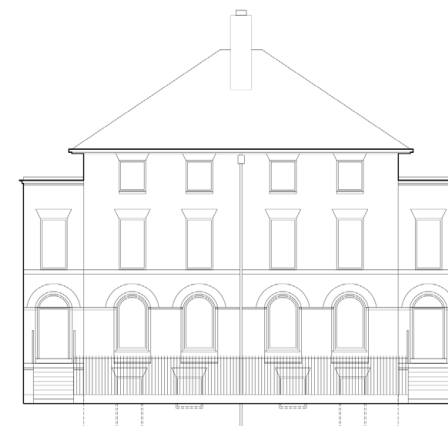
120 & 122 Oxford Road



124 Oxford Road



149-169 Oxford Road



163 & 165 Oxford Road



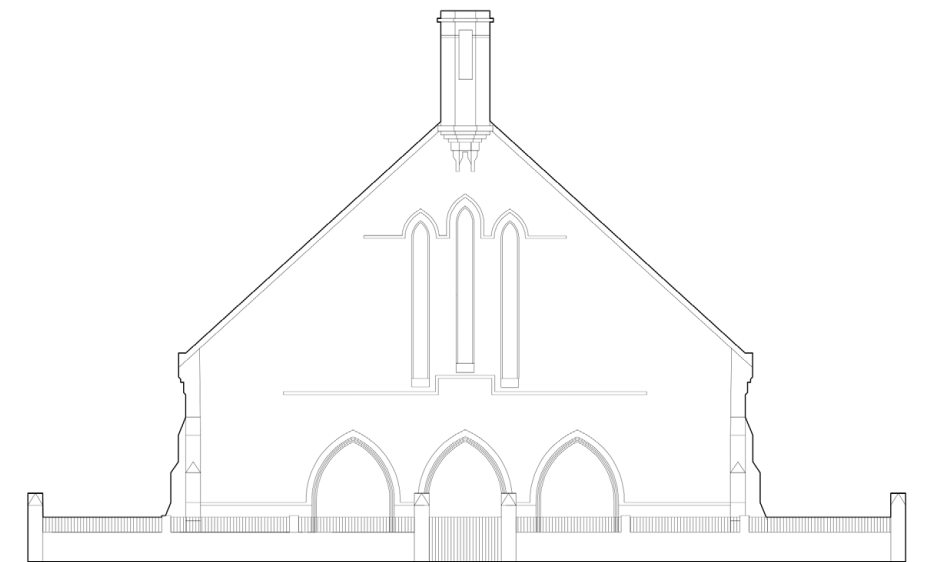
171-177 Oxford Road



187-193 Oxford Road



195 & 197 Oxford Road, 199-203 Oxford Road



Church of the Holy Trinity



Oxford Road Community School

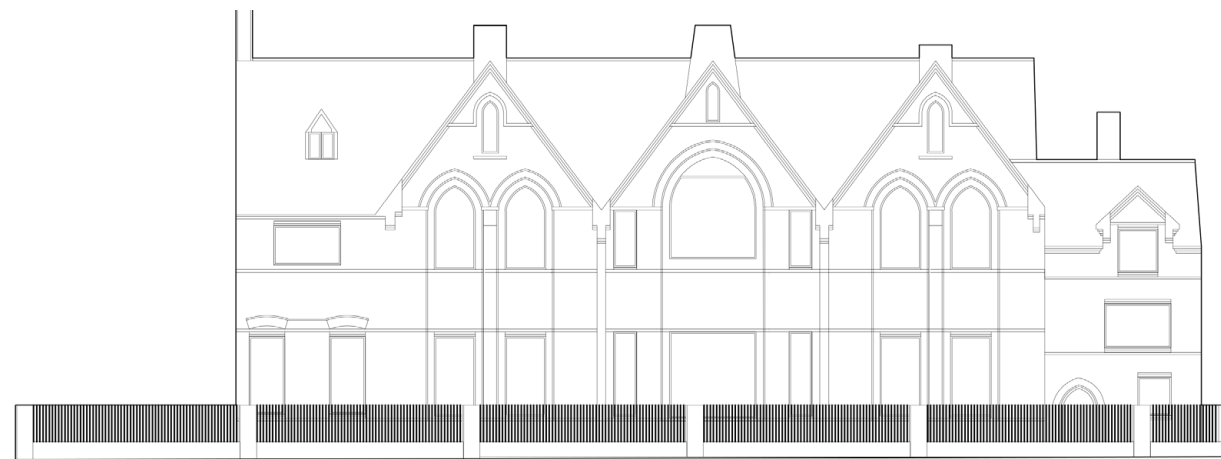


Fig 10: Listed building elevations on Oxford Road

1.3 Contextual Analysis

The following section will look to determine some of the defining contextual features and characteristics of the site and it’s surrounding context, covering existing building heights, urban grain and density, materiality and roof types.

Existing Building Heights

As outlined in the Russell Street/Castle Hill Conservation Area Appraisal, Oxford road consists of ‘a high proportion of typical Georgian, Victorian and Edwardian terraces with a few detached and semi- detached properties.’ It has been noted that the heights of these 2 to 3 and a half storey buildings are a notable feature of the area.

What can be seen from broader analysis of the area is a concentration of denser-planned, taller buildings towards the centre of Reading, dense development of 2 to 3.5 storey Georgian terrace housing and civic buildings along the main thoroughfare of Oxford Road, and 2 storey Victorian terrace housing in gridded streets surrounding the site and towards the west of Reading town centre.



Fig 11: Surrounding building heights

**Oxford Road**

A combination of 2 to 4 storey buildings, with a number of distinctive 3 to 3.5 storey Georgian terraces on the southern elevation and 3 to 3.5 storey villas on the northern elevation. Buildings on both sides of Oxford Road are set back from the roadway and pavement with shallow front gardens for parking, storage and planting. Defensible spaces are defined from the pavements by low level brick walls with iron railings. Oxford Road Community School also uses trees and planting to screen along the dividing line.

Allison Court, the late 1970's block of flats to the immediate west of the site, stands at 3 and 4 storeys. with a large area of defensible green space facing Oxford Road. As the street progresses towards central Reading, the storey heights increase, notably the 10 storey hotel building.



Fig 12: Oxford Road facing west

**Bedford Road**

North of the conservation area there are a series of 4 storey flats that border the proposal site. Some of these sit directly behind the northern elevation of Oxford Road and are visible in the spaces between the 2/3 storey villas.



Fig 13: Bedford Road facing south

**Battle Street**

2.5/3 storey Victorian terrace houses line the Northern edge and partial Southern edge of Battle Street. These terraces have basements and additional space in the eaves of the pitched roofs. The entrance to the properties on the Northern elevation are raised and accessible via steps whilst the terraces on the Southern elevation have level access with the street. The defensible space between the pavement and the properties vary from small front gardens to raised stepped access with small courtyards to allow light to access the basement windows, all of a similar depth of 1.5/2 metres. Street parking lines both edges of the roadway.

Looking towards the town centre, high rise developments of 10 to 12 storeys are clearly visible. These developments are around 250 metres from the proposed site.



Fig 14: Battle Street facing east

**Chatham Street**

Chatham Street was previously bookended by the double-height Central Swimming Pool prior to it's demolition. However, now it lacks a landmark at the nodal point of the roundabout with Bedford Road. Taller flats of 3 and 4 storeys are staggered from the edge of Bedford Road with varying depths of defensible space. These buildings have smaller footprints and higher volumes than the historical context nearby. It is worth noting however that this area is outside of the conservation zone.



Fig 15: Chatham Street facing west

Surrounding Building Materiality

The predominant materiality in the area is red brick, much of which will have been manufactured in Reading. Buff and grey are also commonly used within prominent facades to create patterns and polychromy that have made Reading’s brickwork so revered. As can be seen in Figures 16 and 17, Oxford Road has a much higher percentage of red brick than other materials.



Fig 16: Building materiality plan (top)

Fig 17: Oxford Road north elevation materiality (bottom)

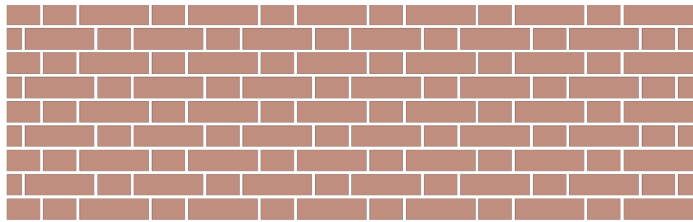
The Conservation Appraisal describes how ‘the extensive use of Reading’s famous local brick industry is exemplified in polychrome brick, tiles and terracotta throughout the area’. During the Industrial Revolution, the culmination of mass production of bricks in Reading, a surge in population within the town due to employment opportunities and therefore a greater demand for the construction of housing, led to the widespread use of Reading’s local bricks for workers housing, typified in the Victorian Terraces around the Battle Street area. What is also evident is the craftsmanship that was used in the motifs and patterning of the terrace facades. Figures 18 and 19 illustrates the variety in patterns and colours, namely red, grey and buff, throughout the nearby Georgian and Victorian terraces. The one consistency throughout however is the prominent use of Flemish bond to construct the facades. The care taken and craft used in the construction of the terraces is evident, as the patterning and bonding used in the polychromatic facades would have required greater skill, material and time than if the builders had used a standard stretcher of flemish bond in the singular red brick.

Roofs are almost entirely slate with the notable exception of the red tiled roof of the Oxford Road Community School. Ironmongery on the boundaries of properties is also prevalent, particularly iron gates and railings. Balconies on the grander Georgian Terraces are also constructed of decorative iron details.

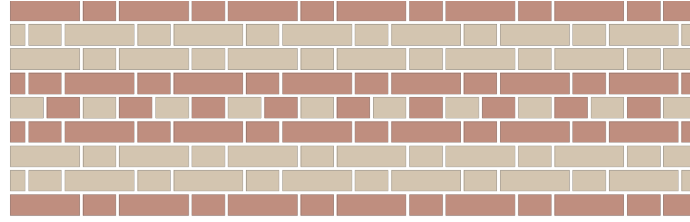


Fig 18: Brick colour, bonds and patterns within nearby streets of development site

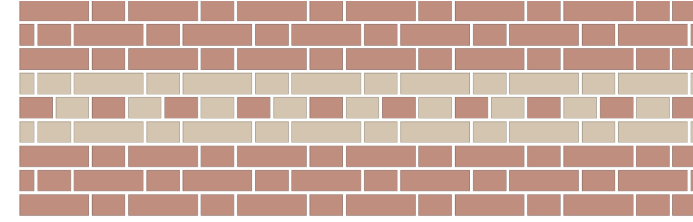
Red Brick Flemish Bond



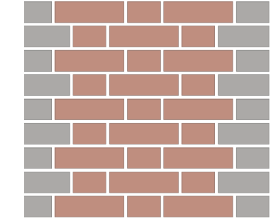
Red Brick Flemish Bond with Cream Brick Banding and Alternating Headers (version 1)



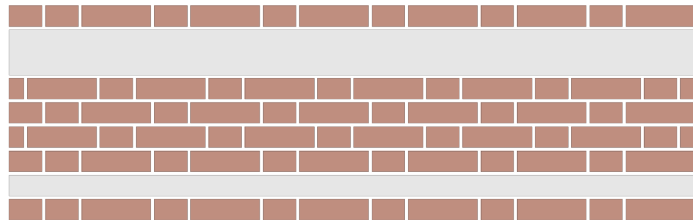
Red Brick Flemish Bond with Cream Brick Banding and Alternating Headers (version 2)



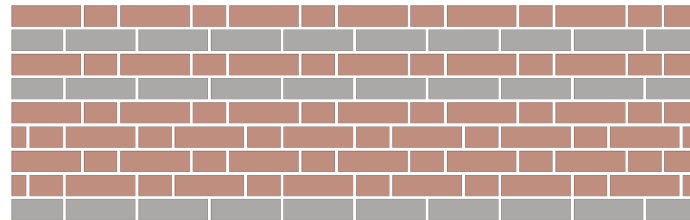
Red Brick Flemish Bond with Grey Brick Edging



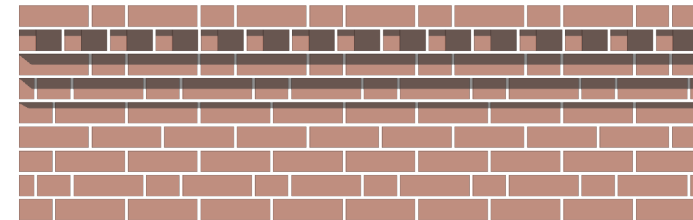
Red Brick Flemish Bond with Rendered Banding



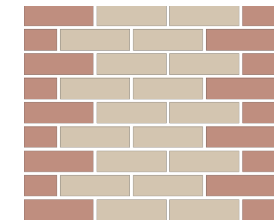
Red Brick Flemish Bond with Grey Brick Stretcher Banding



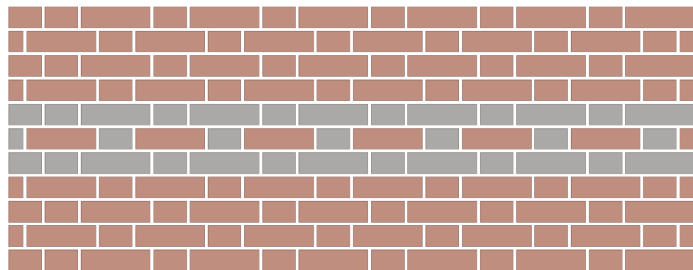
Mixture of Running, Flemish and Stepped Sawtooth Bonds



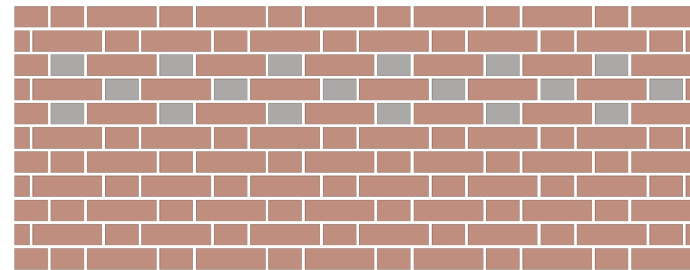
Cream Brick Running Bond with Red Brick Edging



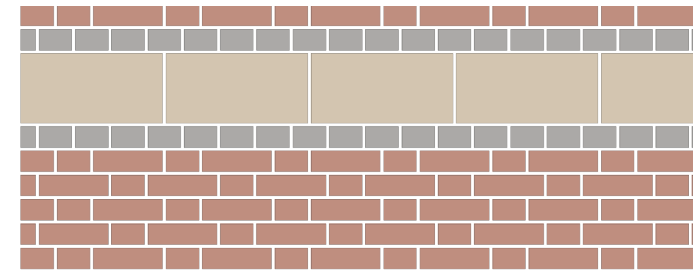
Red Brick Flemish Bond with Grey Brick Banding, with alternating Grey (Header) and Red Brick (Stretcher)



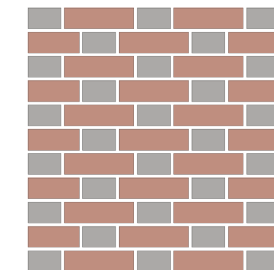
Red Brick Flemish Bond with Grey Brick Checkered Band



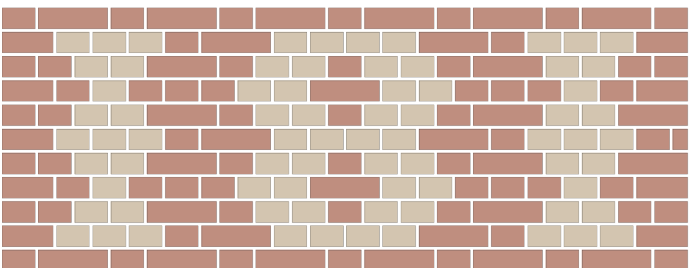
Red Brick Flemish Bond with Cream Stone and Grey Brick Header Banding



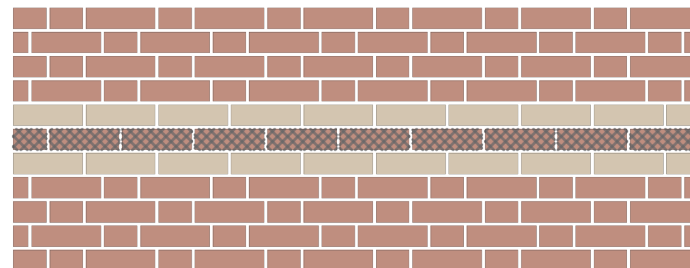
Red and Grey Brick Flemish Bond (Checkered)



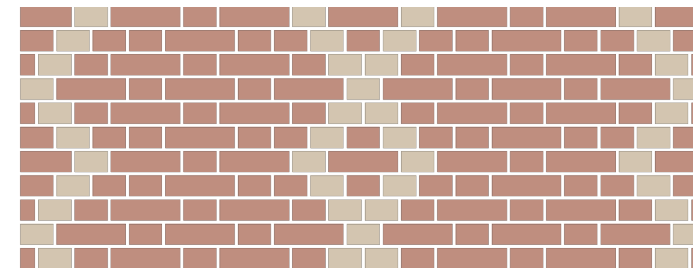
Red Brick Flemish Bond with Cream Brick Header Numbering (representing date of construction)



Red Brick Flemish Bond with Cream Brick and Moulded Red Brick Stretcher Bond Banding



Red Brick Flemish Bond with Cream Brick Header Patterns



Grey Brick Flemish Bond with Red Brick Edging

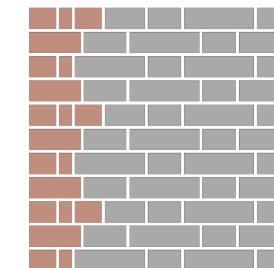


Fig 19: Brick colours, bonds and patterning found within nearby area

Contextual Facade Compositions

The composition of the Victorian and Georgian terrace facades is a defining characteristic of the local aesthetic. Simple, often asymmetrical facades with finely proportioned openings create a rhythm and datum along Oxford Road and side streets such as Battle Street and George Street.

- Further analysis shows the following commonalities:
- 3 to 4 storeys
  - Portrait windows - tall and slim
  - Visible lintels above windows
  - Deep reveals to windows
  - Simple brick detailing - corbels at cill and floor
  - Flemish brick bond
  - A mixture of low brick walls and metal balustrades providing defensible space at street level
  - Semi-basements
  - Stepped access to entrances
  - Datums distinguished by contrasting materiality
  - Parapets

- Portrait windows
- Visible lintels
- Low brick walls and metal balustrades
- Stepped access to entrances
- Datums
- Storey heights

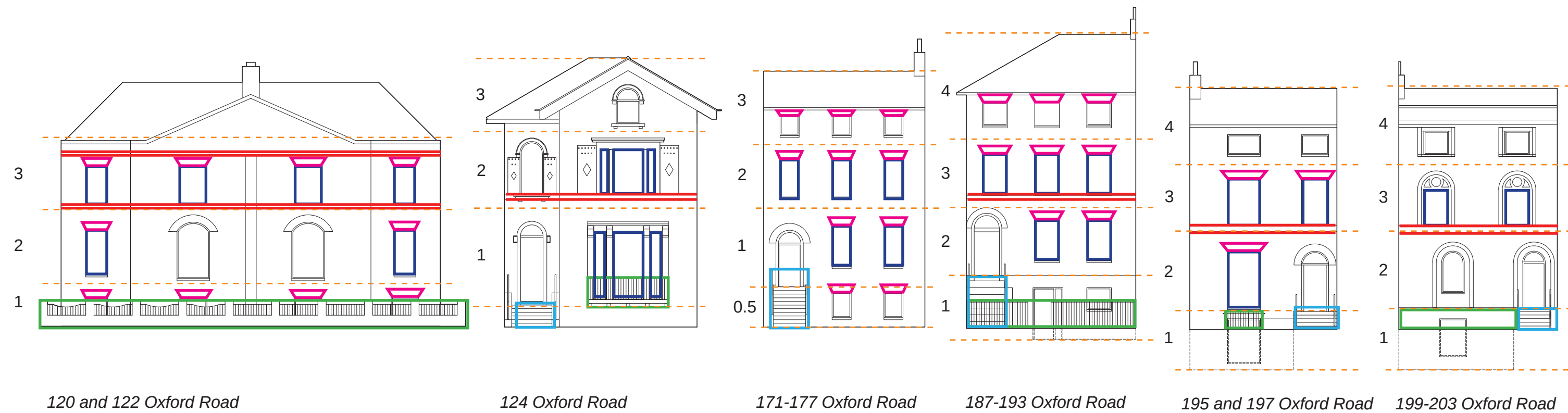


Fig 20: Listed building elevation analysis

1.4 Development History

As previously stated, the development site remained as agricultural land throughout history until the Industrial Revolution, primarily with the introduction of the railway to Reading in 1840. Though other areas around the site were developed to firstly create luxury Georgian terraces and villas and then infilled with Victorian terraces for the working classes, the development site remained vacant land without recorded use until the migration of Victoria Nurseries in the late 1800's (Fig.21 & 22). The nursery evolved into Bedford Road Nursery between 1935 and 1950 before being fully demolished and replaced with Reading Central Pool in 1966 (Fig 23). Plans to demolish the pool and replace it with a large private and affordable housing scheme with underground parking were submitted in July 2003 (figures 25-27, appendix 5.2), which were approved but unrealised. The scheme included the following:

|                                         |            |
|-----------------------------------------|------------|
| <b>Private</b>                          | <b>No.</b> |
| • 2 Bedroom 4 Person Apartments (70sqm) | 51         |
| • 1 Bedroom 6 Person Apartments (48sqm) | 16         |
| <b>Affordable</b>                       |            |
| • 3 Bedroom 6 Person Houses (120sqm)    | 04         |
| • 3 Bedroom 5 Person Houses (90sqm)     | 01         |
| • 2 Bedroom 4 Person Houses (84sqm)     | 03         |
| • 2 Bedroom 4 Person Flats (76sqm)      | 02         |
| • 2 Bedroom 3 Person Flats (65sqm)      | 05         |
| • 1 Bedroom 2 Person Flats (47sqm)      | 07         |

- Parking**
- 67 private spaces, 12 affordable spaces inc. 5 disabled

The design proposed a 67 apartment 4/5 storey horseshoe-shaped block with open ended courtyard to the south, along with 2 blocks of 4 2/3 storey affordable houses and 2 no. 3 storey apartment blocks on the southern end of the site (fig. 25).

Reading Central Pool finally closed to the public in January 2018 and was demolished shortly after. The site has since been used for public parking ahead of further development (fig. 24).

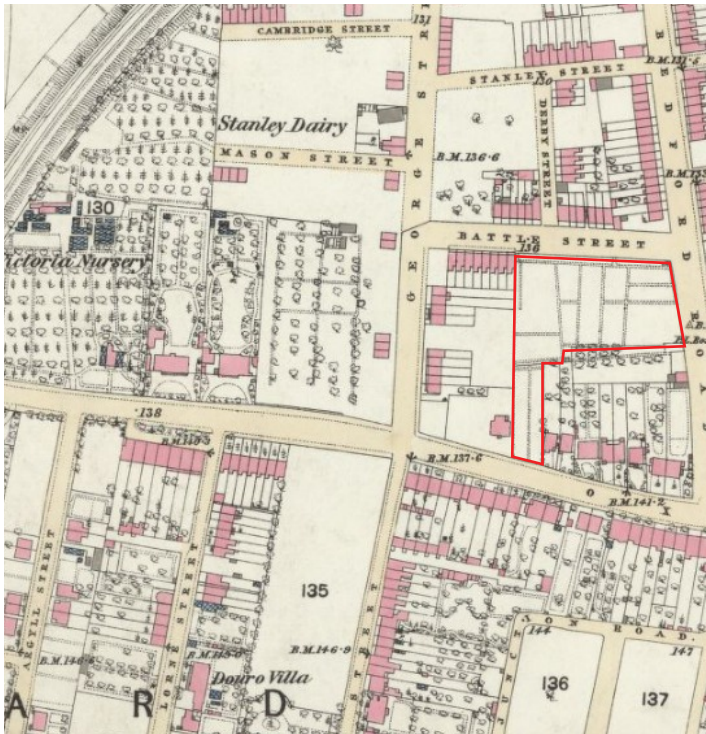


Fig 21: Vacant Site with Victoria Nursery to West - 1875

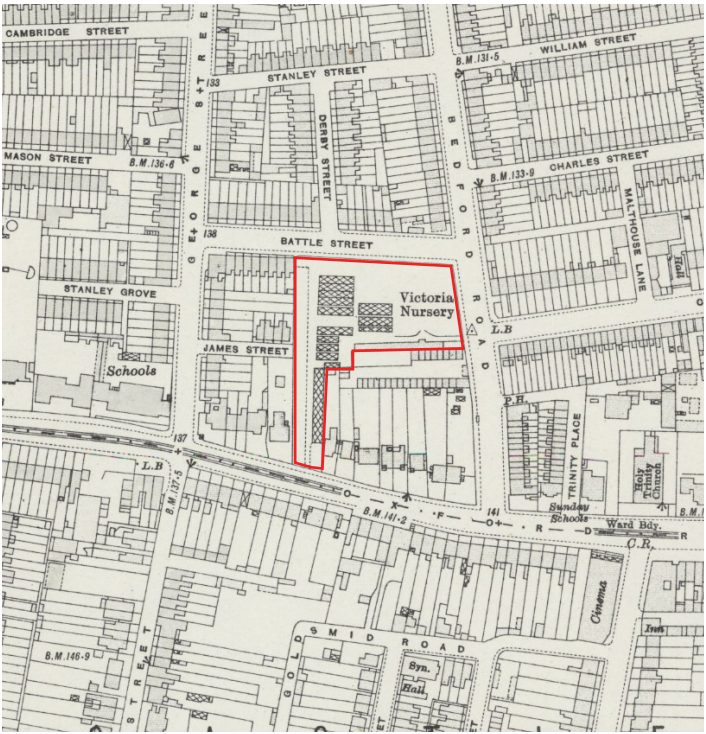


Fig 22: Victoria Nursery on site - 1931-32



Fig 23: Reading Central Pool - 2012



Fig 24: Vacant Site - 2021

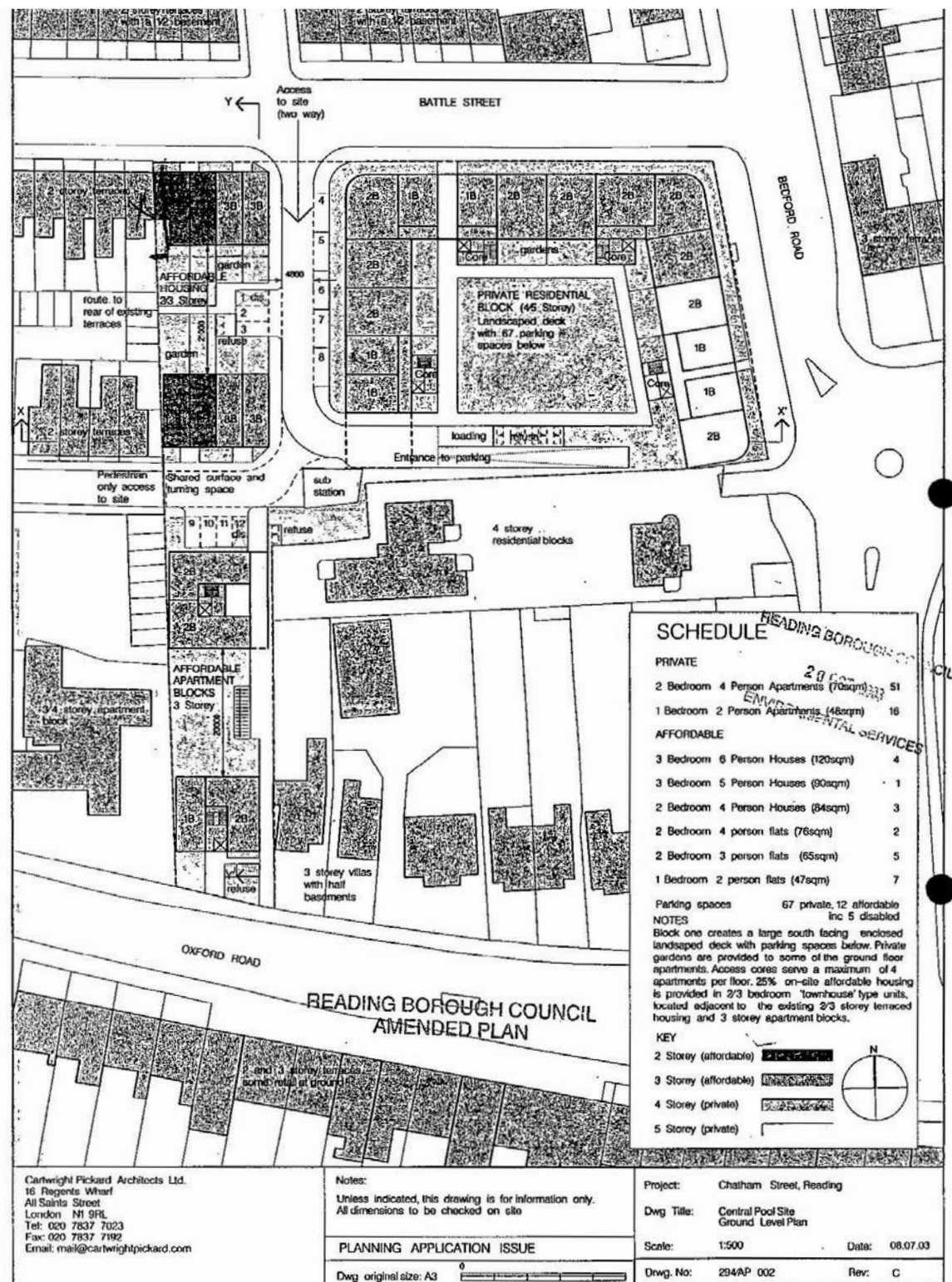


Fig 25: 2003 Previous Application - Ground Floor Plan



Fig 26: 2003 Previous Application - Perspective View

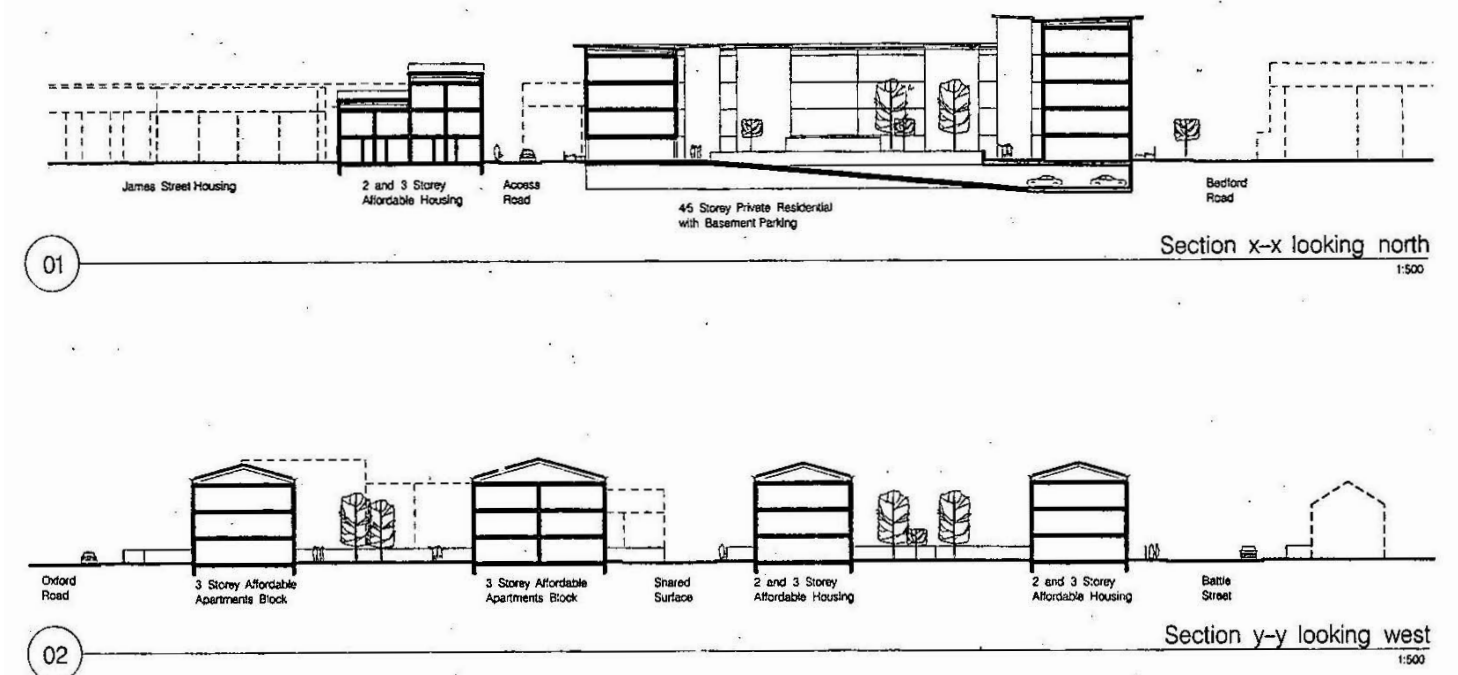


Fig 27: 2003 Previous Application - Site Sections

1.5 Existing Site Plan

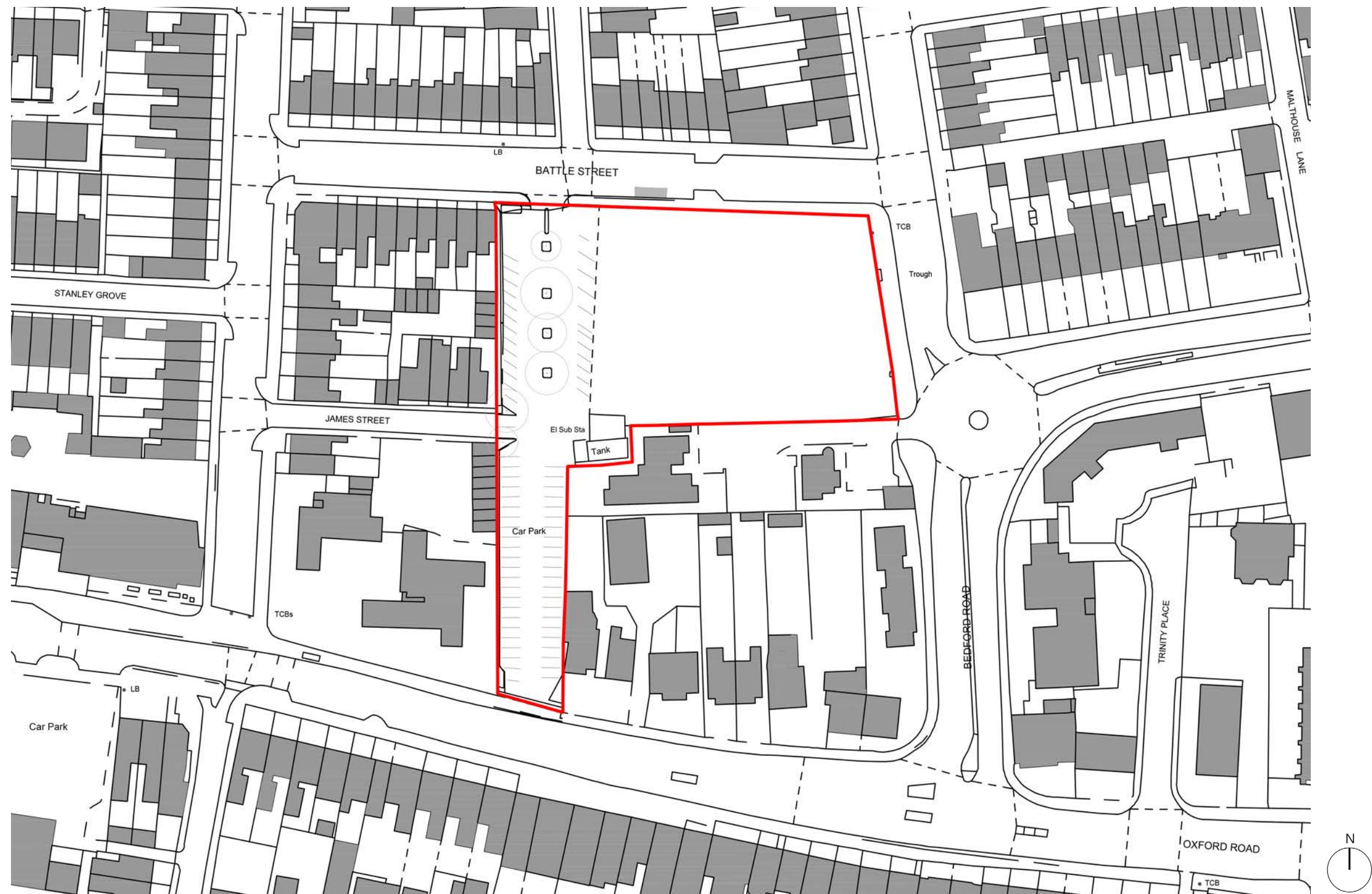


Fig 28: Existing site plan - Scale 1:1000 @A3

1.6 Photographs



Fig 29: Existing Site Photographs (part i)



J. On Site (south)



K. Edge of Site (south facing Oxford Road)



L. Oxford Road (south-west)



M. Oxford Road (north onto Site)



N. Bedford Road (north)



O. Battle Street (east)



P. James Street (east)



Q. On Site (north-east)



R. Bedford Road (south-west)



Fig 30: Existing Site Photographs (part ii)

## 1.7 Summary Statement of Significance

The revision of the Russell Street/Castle Hill Conservation Area in 2019 encapsulates the Southern area of the site as well as the adjacent villas on Oxford Road. In doing so, Reading Borough Council can ensure future development of the site is respectful of the context within the conservation area, as well as supporting Reading's High Street Heritage Action Zone; a heritage-led regeneration initiative led by Historic England, working with local councils and the community to create economic growth and improve the quality of life in historic high streets.

Though there are a number of listed buildings around the site, particularly within the conservation area, the site itself has never contained any previous building or monuments of historical significance. Therefore this final section of the heritage significance analysis will refer to the development site as well as aspects outside of the site boundary, primarily within the conservation area, to discern the significance of the immediate context as it stands at present.

***Evidential Value*** - *How the physical remains of a place tell us about the past.*

Oxford Road has long been a main thoroughfare from the centre of Reading westward towards Pangbourne. It was once a suburban road leading away from the town centre, with large, expensive Georgian terraces along the route, mostly on the Southern elevation, with some villas on the North. This made the area around Oxford Road particularly exclusive for the wealthy at this time. When industry boomed in the Victorian era and the town expanded, the wealthier residents moved further out of Reading, with the areas around Oxford Road's Georgian frontages becoming workers housing, exemplified by the vast inclusion of Victorian terrace houses. As Reading's industry and production progressed, the route became increasingly popular and so properties lining Oxford Road became a combination of trade and residential, including the conversion of the ground floor of a number of Georgian terrace houses into shops and businesses. In doing so, Oxford Road has become a popular destination for a wide variety of trading. As stated in the Conservation Appraisal, 'It has a distinctively different character from the remainder of the Conservation Area. It is defined by both its busy use and its diversity of cultures, which is reflected in the shops lining the main road'. The cultural element is noticeable not only in the shops but also the variety of civic buildings, including religious buildings, old cinema building and the Oxford Road Community School.

The lack of development of the site for housing is in stark contrast to its immediate context. The reason for this lies in its use as firstly farmland, then as an arboricultural nursery, with the larger area of the site being developed as a swimming pool in 1966. However the area within the conservation zone has not had any recorded development, leaving a noticable blank space in the urban grain. Since the demolition of the swimming pool, the site has remained derelict, with some use as a car park, and has been a site of active anti-social behaviour and crime due to its neglect and disuse. With this in mind, the site of development is considered to have low archaeological potential and low evidential value overall.

***Historical Value*** - *How people, events and aspects of past life are connected through a place to the present.*

As previously mentioned, Battle Street (to the north of the site) has its name derived from Battle Farm that previously occupied the site, which in turn owed its namesake to the original landowner; Battle Abbey in Hastings.

The Oxford Road Community School was constructed in 1880-83, ten years after the 1870 Forster Education Act, which required school places for all children between 5 and 10 years old. The building was designed by local architects Morris and Stallwood in the Neo-Gothic style. The school is constructed of local Reading red brick and terracotta tiles. According to Reading Museum, 'Morris and Stallwood were accomplished builders of schools, combining current thinking in education and social reform with architectural skill. Of all the late Victorian schools in Reading, this is one of the most intact and architecturally inspired.' As a predecessor of the first post-education act buildings, Morris and Stallwood made adaptations to previous school design models by replacing the single schoolroom with a hall with larger, lighter classrooms off of it.

A defining feature of the Oxford Road area is its multiculturalism. With the industrial boom of the 19th Century, workers were attracted to Reading from outside of the UK, the first of which were Eastern Europeans and Russian Jews escaping economic hardship and increasingly violent antisemitic behaviour. Oxford Road soon became the centre of Reading's Jewish community, who established their own businesses in and around the area. By the 1950's, Reading's stable economy provided employment opportunities for Irish, Eastern European and Caribbean families who found affordable homes in the Oxford Road area. Subdividing the large Georgian and Victorian houses for multiple occupancy increased the population of the area. In July 2012, Oxford Road residents and community leaders gathered at Battle Library to agree upon a future vision for the neighbourhood. The initiative 'A World in One Place' was created in recognition of the many cultures and communities in the area, with those present recognising that the Oxford Road is amongst the most densely populated and cosmopolitan neighbourhoods in the UK.

This being said, the physical and architectural aspects of this area have seen mistreatment and poor development. The Conservation Zone now in place ensures that properties and sites within its boundary must be conscientiously maintained or developed to prevent their original character and the overall character of the area from deteriorating further. As well as this, the site also sits within the High Street Heritage Action Zone, and so should be developed in a way that improves the quality of life along the historic Oxford Road. As the site itself has not contained any notable development or events of historic value, the area of development is of low historical value, but should however be considerate of neighbouring context with high historical value, in particular the Oxford Road School and neighbouring listed buildings.

***Aesthetic Value*** - How people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from place.

The varied built environment of residential stylings, particularly the 18th and 19th Century terrace house typology, is a defining aesthetic of much of the area, along with the red, grey and buff brick materiality. Furthermore, the properties to the east of the site along Oxford Road are villas; separate buildings with varying forms and orientations. What were once individual properties of 3 to 3.5 storeys are now subdivided internally for multiple occupancy and/or businesses and office spaces. As well as this, the rich variety of 18th and 19th Century terraces lining the southern elevation of Oxford Road creates an active solid face to the busy road, contrasted by the villas on the opposite side.

However, the lack of green space is an increasing problem for the overall aesthetic of the area. The Conservation Appraisal notes that the conservation area has 10% or less canopy cover, with many of the green assets encapsulated in this statistic situated away from Oxford Road. It is clear that tree cover and green space is sparse and lacking, with hard landscaping, building frontages and boundary walls defining defensible space from public. This leads to a somewhat monotone and hard aesthetic for the area at present.

The aesthetic value of the site itself is currently low, comprising of a car park with steel fencing and concrete bollards to the Oxford Road frontage.

***Communal Value*** - How people draw meaning from a place because it figures in their collective experience or memory.

The historic presence of a multicultural community around the proposed site as well as the active pedestrian and vehicular traffic route of the adjacent Oxford Road indicates the site's high communal value. Community-led initiatives seek to protect and enhance the character of the area as well as the quality of living and sense of community in what is a relatively deprived area in Reading. Although the surrounding area has a high communal value, celebrating its multi-ethnic and cultural strongpoints, the area within the proposed site has a very low communal value. Since the demolition of the Central Swimming Pool, the site has become a place of crime and anti-social behaviour due to its neglect. Although it provides a pedestrian link between Battle Street and Oxford Road, the link is uninviting due to the lack of supervision and increasingly poor reputation.

***Summary of Significance***

Though the surrounding area, particularly the conservation area of Oxford Road, has a high level of architecturally aesthetic, historical and communal value, the development site in its current state has little value in regards to these categories. It is for this reason that the 2019 revision of the Conservation Area encapsulated the derelict area of the site fronting Oxford Road, to ensure that whatever development does occur, is developed conscientiously and with respect for its surrounding context in accordance with the appraisal and the High Street Action Zone. This includes scale and massing, footprint, materiality and use.

2.0 Assessment of Impact

2.1 Background

Reading Borough Council have perceived a growing need to provide housing and improve/expand facilities for adult care and accommodation within the town. With this in mind, Reading Borough Council approached HCC Property Services through it’s long-established working relationship and in recognition of Hampshire’s delivery of high quality accommodation for adult services, with the intention of refining a brief and creating a scheme that addressed the beforementioned needs on the site of the former Central Swimming Pool.

Aside from use as a car park and temporary vaccination drop-in centre, the site has been left derelict since the demolition of the pool in 2018. The site was deemed suitable for the proposed brief due to it’s size, central location and also location between existing older person’s day centres and mental health flats that are in need of improvement.

The brief has been defined as follows:

Uses:

- 35 place Old Person’s Day Centre
- Sheltered & General Needs flats & houses
- Supported Living Flats
- 100% Affordable Housing

Placemaking:

- New public mews connectiong with Battle Street and James Street
- New public pedestrian route to Oxford Road
- New safe and secure courtyard and gardens for new residents
- New planting within the development and along it’s perimeters

Sustainability:

- Zero Carbon in Use

Robust Construction:

- Long life, low maintenance

Size:

- 6938m2 over 4 Storeys
- Site Area - 0.55 Ha

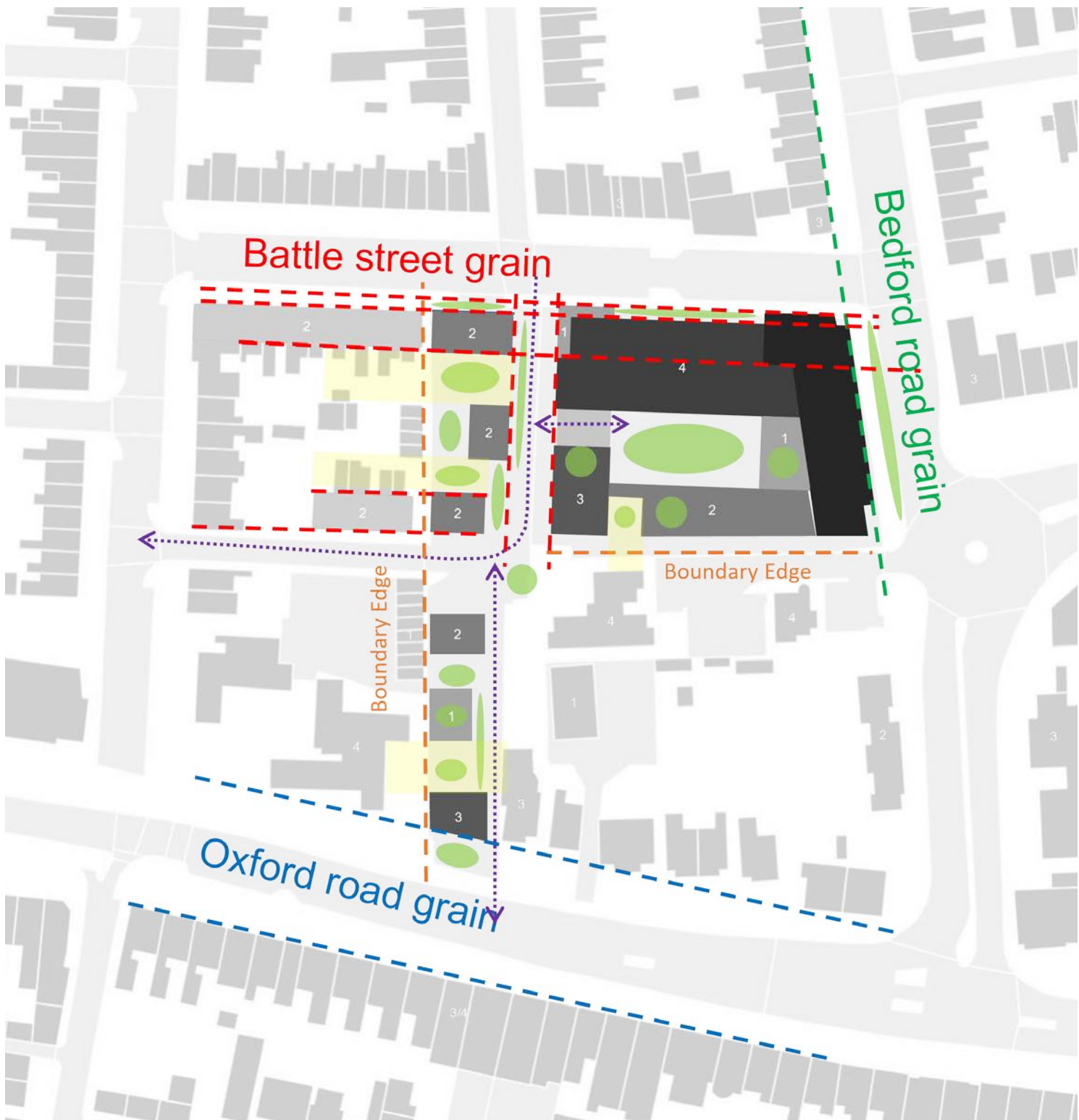


Fig 31: Contextual influence upon the scheme



### *Form, Scale and Massing:*

The buildings vary in scale from four storeys along Battle Street, dropping down to three storeys within the conservation area fronting Oxford Road, where the individual pavilion houses follow the street pattern of late Victorian Villas on the north side of Oxford Road, 'repairing' the gap in the street frontage. The building line along Oxford Road accords with the adjacent No. 134, with projecting element typical of the pavilion characters to the East. (124, 128, 130, 134 Oxford Road). The Oxford Road elevation comprises a two story projecting bay, stepping up to three storeys behind, articulated as the adjacent villas in that its primary façade projects to contain and define the main living spaces (shown in red), a subservient side bay has the entrance and coordination/stairs in it (blue) and it includes a bay window to further articulate the façade.

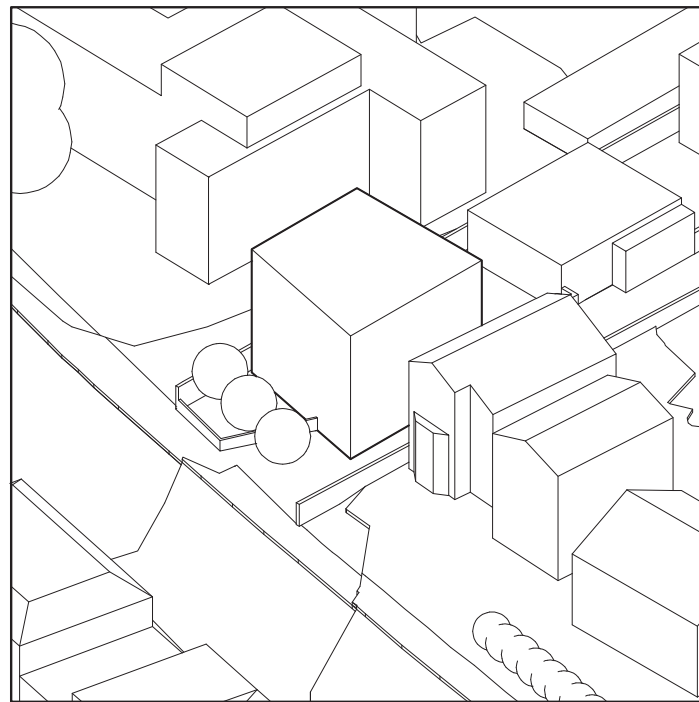
### *Roof Form*

The roof form of the development reflects the dominant aesthetic of parapeted buildings on Oxford Road and its low pitch enables the overall massing to be kept to a minimum. In functional terms this enables the design to meet RBCs Carbon Emergency requirements of maximizing photovoltaic generation to create Carbon Zero Building in Use. As demonstrated on Pages 26 to 29, the parapets and low pitches of the adjacent historic buildings provide the dominant aesthetic, with the gabled frontages largely reserved for the key public buildings (Community School and Church of the Holy Trinity) with the entire line of properties from Prospect Road to The Pavilion Church having either eaves or parapets along their façades, with shallow pitched roofs behind. A number of alternative roof form options were tested as part of the design process, as summarised on page 23.

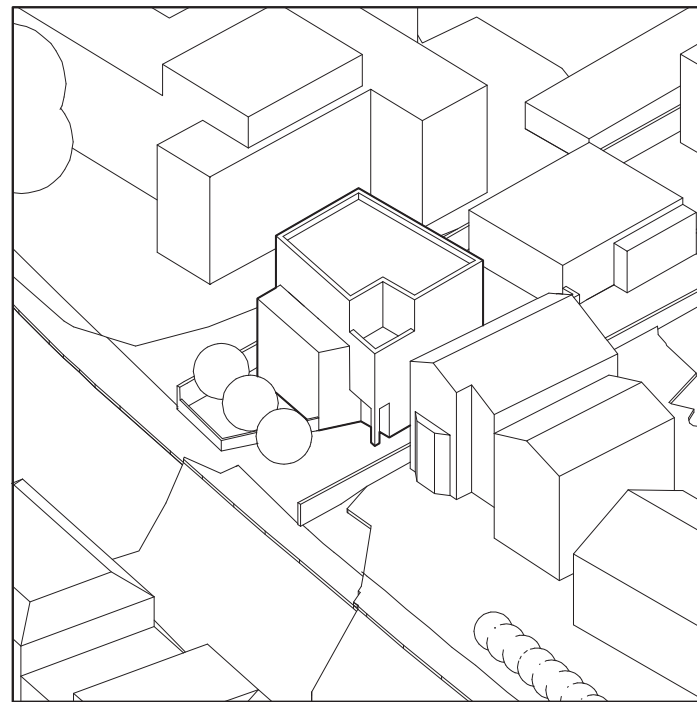


Fig 33: Aerial view - Massing indicating contextual bays and recesses

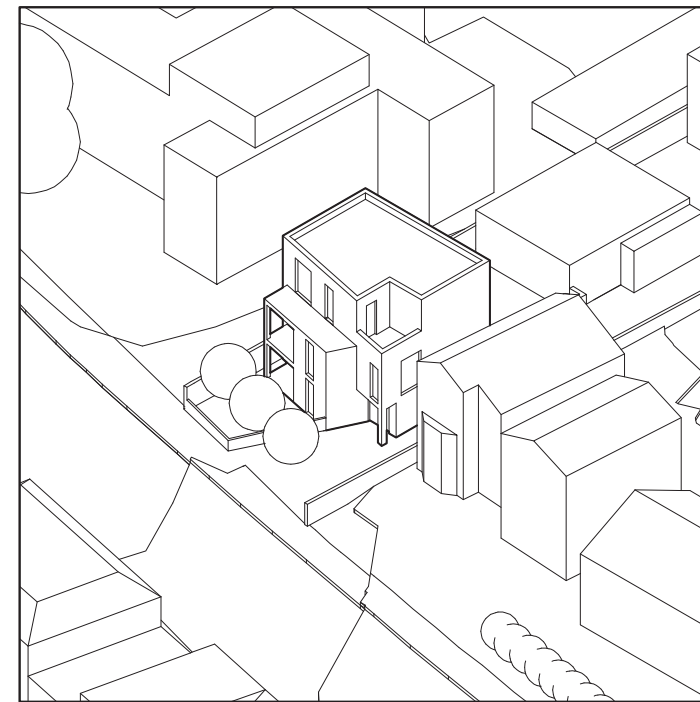
Mass



Articulation



Fenestration



Detail

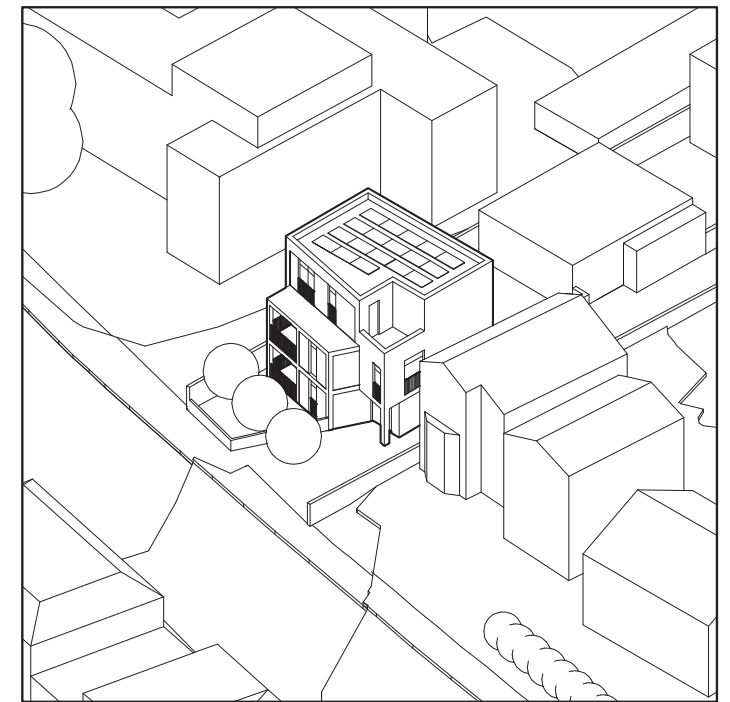
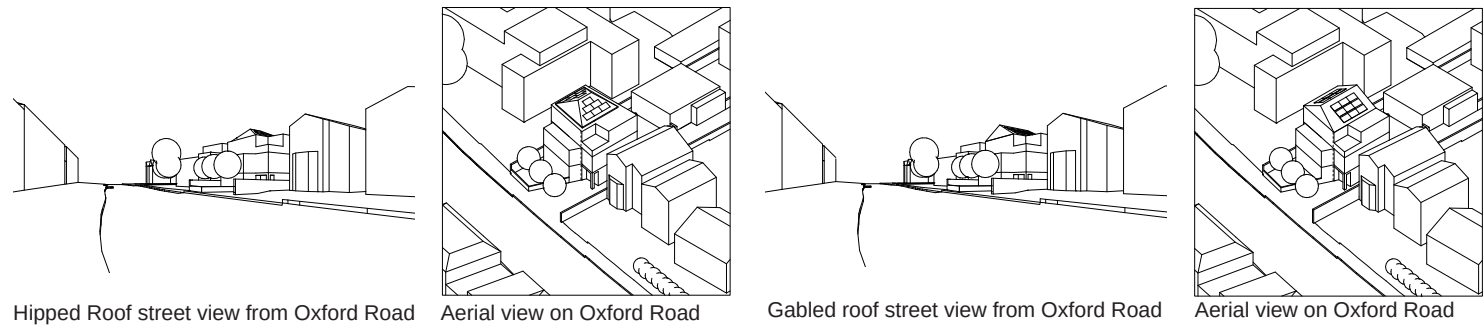


Fig 34: Development of Oxford Road building form and massing

3 Storey Pitched & Hipped / Pitched & Gabled Roof

- Pros:* Roof Form matches some local heritage buildings.
- Cons:* Height: Too high and not in-keeping with the adjacent building heights, over-bearing to adjoining buildings.
- Required PV's would be visible from Oxford Road and the Conservation Area and would number less in hipped roof option. Maintenance and cleaning difficult.
- Cost and Sustainability: Pitched roof has a financial and carbon cost for no practical benefit, Passivhaus design compromised with larger volume.
- Rainwater downpipes: In public passageway, could lead to damage.

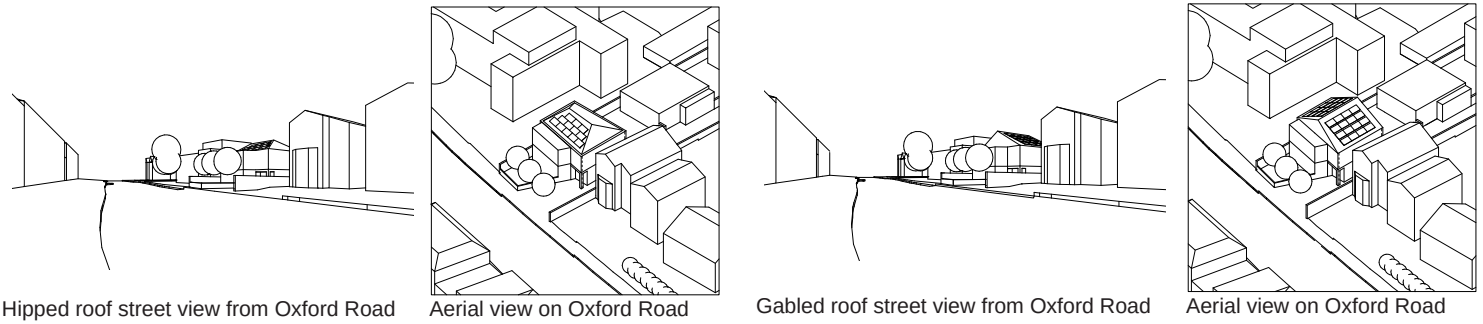
**Heritage impact:** Overall height generated by adding pitched roof to three storeys will detract from adjacent landmark heritage assets with pitched roofs.



2 Storey Pitched & Hipped / Pitched & Gabled Roof

- Pros:* Roof Form matches some local heritage buildings.
- Cons:* Height: Too low and not in-keeping with the adjacent building heights.
- Required PV's would be visible from Oxford Road and the Conservation Area and would number less in hipped roof option. Maintenance and cleaning difficult.
- Cost and Sustainability: Pitched roof has a financial and carbon cost for no practical benefit, Passivhaus design compromised with larger volume.
- Housing numbers: Loss of one general needs flat.
- Rainwater downpipes: In public passageway, could lead to damage.

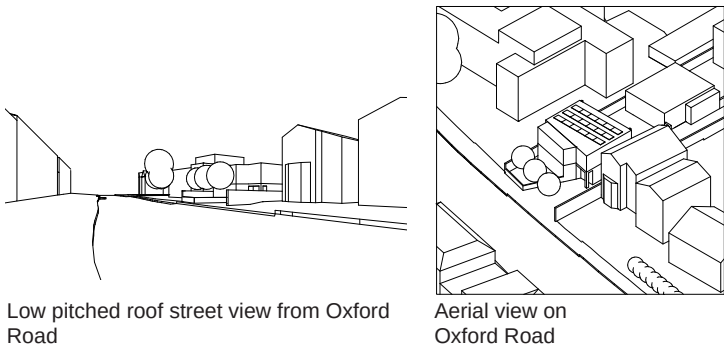
**Heritage impact:** Two storey elevation varies in scale significantly from predominantly three storey context.



2 storey parapet with low pitched roof

- Pros:* PV's: not visible from road and maximum number of PV's achieved. Maintenance and cleaning straightforward.
- Cost and Sustainability: Flat roof forms have a low form factor as required with Passivhaus design and result in less building = low carbon and low financial cost.
- Rainwater downpipes: In private gardens to avoid damage in the public realm.
- Cons:* Height: Not in-keeping with the local building heights.
- Roof Form: does not match traditional listed buildings, however there are some flat roof buildings in the conservation area i.e. directly opposite.

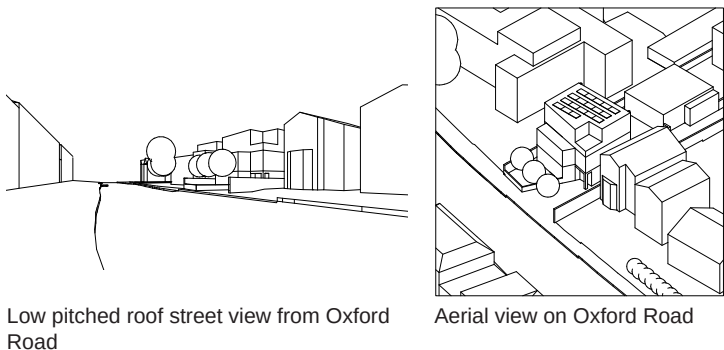
**Heritage impact:** Low flat roof does not fit into the streetscape, which is predominantly 3 storey.



3 storey parapet with low pitched roof

- Pros:* Height: consistent with adjacent and buildings opposite. PV's; not visible from road and maximum number of PV's achieved. Maintenance and cleaning straightforward.
- Cost and Sustainability: Flat roof forms have a low form factor as required with Passivhaus design and result in less building = low carbon and low financial cost.
- Rainwater downpipes: In private gardens to avoid damage in the public realm.
- Cons:* Roof Form: does not match local traditional buildings, however there are some flat roof buildings in the conservation area i.e. directly opposite

**Heritage impact:** Parapet and low pitched roof reflects residential parapet forms opposite, and does not detract from landmark heritage assets with pitched/gable roofs



It should be reiterated that, as a rule, the most prominent gables and defined pitched roofs are landmark buildings with civic/social purpose such as Oxford Road Community School and the Church of the Holy Trinity. Private residencies along and around Oxford Road are overwhelmingly terrace housing, which have parapeted and concealed gables. As the scheme on Oxford Road will be the latter, it has been designed to be deferential to it's context and take precedent from existing residential buildings of merit and avoid competition aesthetically with the highly articulated school and church.

Place making is a key initiative of the conservation zone and Reading High Streets Heritage Action Zone, and so is of equal importance to the scheme on Oxford Road. The inclusion of trees to both green and shade this area helps to achieve an enriching and enjoyable space. The inclusion of the passageway and it's angled entryway is a positive addition to the public realm that invites greater permeability through the urban block, as well as opportunities to sit, rest and celebrate local heritage.



Fig 35: Oxford Road south elevation including scheme



Fig 36: Oxford Road north elevation

Metropolitan Drinking Fountain and Trough Relocation

Located on the East side of the site on Bedford Road is a trough created by the Metropolitan Drinking Fountain and Trough Association, dating back to the early 20th Century (A-Fig.38 & 40). The trough first appears in OS Maps in 1930 (B-Fig. 37), remaining in it's original location until the 1960's before being relocated to it's current position on Bedford Road. Originally the trough was used as a water fountain for the public and also as a water trough for horses, although it's relocation in the mid-to-late 20th century resulted in the decommissioning of the connecting plumbing and has since been claimed by local residents as a public planter.

The intention is to relocate the trough once again to a more suitable location within the site where we believe its value as a point of public interest can be increased. Rather than abutting the main facade of the development and Bedford Road, the intention is to relocate the trough to the gateway of the site, sitting adjacent to the passageway wall, which in itself is intended to have cultural significance with local artist involvement in it's design and patterning (C-Fig. 39 & 41). The move aims to protect the trough by relocating to a safer, more pedestrian location, and to continue to use it as a public planter. We believe this will also increase the heritage profile of Oxford Road.

The trough would not be moved far from its original position and would stay within the same urban block. Historical maps provide evidence of a previous relocations along Bedford Road to its current position; evidence that the trough has been moved over time to respond to development.

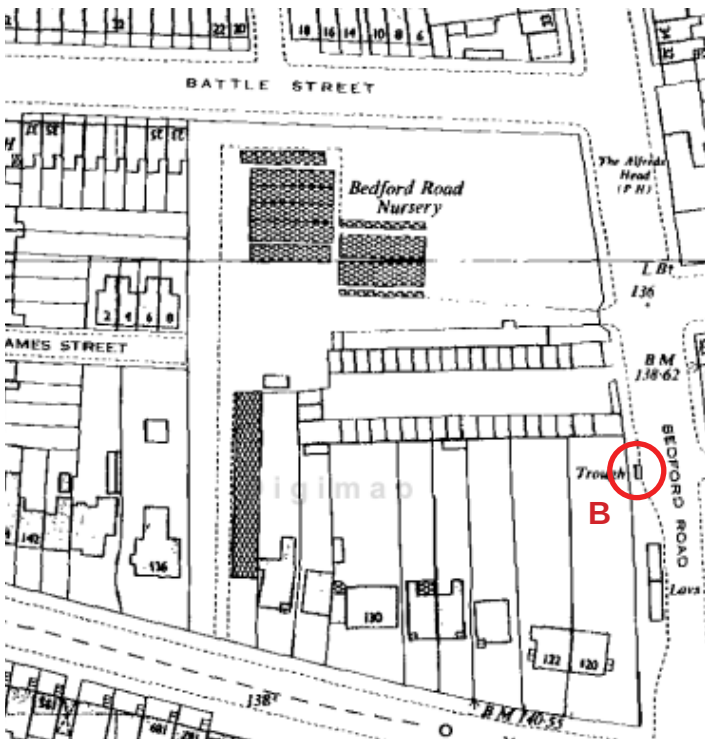


Fig 37: Original trough position - 1960 (B)

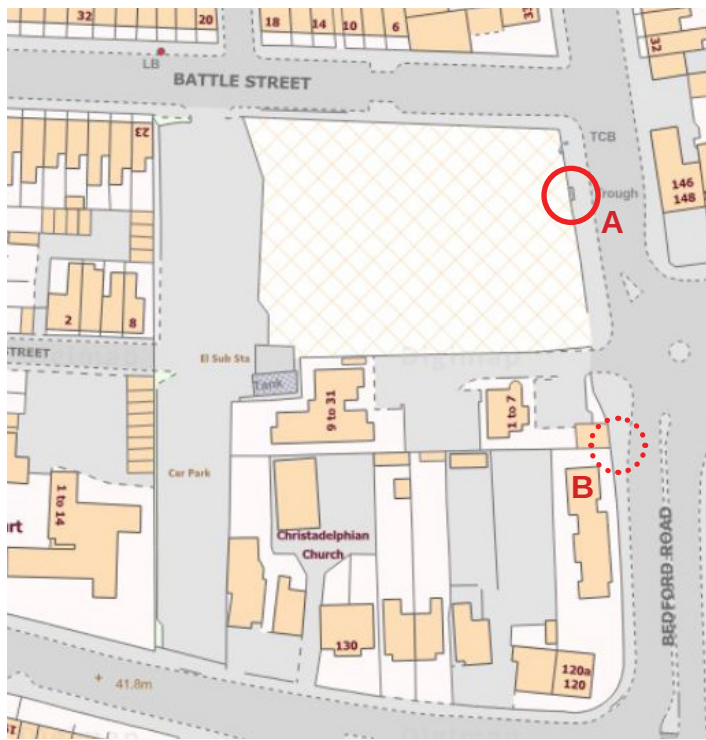


Fig 38: Current trough position (A)

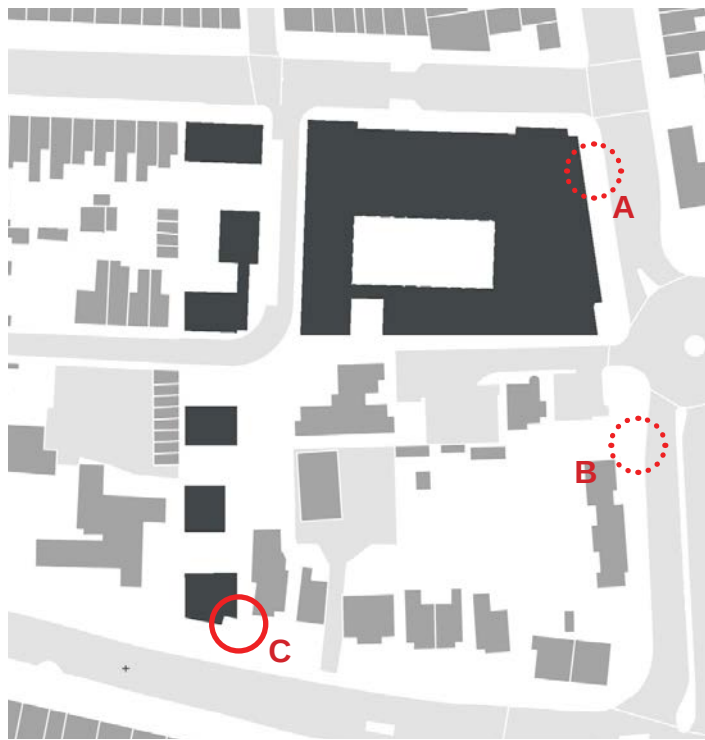


Fig 39: Intended trough position (C)



Fig 40: Current trough position - Bedford Road



Fig 41: Intended trough position - View from Oxford Road

### 2.3 Assessment of Impact

The images on pages 26-29 seek to demonstrate the contextual visual impact of the scheme. It is considered that the impact is overall a positive one, insofar as the development will result in the continuation and repair of the street frontage to Oxford Road, at an appropriate scale and with materials and detailing developed to minimize any harmful visual impact on the surrounding context.

As can be seen in figures 42 and 43, the visual impact on the key landmark building of Oxford Road Community School is minimal. The massing and form of the scheme on Oxford Road fills the gap within the urban grain by embodying the villa typology as well as elements of the celebrated Georgian terraces, namely parapets, to remain quiet in its aesthetic and presence on the street. Where the building is visible from the street, the facade is likely to be concealed by trees and high bushes. The facade's composition is intended to contain tasteful and considered brick patterning informed by local context to create subtle aesthetic value. The wider development of the Battle Street site has also been massed in consideration of its visual impact on key landmark buildings, and as demonstrated in figure 43, is barely visible in and around the landmark building.



Fig 42: View east along Oxford Road from Oxford Road Community School



Fig 43: View north East towards George Street from Oxford Road Community School

Figures 44 and 45 demonstrate the impact that the Oxford Road scheme will have aesthetically on the Church of the Holy Trinity. By continuing the villa/pavillion typology, the scheme intends to be subservient within it's context, allowing key landmark buildings such as the school and church to remain prominent along the streetscape. Trees added to the street front also provided much needed greening, shade and some visual screening, particularly of Allison Court which is labelled as a 'site of improvement'.

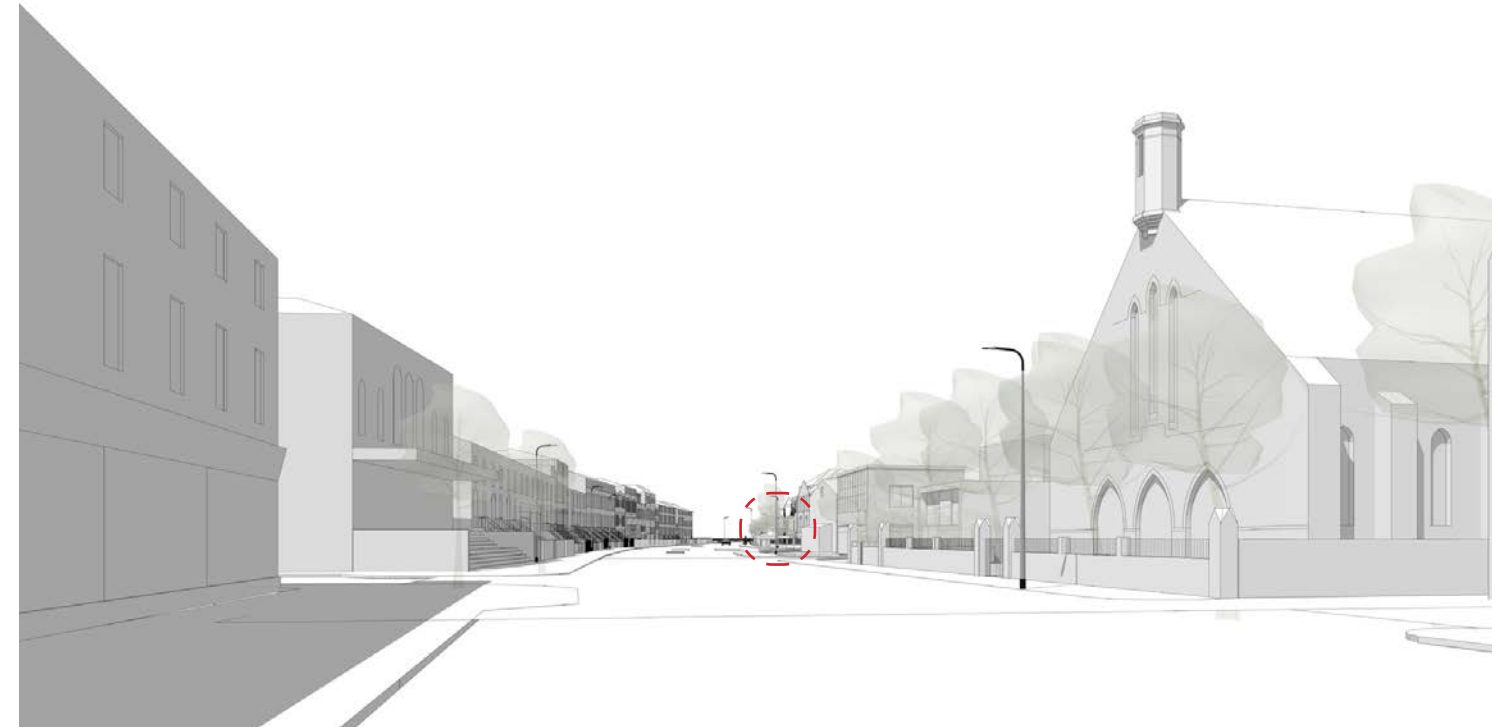


Fig 44: View west along Oxford Road from Church of the Holy Trinity



Fig 45: View north-west along Oxford Road from Church of the Holy Trinity

It is considered that the four storey, larger scale elements of the scheme fronting Battle Street and Bedford Road have negligible impact on the setting of the Conservation Area and listed Buildings 120 to 124 Oxford Road due to the existing four storey Bedford Road flats which sit between the site and the heritage assets (as indicated on Fig 46) and the impact of the scheme on the view into the Conservation Area from Bedford Place, looking south, is considered negligible as that aspect is dominated by the modern four story Trinity Place.

The impact on the setting of 122-124 Chatham Road is deemed to be very minor due to the scheme's distance from these listed buildings and the adjacent, intervening modern developments sitting between the scheme and the listed properties. The part of the conservation area which encompasses the Church of the Holy Trinity and 118 Oxford Road is visually shielded from the development site due to the modern housing of Cherwell Crescent and Trinity Place. The impact on the site itself is considered negligible due to the lack of any significant heritage value within it.

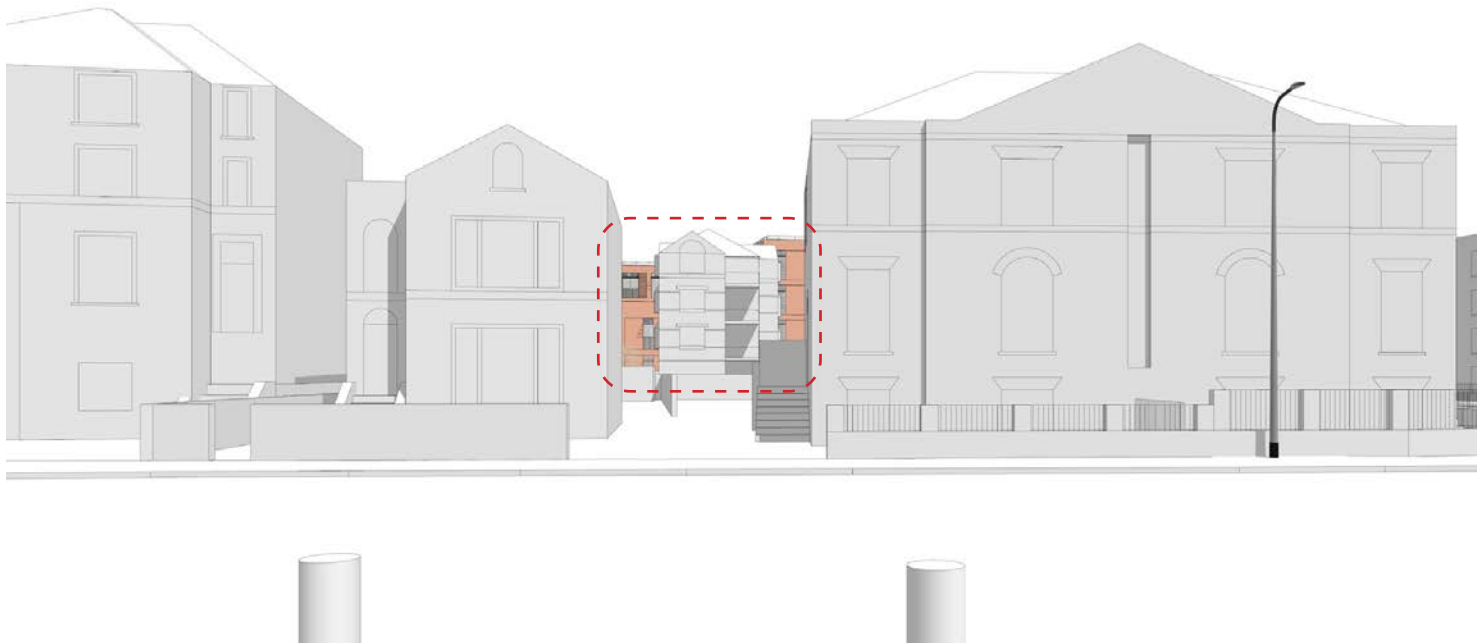


Fig 46: View north from Oxford Road between listed buildings (120,122,124 Oxford Road)



Fig 47: View north-west from Oxford Road/Bedford Road junction between listed buildings

On approach to the scheme, it is the public realm that has the most aesthetic and communal impact, providing ample opportunity for pedestrian access through the development site and opportunities to sit within the shade of newly planted trees. The villas sit at varying angles and provide a defining edge with their facades to which the Oxford Road building is built up to. Materiality is key to ensure the building remains in keeping with the overarching context, with use of red and grey brick along with subtle brick bond changes that reference the historic terraces opposite.

What is evident in figures 48 and 49 is the use of parapets on the southern edge of Oxford Road. These create a boxed, defined aesthetic that conceal the pitched roofs that sit behind to create quiet, refined facades that the proposal takes precedent from.



Fig 48: View west along Oxford Road near to proposal



Fig 49: View east along Oxford Road near to proposal

### 3.0 Justification and Mitigation

#### Summary

As demonstrated in Section 2.3, the scheme addresses the heritage context in a number of ways, including the reduction in scale of the development down towards Oxford Road with the individual pavilion buildings within the conservation area reflecting the Villa typology of the northern side of Oxford Road and the façade treatment and materiality reflecting their context.

Up until 2019 the majority of the site was occupied by the Central Swimming Pool, which has subsequently been demolished. The site is currently unused and presents a void in the urban fabric of this part of Reading when viewed from both Bedford Road and the conservation area of Oxford Road, where the row of historic villas is interrupted by a car park, modern railings and a row of modern concrete bollards.

It is therefore considered that overall the scheme has a positive impact on the townscape and character of the area. The enhancement of the urban grain of Oxford Road, and the creation of a new public space to identify the new pedestrian route through the site with the resultant animation of the streetscape further supports the statement that the proposals are beneficial to the conservation area's townscape and character.

With regard to the listed buildings within the vicinity of the proposals, the building development has been designed as an unobtrusive addition to the streetscape. It takes cues from contextual form, massing and materiality to create a scheme that is quiet and orderly within its context, and is therefore considered to cause no harm to the conservation area and the neighbouring listed buildings within it.

The scheme provides a long term economically sustainable use for the site which enables Reading Borough Council to provide much needed Adult Care and Housing in the area where it is most required, whilst also enhancing the historic context in which they are located.



Fig 50: Visual of development on Oxford Road

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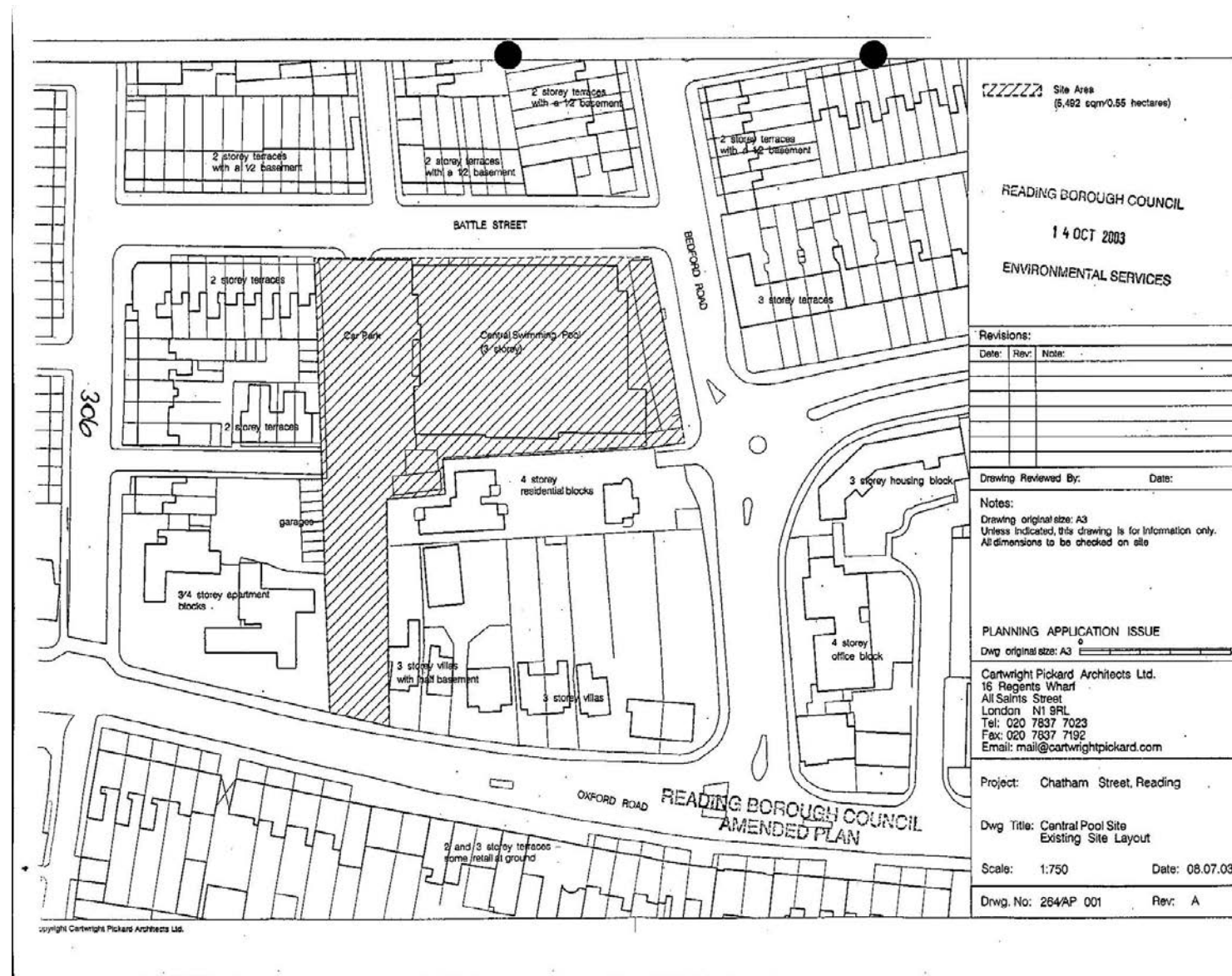
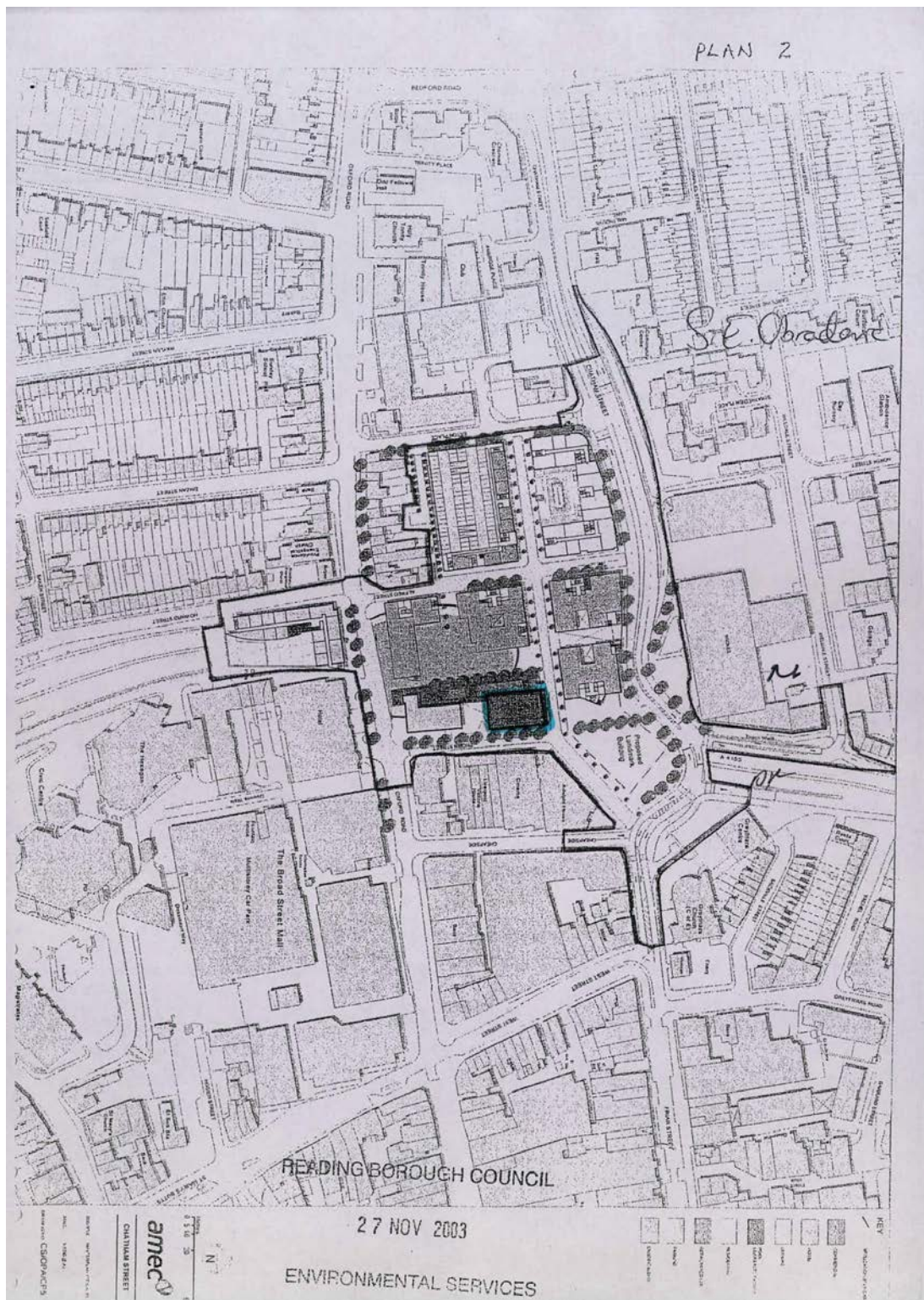
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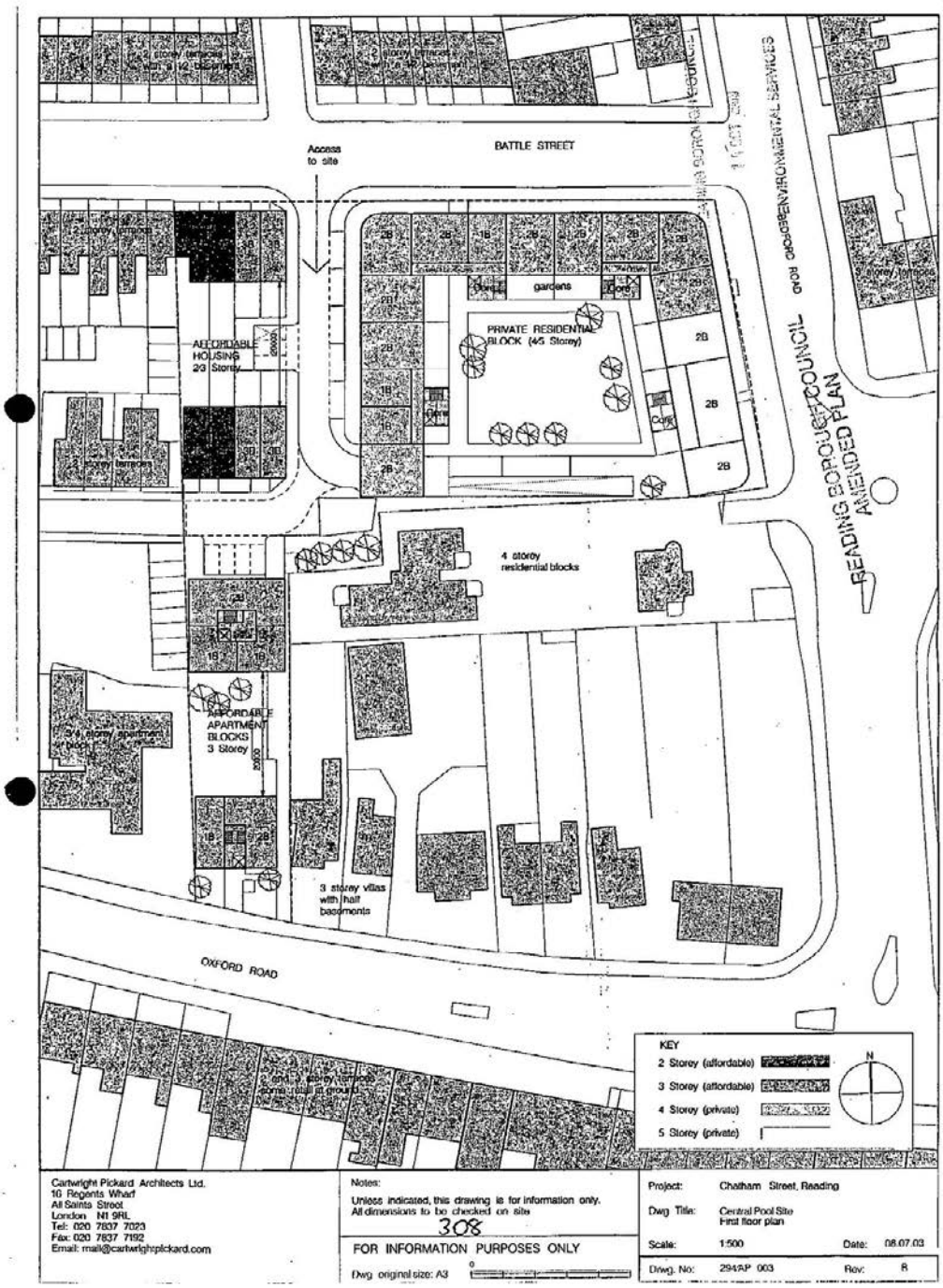
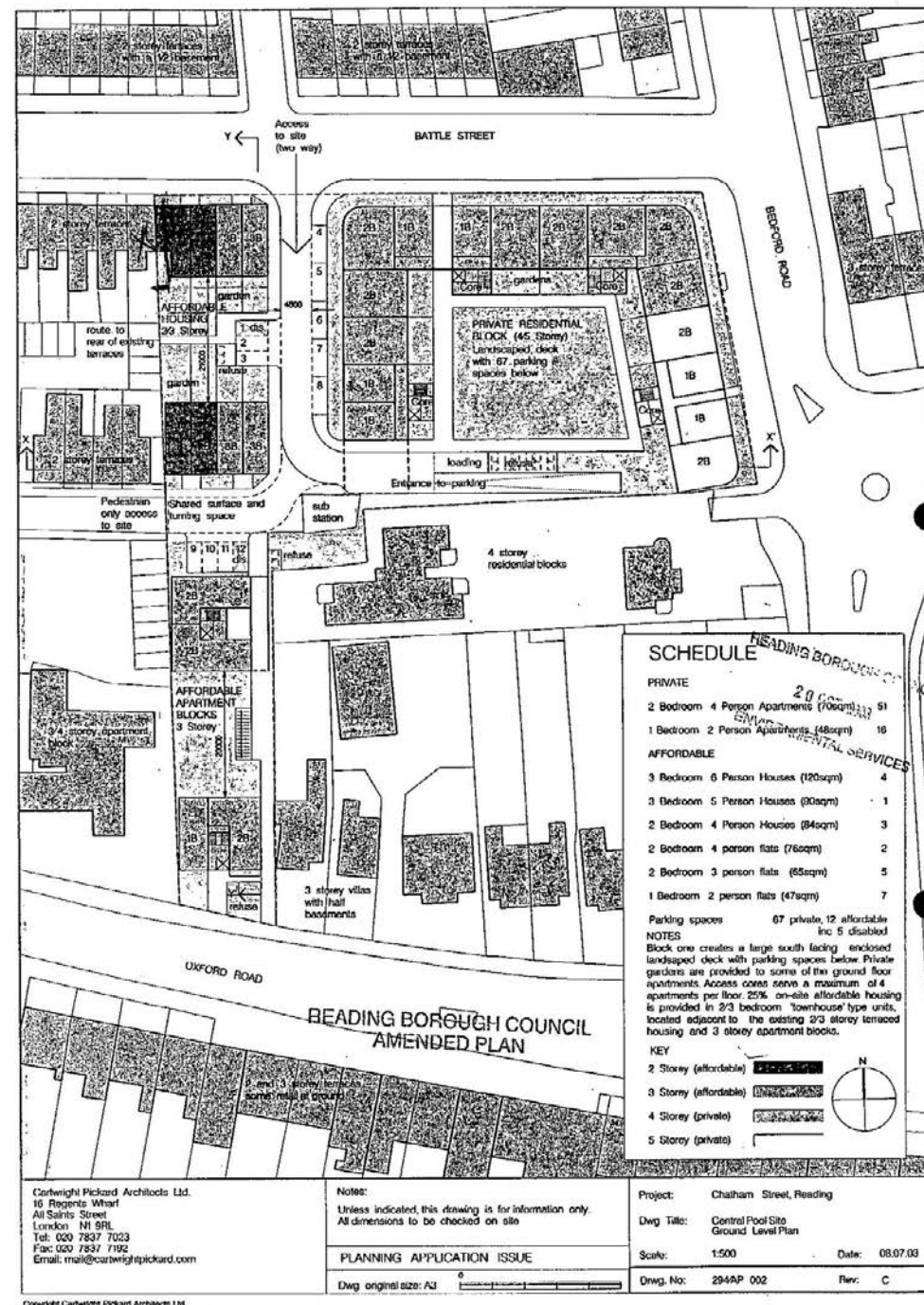
5.0 Appendix

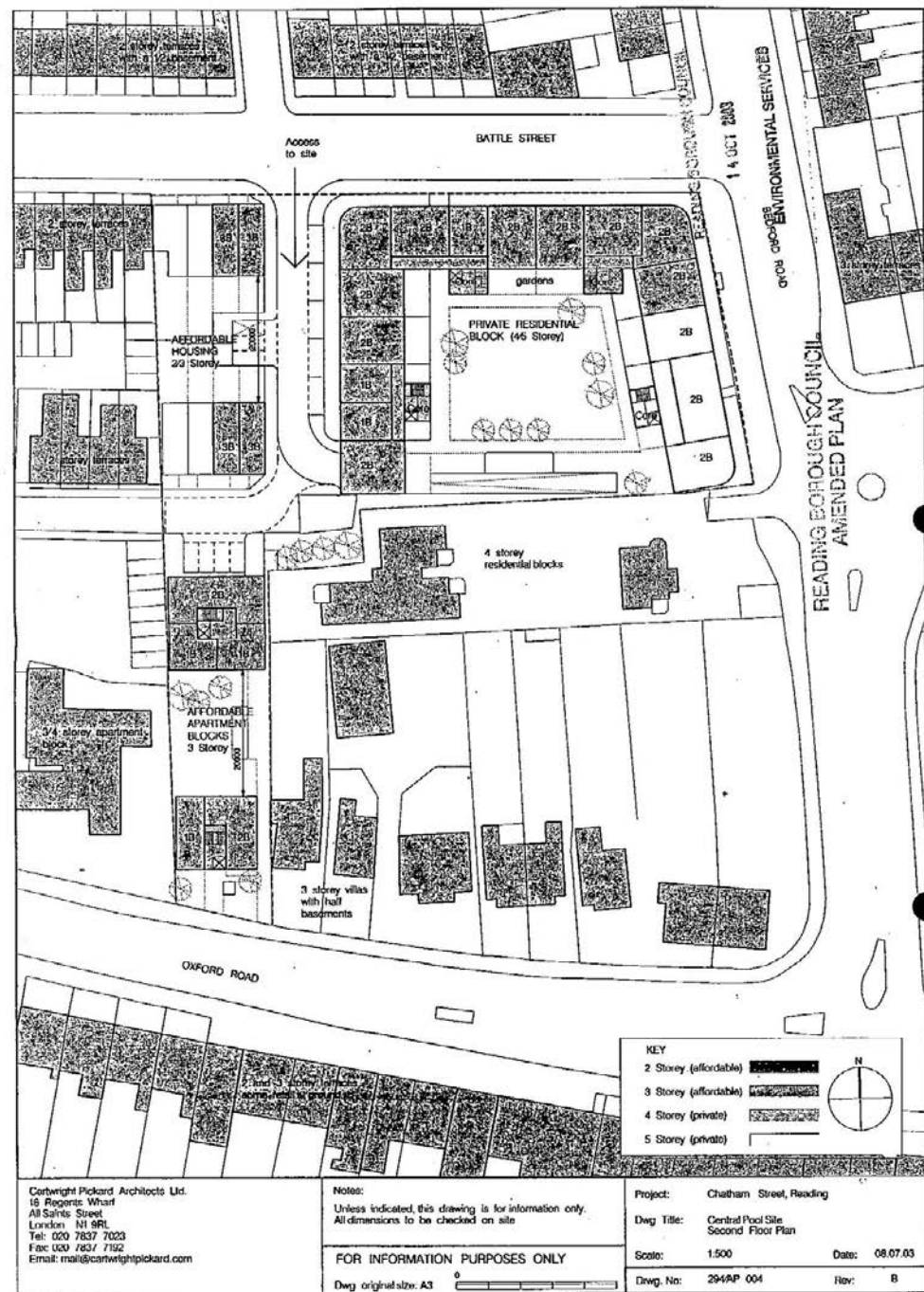
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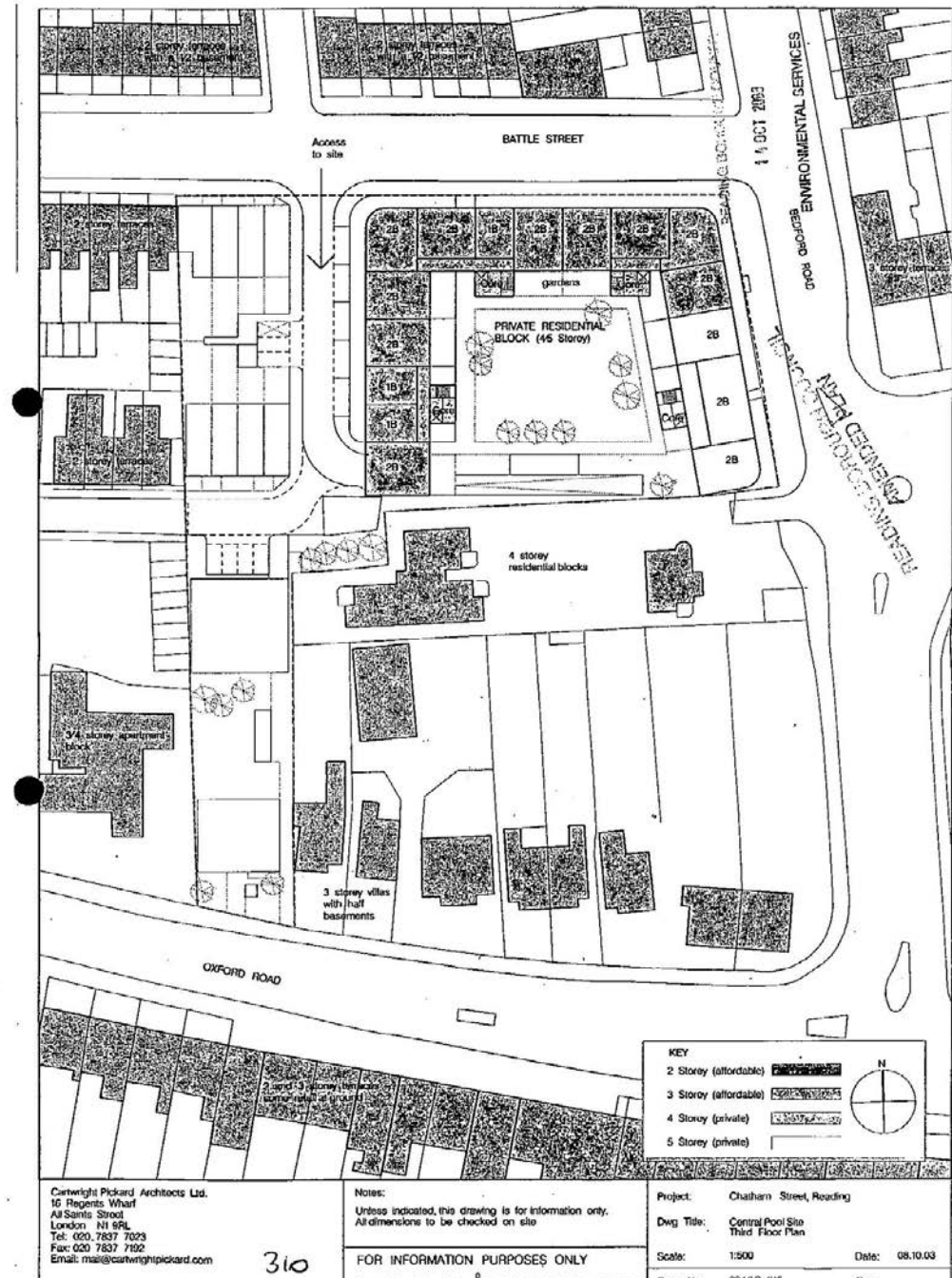
## 5.2 Previous Planning Submission 2003



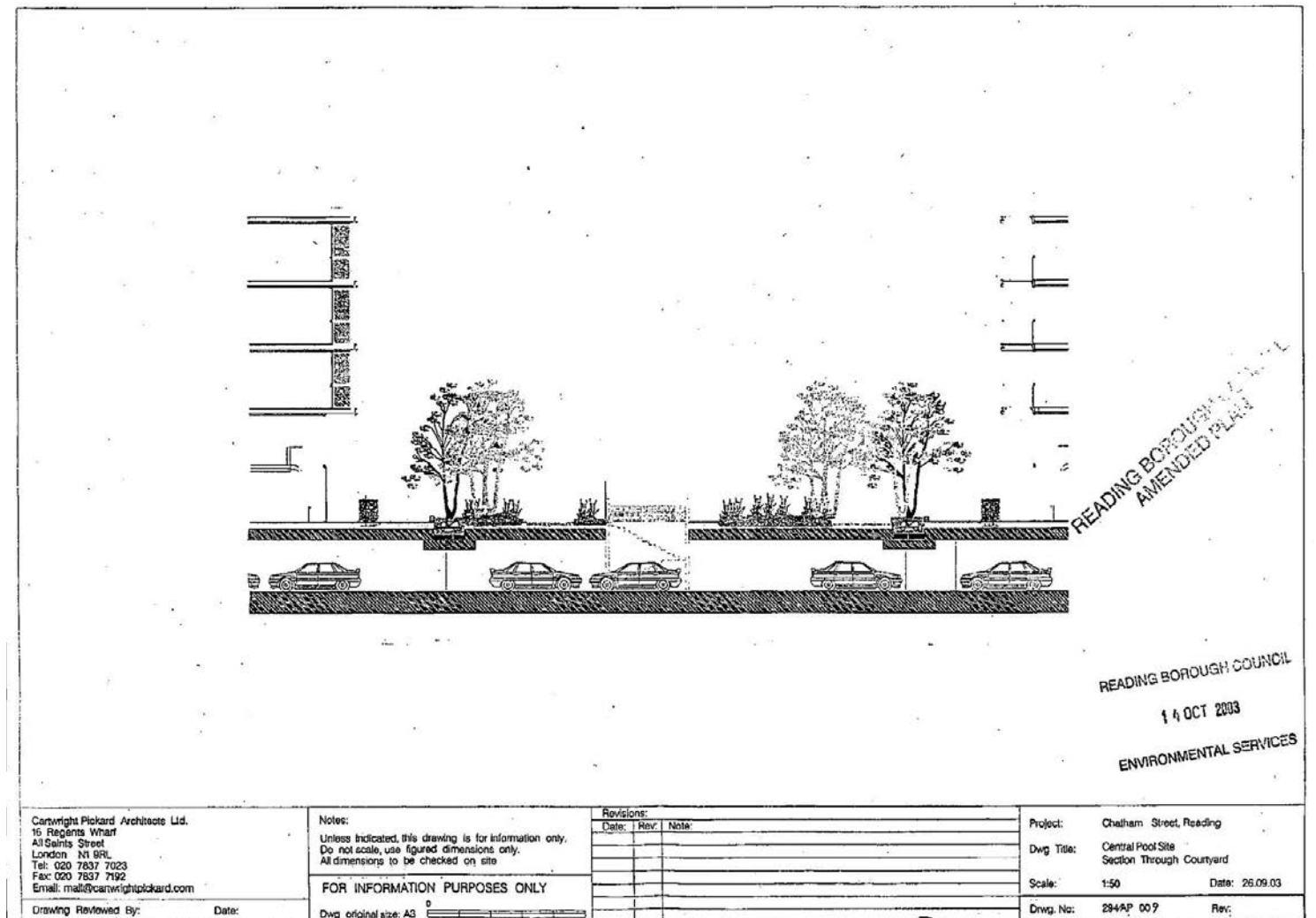
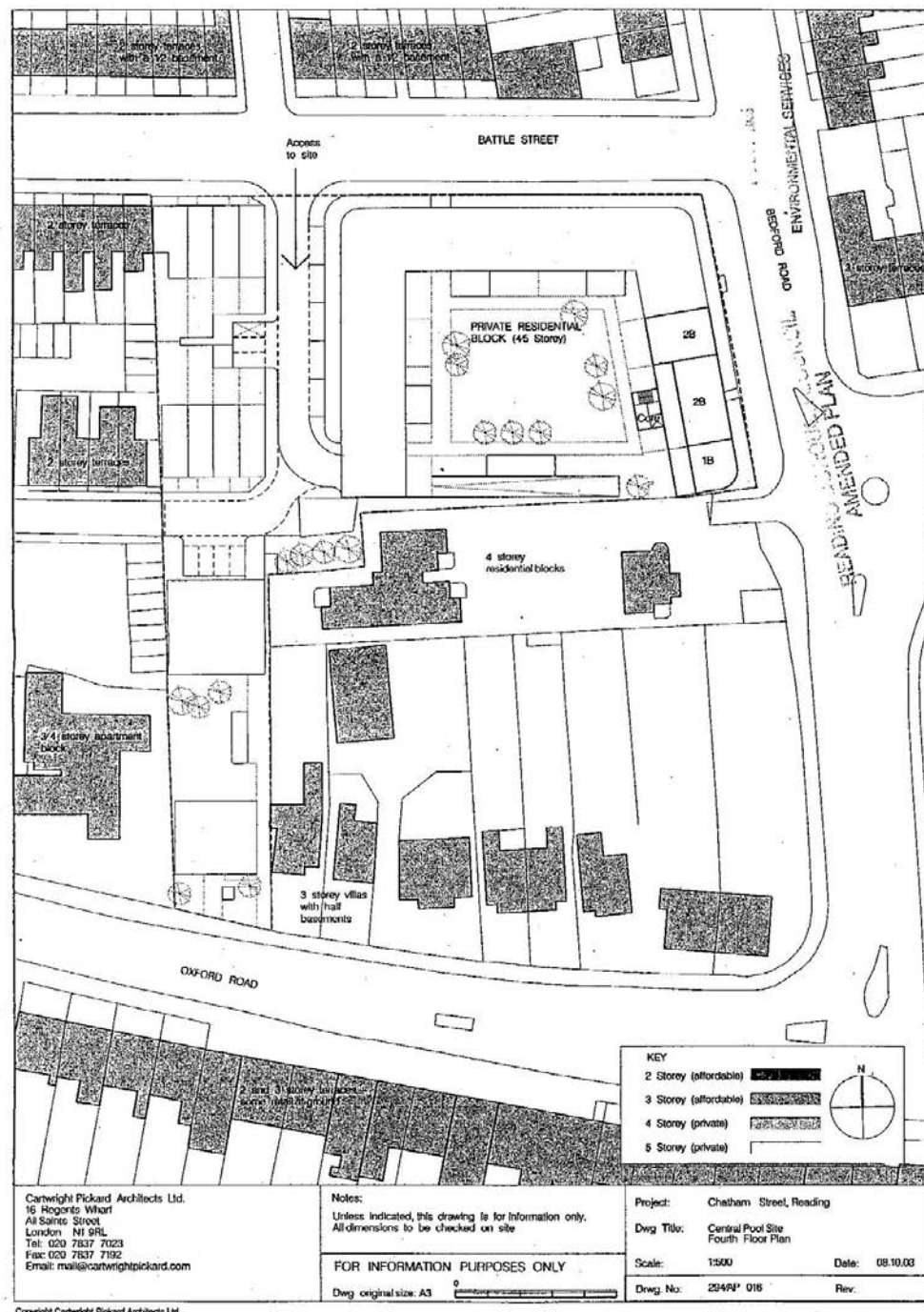


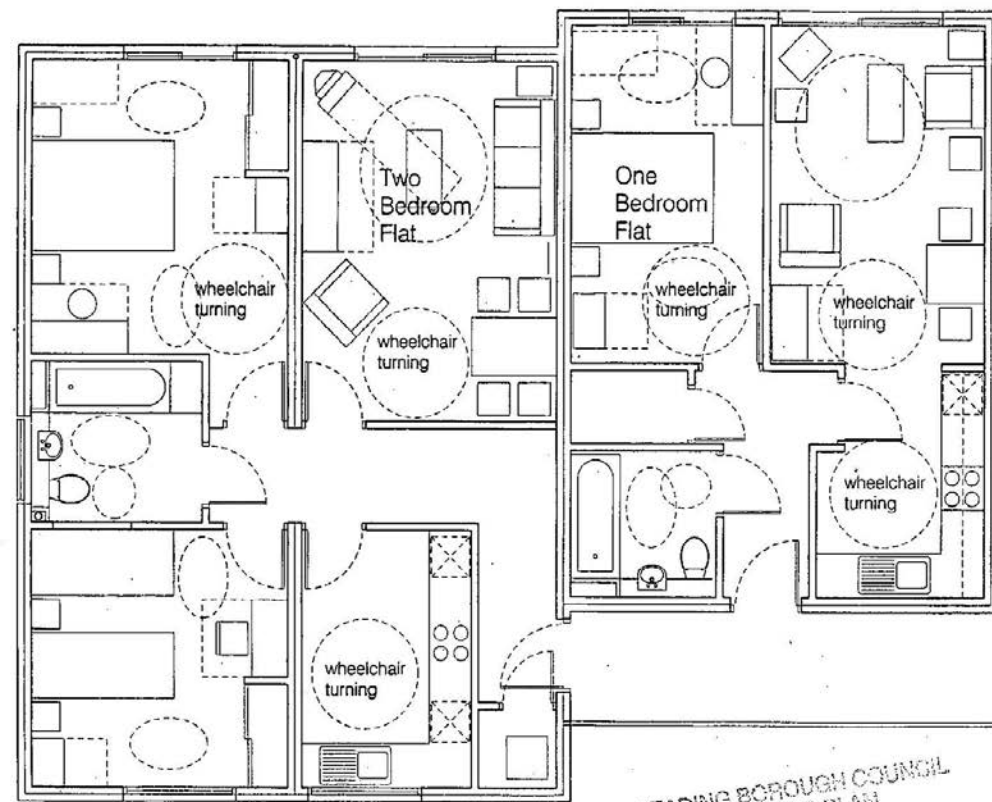


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READING BOROUGH COUNCIL  
AMENDED PLAN

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL  
14 OCT 2003  
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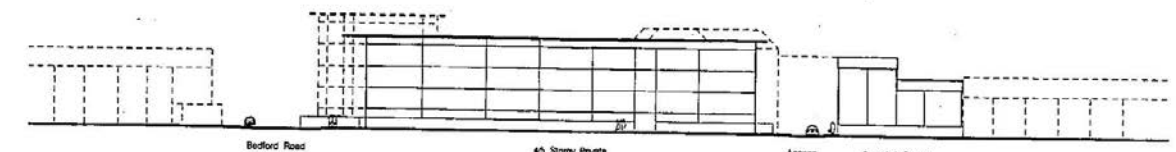
Notes:  
Unless indicated, this drawing is for information only.  
All dimensions to be checked on site.

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Dwg original size: A3

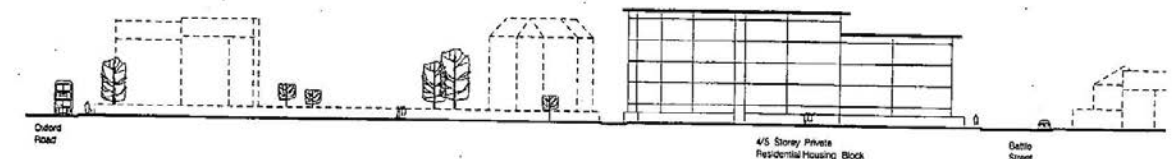
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|            |     |      |

Project: Chatham Street, Reading  
Dwg Title: Central Pool Site  
Typical Flat Layout  
Scale: 1:50 Date: 26.09.03  
Dwg No: 294AP 008 Rev: A



01

North Elevation to Battle Street  
1:500



02

East Elevation to Bedford Road  
1:500

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14 OCT 2003  
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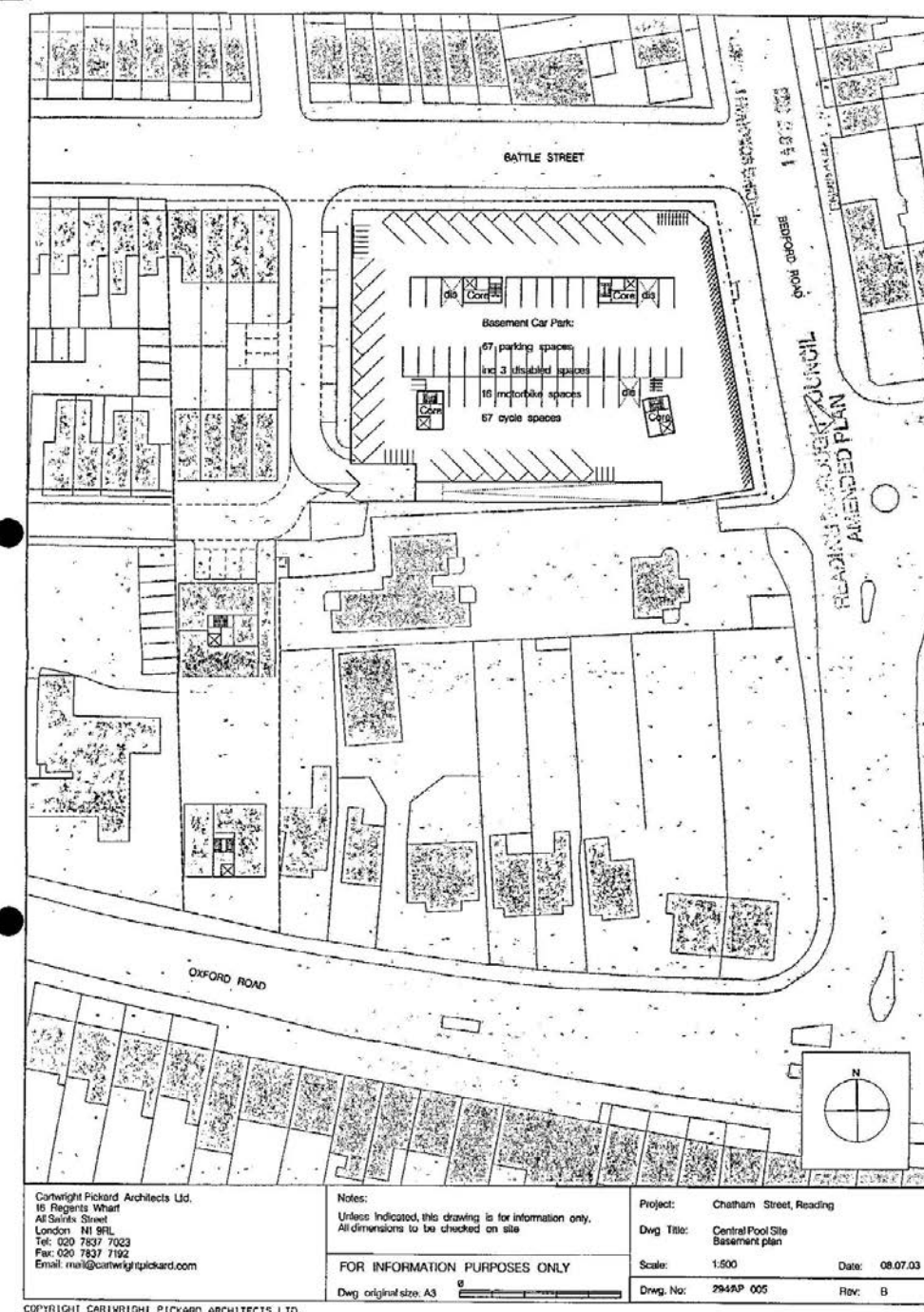
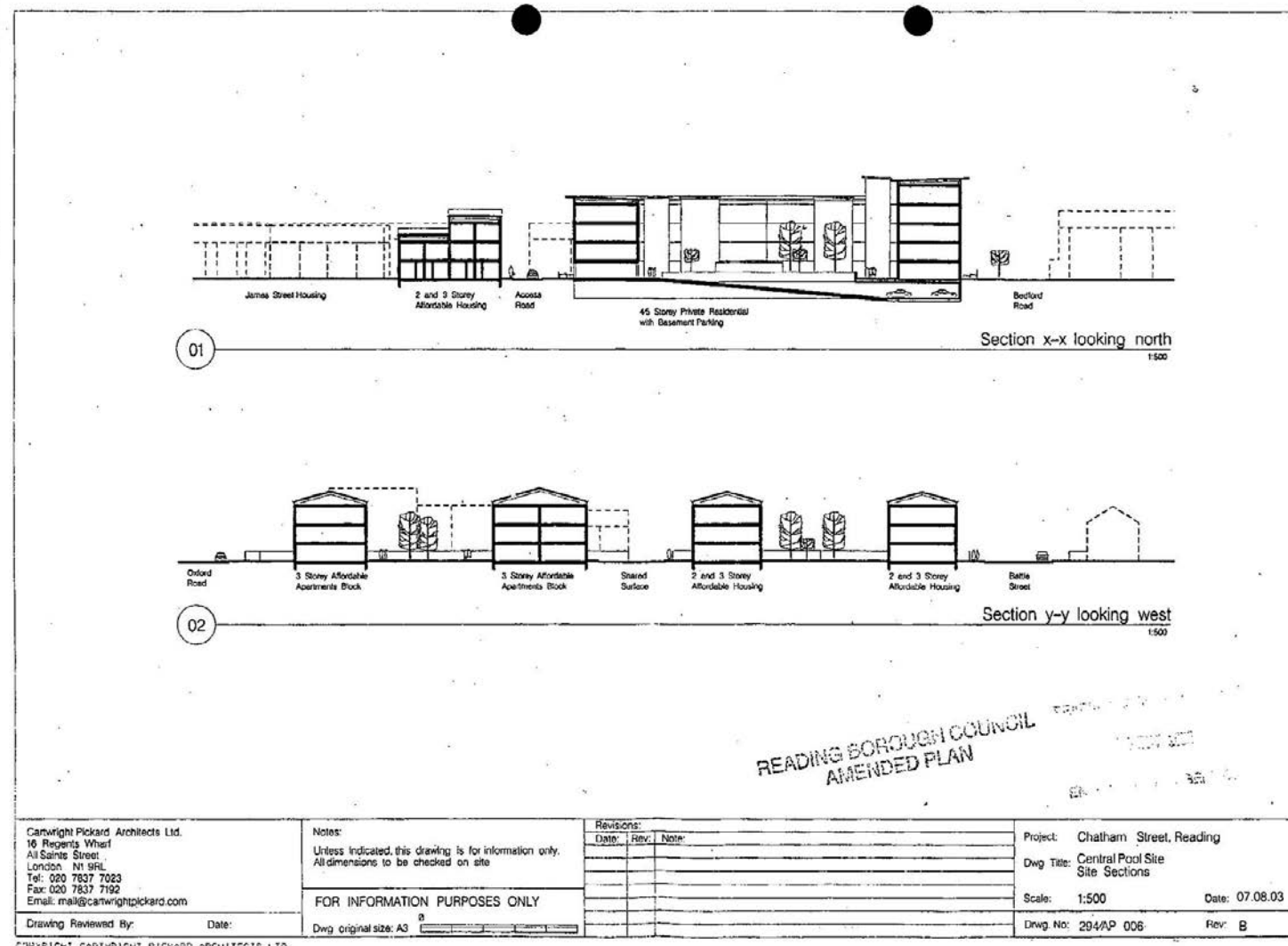
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| Revisions: |     |      |
|------------|-----|------|
| Date       | Rev | Note |
|            |     |      |
|            |     |      |
|            |     |      |

Project: Chatham Street, Reading  
Dwg Title: Central Pool Site  
Massing Elevations  
Scale: 1:500 Date: 07.08.03  
Dwg No: 294AP 007 Rev: B



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All dimensions to be checked on site

Dwg. original size: A3

Revisions:

Date: Rev: Note:

Project: Chatham Street, Reading

Dwg Title: Central Pool Site  
Sketch View Along Chatham Street  
looking towards the site

Scale:

Dwg. No:

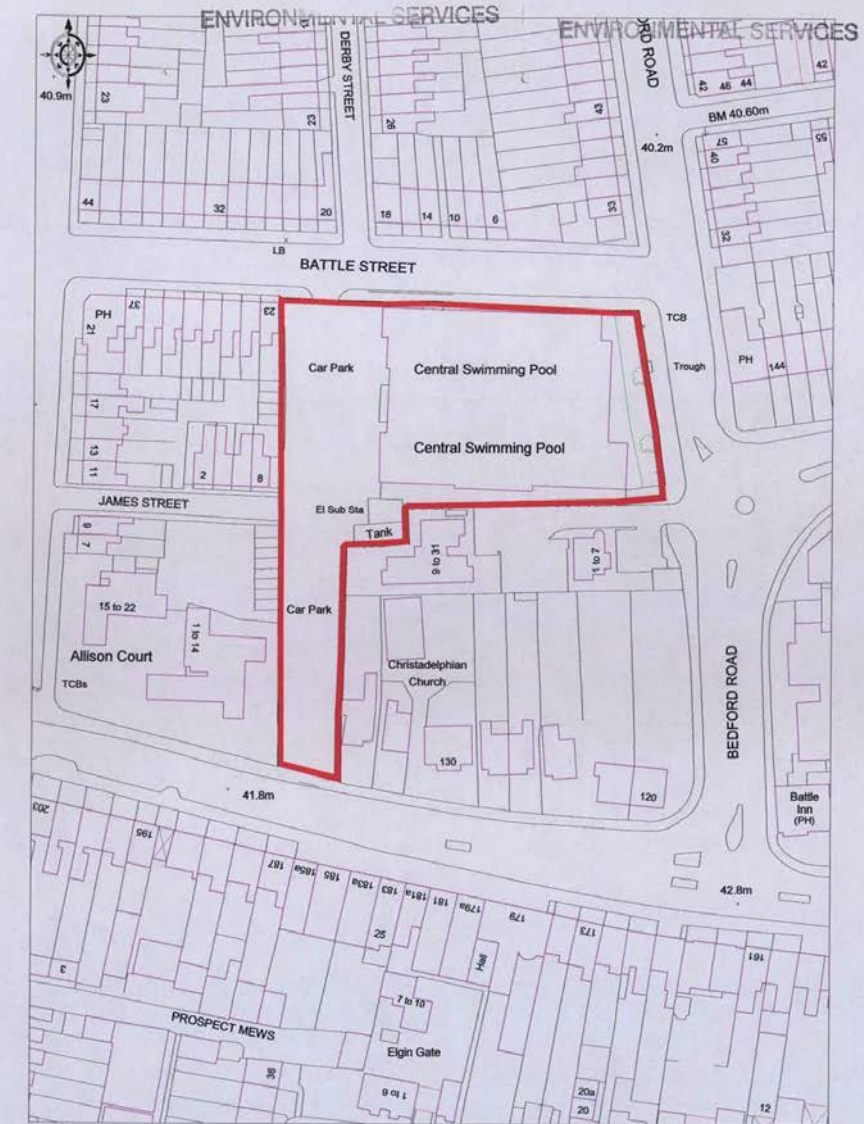
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HDL01 Site Location Plan



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