



Town Planning Bureau

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PLANNING STATEMENT

Site: 1-15 Queen Victoria Street / 145-148 Friar Street, Reading RG1 1SY

Application by: Thackery Estates

Lead Consultant: Mr Paul S Bottomley

Date: 11th August 2022

Our Ref: URB-482b-ST3

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 This planning statement is prepared by Mr Paul S Bottomley BA (Hons), MA, MRTPI of Town Planning Bureau and comprises supporting information in respect of a planning application and listed building consent for the development as described at para 1.2 below.

- Applicant: Thackery Estates Reading Investments Ltd (“the Applicant”).
- Site: 1-15 Queen Victoria Street / 145-148 Friar Street, Reading RG1 1SY (“the site”).
- LPA: Reading Borough Council (“the Council”).

Proposal

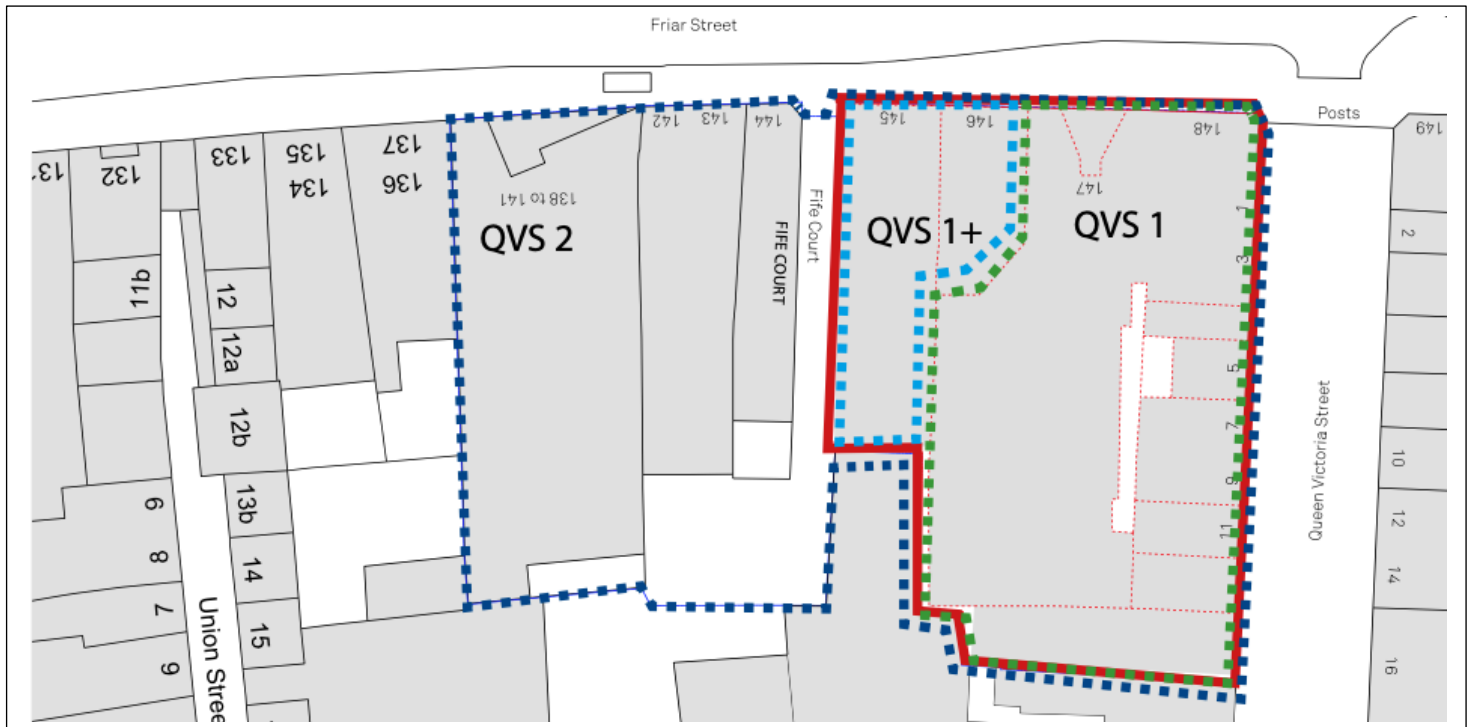
1.2 Planning permission and listed building consent is sought for the following development:

“Part demolition of rear of site and No.145, demolition of No.146; repair and refurbishment of listed buildings; change of use of upper floors from office (Use Class E(g)) to apart hotel (Use Class C1); erection of a four-storey rear extension with mansard; erection of a part-two, part-three storey rear addition (Use Class E(a) or (b)); alterations to ground floor principle façade; creation of public square; and associated works.”

1.3 This proposal is a resubmission albeit for an expanded site, which extends the original vision and enhances the QVS1 approved scheme (subject to signing S106) refs: 210223 & 210224 (“approved Scheme”). This proposal is an update to the said scheme that now incorporates 145 and 146 Friar Street, thereby enhancing the retail and commercial offering. This scheme also increases connectivity and permeability to the market square from surrounding areas, provides an anchor use, and increases the apart-hotel guestrooms at upper level to provide 104 bedrooms across the QVS1 site to further support the viability and vitality of the scheme, and is now dovetailed with the adjacent QVS2 scheme proposals to provide a masterplan approach to the key town centre site.



- 1.4 This plan below shows the application site (Red Edged), Approved Scheme for QVS1 (Green Dash), expanded QVS1 site (Turquoise Dash) and the adjacent QVS2 site (Blue Dash) - QVS2 is submitted as a separate planning application, but the two are linked and as agreed with officers, to be submitted and considered together. The applications are submitted separately due to the listed nature of the buildings within the QVS1 site.



- 1.5 This Planning Statement should be read in conjunction with the following supporting documents submitted with this application. This material will show that the proposals accord with national and local planning policy and guidance, represent sustainable development and there are no material considerations that indicate that planning permission and listed building consent should be granted for this conservation led scheme.

Report	Prepared by:
Location Plan	FCH Architects
Drawings	FCH Architects
DAS	FCH Architects
- Utilises	FCH Architects
- Landscape principles	FCH Architects
- Materials Details	FCH Architects
- Waste Collection	FCH Architects
- External Lighting	FCH Architects
- Cycle parking	FCH Architects
- Fire Statement	FCH Architects
Heritage & Townscape Visual Impact Assessment	Revival & Taylor
Archaeological Assessment	Oxford Archology
Air quality assessment	GEM
Energy / Sustainability Statement	TBA
M&E (Ventilation / Extraction Details)	TBA
Drainage	Uddin
Ecology	Skilled Ecology
Flood Risk & SUDS	JME
Fire Statement	Horner / FCH

Noise & Vibration Impact Assessment	KPA
Transport Assessment	MODE
Servicing Details (including Waste)	MODE
Travel Plan	MODE
CMP	MODE
Structure	Axiom
Planning Statement	TPBureau
Heads of Terms	TPBureau
CIL	TPBureau
Management Report	Thackeray
Statement of Community Involvement	TPBureau

- 1.6 The application is accompanied by a Heritage Statement prepared by Revive and Taylor, which is an addendum to the Heritage Statement prepared by Heritage Collective in respect of planning and listed building consent applications ref: 210223/210224 referred to as “HS”. This provides a comprehensive historic assessment of the heritage assets, determination of their significance and value, and assesses the potential impact of the proposals on the assets.

The Applicant

- 1.7 This application is submitted on behalf of The Thackeray Estate, a property development and investment company with nearly 60 years’ experience and a nationwide portfolio. The Thackeray Estate has several key land holdings within Reading representing significant investment in the future growth of the Borough. These include the application site, 138-144 Friar Street (QVS2). In addition, 149-150 Friar Street, 2-4 Queen Victoria Street and 1 Station Road are also in the ownership of the Applicant. This combination of properties represents a key part of the town centre, as well as their wider Reading land holding - we refer readers to the DAS for further list of the Applicant’s holdings in Reading. The Applicant is committed to a £60m investment into Reading Town Centre and is committed to the delivery of this destination scheme.
- 1.8 The Applicant has worked with the Council since November 2019 developing their shared vision for the redevelopment of the sites QVS1 and QVS2. The scheme has been developed through consulting, listening, formulating a scheme and gaining the support of officers.
- 1.9 The Applicant has a track record of delivering sensitive, iconic sustainable development across the United Kingdom, with specialist experience in the successful reuse and regeneration of listed buildings and town/ city centre sites. The Applicant has brought this relevant knowledge and wealth of experience to the development proposals presented herewith, which represents a unique opportunity to secure the future of a beloved building at the heart of the town centre and to deliver an enhanced retail, cultural and living experience to an underutilised site in central Reading with a focus on sustainability.

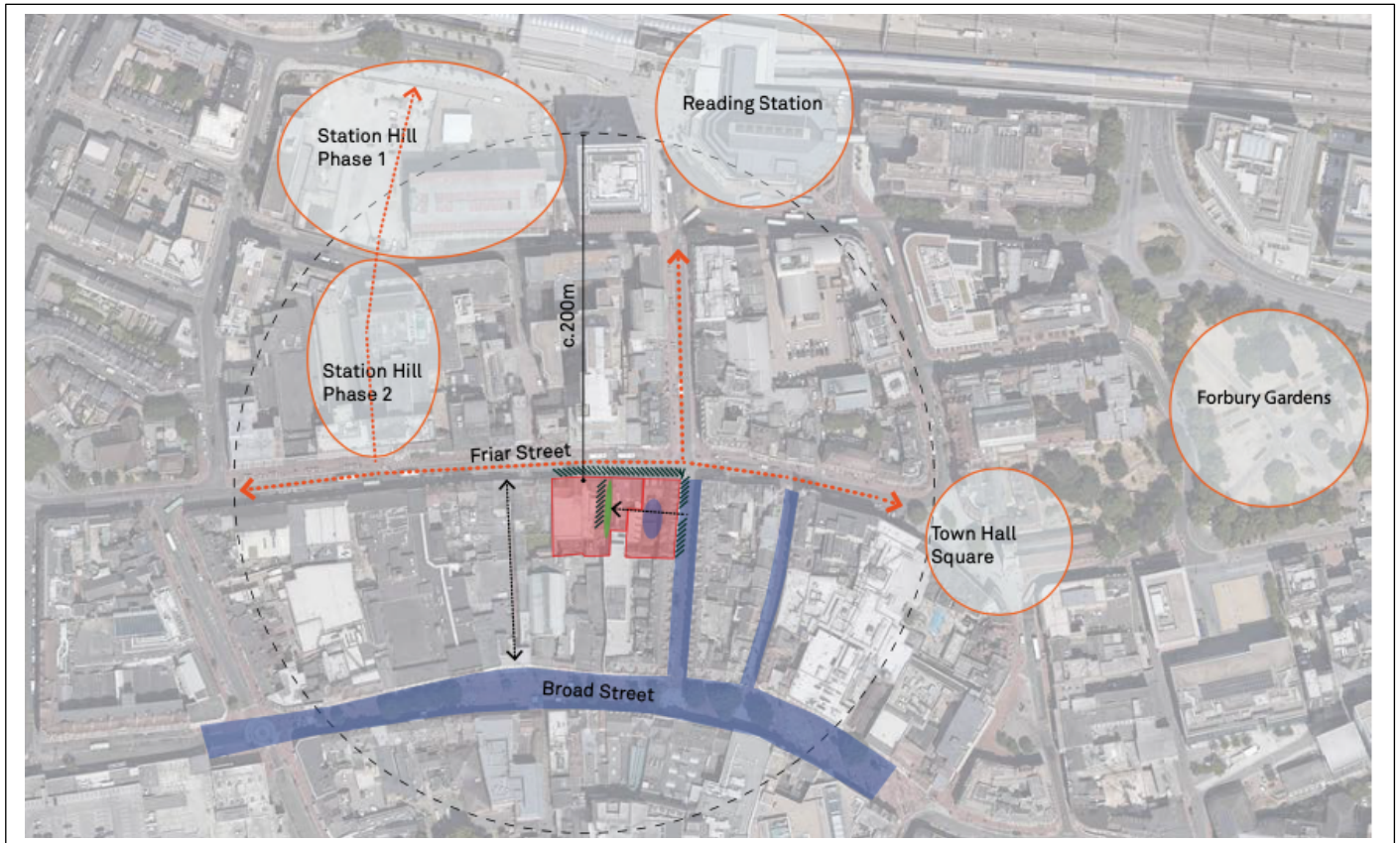
Background

- 1.10 This application is sought for the conservation, enhancement and regeneration of this important town centre site that lays at the gateway to the primary shopping area of Reading when accessing from the main line railway station.
- 1.11 The proposal is for a mixed-use scheme comprising a market square, retail and apart-hotel that represents a unique opportunity to enhance and utilise this highly accessible location within the town centre, bringing a largely vacant and dilapidated site back into viable use, including the restoration and secured longevity of the Listed Buildings.
- 1.12 Following the approval by the Council's Planning Committee (the decision is subject to the agreement of the S106) for application refs: 210223 & 210224 that approved:
"Part demolition of rear of site. Repair and refurbishment of listed building. Change of use of upper floors from office (Use Class E(g)) to apart hotel (Use Class C1). Erection of a three - storey rear extension with mansard. Erection of a part-single, part-two storey rear addition (Use Class E(a) or (b)). Alterations to ground floor principal façade Creation of public square, and associated works"
- 1.13 The Applicant has managed to secure 145 and 146 Friar Street to encompass them into the scheme. Further, the scheme has been presented to the market with significant interest in the apart-hotel and the retail offering. One key point, which this scheme will address is a need and demand for a larger apart-hotel offering as operators consider over 100 rooms is needed to be viable and further, this further ensures both viability of the scheme as a whole and will further underpin the vitality of the proposal.
- 1.14 The application scheme follows extensive research and review of successful precedent schemes across the country, consultation and engagement with key stakeholders who together have shaped the proposal the Applicant presents. The LPA engagement has included extensive pre-application discussions (QVS2 pre-app responses received on 7th April, 22nd April and 16th June 2022), Design Panel Review (response received 18th July 2022) and full review of the standalone QVS1 pre-app (received 12th July 2022) and a comprehensive review of the existing assets to present the scheme before you.
- 1.15 The Applicant has also engaged with third party key stakeholders, including Reading BID, Reading Civic, Reading CAAC, business, local residents and social media, as well as informed local Councillors. The feedback to date has been very positive and the constructive feedback has helped to inform and develop the scheme, which has evolved to take account of the engagement. The feedback is encouraging the speedy delivery of the scheme, to align with the linking of both proposals at QVS1 and QVS2 has key to this proposal.
- 1.16 In summary, the engagement found that the scheme presented is a positive benefit that on the feedback received, on the whole is supported by the local community and key stakeholders.

2.0 Site Location & Description

The Site

- 2.1 The site is a prominent plot located on the corner of Queen Victoria Street (“QVS”) and buildings along Friar Street, with significant frontage to both. QVS is the principle pedestrianised access point to the town centre from Reading Railway Station and Friar Street is traffic controlled with access to busses and taxis only.



- 2.2 The Site comprises a number of premises with retail uses at ground floor level with other secondary uses (although vacant) at first floor level and above. Both QVS and Friar Street are key primary retail streets within the town centre and are in a highly accessible location, approximately 250m from Reading Railway Station to the north.
- 2.3 Below is a summary of the initial scheme (QVS1), followed by its evolution to QVS1+ which is the revised scheme that will comprise the new QVS1 going forward, for which we are now applying for planning permission and listed building consent. This is followed by QVS2, which is a separate, but linked, planning application. QVS1 was approved in summer 2021 and as such is a material consideration as part of this application.
- 2.4 The site comprises the following distinct buildings:
- 1-15 QVS - Part of a larger terrace built in the early 1900s, the QVS properties comprise retail accommodation arranged over the ground and basement floors. The remaining 1st, 2nd and 3rd floors being office accommodation, albeit there are many vacant units. The properties are Grade II listed.

- 148 Friar Street - This unit comprises retail floorspace at ground (Café Nero) with vacant office floors above. The building is located on the corner of Friar Street and forms the corner of 1-15 QVS. This property is also Grade II listed.
- 147 Friar Street - Dating from the early 1880s, this unit comprises retail/ nail salon at ground floor with three vacant floors above, which are understood to be former offices. The building is also Grade II listed - the main interest of the building is the 2-storey shop front.
- 146 Friar Street is basement and 3-storeys in height, with an retail use at basement and ground floor level (Reading Food & Wine) and on the upper floors Simple Recruitment Services. This building is not listed.
- 145 Friar Street is basement and 4-storeys in height, with WHSmith occupying the ground floor and office uses above. This building is not listed.
- To the rear of the properties are a mix of more modern extensions and additions (late 19th and 20th centuries) that are incoherent with each other and represent crowded built form - all the buildings are vacant, deteriorating and suffer from anti-social behaviour and accessing by rough sleepers.

2.5 Internal alterations to the uppers also reflect the more recent uses of the upper floors and have created a collection of inconsistent space that is inefficient and not suitable for modern office accommodation. The majority of the uppers are vacant.

2.6 The QVS and 148 Friar Street are in a poor state of repair, with the listed elements particularly in decay and in urgent need of restoration. Interim measures have been taken to make the buildings safe with scaffolding erected along QVS and retention netting installed in certain areas of the historic façade.



2.7 As advised, the Applicant also holds other sites in the town centre including 149 Friar Street and Nos. 2 to 4 QVS, which is directly opposite and forms the corner building of QVS and 1 Station Road - therefore the Applicant owns all three corners when entering QVS.

- 2.8 The Site is highly accessible by public transport, walking and cycling with Reading Railway Station (250m) to the north, with regular services into London and acting as an interchange hub for services to the rest of the country. The Site is within the heart of the town centre with immediate access to associated shops, facilities, and services, including a key bus route on Friar Street. Friar Street and QVS are also designated cycle routes and this part of the town centre offers pedestrianised streets and bus/taxi/cycle only restricted roads.
- 2.9 A full detailed description of the Site and existing buildings is included within the DAS submitted with this application and the full historic description of the Site is contained within the supporting Heritage Statement.
- 2.10 A photographic assessment of the existing site is contained within the Schedule of Works (“SOW”) and general condition of the site within the accompanying Method Statements of repair.

Surrounding Area

- 2.11 The remainder of the adjoining shopping parade along QVS comprises a wider listed building of 1-31 and 2-32 QVS. These buildings are all of a uniform design as per the application Site with tiled and terracotta principal facades and continuous ground floor retail frontages. QVS is a key pedestrianised shopping street within Reading town centre, connecting with the pedestrianised Broad Street of the south and providing a key north-south link to the Railway Station.



- 2.12 Central Reading has a wide range of town centre uses and services, including shopping high-streets, retail arcades, hotels, offices and residential uses. The town centre is undergoing significant regeneration and redevelopment with key projects underway or proposed.
- 2.13 The existing buildings at the Site reflect the predominant building heights within the town centre. However, there are some larger plots and building heights punctuating the skyline, such as the Novotel Hotel on the north side of Friar Street, Thames Tower by the railway station and the Heelas department store.
- 2.14 To the north of the Site is the Station/River Major Opportunity Area (“MOA”), as designated within the Reading Local Plan 2019. This area is designated for regeneration and redevelopment that will bring about significant change and enhancement to central Reading over the plan period. Immediately north of Friar Street is the Friar Street and Station Road sub-area of the MOA, which will assist in facilitating greater cycle and pedestrian permeability through central Reading with connectivity to the railway station.

3.0 Relevant Planning History

- 3.1 This section summarises relevant planning applications for the Site and other relevant developments in the surrounding area. A summary is provided of proposals previously presented for pre-application advice and the responses received from the Council.

QVS1 Planning Application Material Consideration

- 3.2 The Application for 1-15 Queen Victoria Street and 147-146 Friar Street Reading, (Phase 1 (QVS1)) was approved at Planning Committee in June 2021, for, “Part demolition of rear of site; repair and refurbishment of listed buildings; change of use of upper floors from office (Use Class E(g)) to apart hotel (Use Class C1); erection of a three-storey rear extension with mansard; erection of a part-single, part-two storey rear addition (Use Class E(a) or (b)); alterations to ground floor principle façade; creation of public square; and associated works.” The approval of this scheme is a material consideration when determining the planning applications for this QVS1 scheme and the linked application for the QVS2 scheme.

Planning Applications

- 3.3 **1-15 QVS:** The below table summarises planning applications for the part of the Site with addresses along QVS. This does not include minor works such as shop front alterations or signage, and also omits duplicate Listed Building applications.

App Ref	Description	Decision/Date
1-15 QVS and 148 Friar Street		
181737	Repair and maintenance, and where necessary replacement of the roof, windows and brickwork including repair and maintenance of 12 roof gables	Recommendation made (unknown)
5 QVS, RG1 1SY		
930720	Change of use from financial and professional services (A2) to offices(B1).	Approved 16/09/1993
901065	Change of use of first and second floor to A2 (employment agency)	Approved 23/08/1990
891119	Change of use of ground floor from retail shop (A1) to employment agency (A2).	Refused 02/11/1989
7 QVS		
020616	(Amended description) Change of use from class A3 (tea shop, bakery) to class A2 (job shop.)	Approved 17/09/2002
940142	Change of use from estate agents to bakery/tea rooms.	Approved 17/11/1994
11 QVS, RG1 1SY		
960303	Conversion to form a single unit at ground floor level by removal of part of internal wall.	Approved 14/11/1996
960869	Change of use of ground floor and basement to A2 use forming extension to existing premises at 13 Queen Victoria Street.	Approved 28/08/1996
13-15 QVS		
890382	Change of use from Class A1 (retail-hairdressers) to Class A2 (employment bureau).	Approved 14/06/1989

- 3.4 **147-148 Friar Street:** There are numerous applications related to external shopfront alterations and signage that have not been included within the below table.

App Ref	Description	Decision/Date
147 Friar Street, RG1 1EX		
880153	Conversion of first floor into restaurant with 120 seats, formation of staircase and disabled WC to ground floor.	Unknown 23/11/1988
148 Friar Street,		
130576	Change of use of the public highway to a street café area.	Approved 19/09/2013

- 3.5 **146 Friar Street:** There are numerous applications related to No.146 but the change of uses to residential nor extensions have been implemented.

App Ref	Description	Decision/Date
146 Friar Street, RG1 1EX		
140031	Change of use from opticians to Class A1 (shops) on the ground floor to include new shop front	Approved 11/03/2014
150726	Proposed change of use of first and second floors from Consulting Rooms to Offices (B1)	Approved 02/07/2015
170654	Change of use of first and second floor from B1a Office to C3 residential to provide two self contained flats, together with additional first floor window to rear elevation	Approved 19/07/2017
17077	Change of use of first and second floor from B1(a) Office to C3 residential together with a third floor extension to the building and alterations to fenestration to provide 3 x self contained one bedroom flats	Approved 20/12/2018
172172	Change of use of first and second floor from B1a Office to a one-bedroom flat (C3).	Approved 16/02/2018

- 3.6 **145 Friar Street:** There are numerous applications related to No.146 but the change of uses to residential nor extensions have been implemented.

App Ref	Description	Decision/Date
145 Friar Street, RG1 1EX		
091660	Change of use of 1st, 2nd and 3rd floors from B1 Office to D1 Educational Training Institute.	Approved 20/09/2009
171720	from an Educational Training Institute (Class D1) to office use (Class B1a).	Approved 08/01/2018

Surrounding Area

There are numerous planning applications of note in the surrounding area, which share similar attributes. Examples are given below.

- 3.7 **17-27 QVS:** Planning and listed building consent was granted in January 2019 (app refs: 181296 and 181297) for, “change of use of first, second and third floor from office use (B1a) to serviced apartment use (use class C1) comprising 15 x 1 bed units and 4 x 2 bed units”. These proposals and the site are very similar to that of this Application, being in close proximity, sharing the same planning policy designations and issues and being of the same configuration of uses. This consent has also been referenced in pre-application advice discussions with the Council (see below) as a good example to follow for the Site and an example of some technical requirements and mitigation that may be relevant for the application proposals.
- 3.8 **2-4 QVS:** Planning and listed building consent was granted in 2017 (app refs: 170210 and 170211) for, “conversion of vacant office accommodation at first, second and third floor levels to create 7 x 2 bed residential units with part of ground floor and basement for ancillary storage

space”. These proposals demonstrate the acceptability of loss of office floorspace in this part of Reading town centre and the introduction of accommodation.

Pre-Application Advice

3.9 In developing the proposals herewith, pre-application advice to the redevelopment of 146 and 145 Friar Street was obtained in conjunction with QVS2 scheme. A standalone review was sought and response was issued 12th July 2022 (ref: 220816/PREAPP) on this proposal. The scheme has been further refined in response to the advice received.

3.10 The pre-application advice request was accompanied by a detailed description of the scheme and analysis of relevant planning policy, a visual design document, floor plans and elevations and a Statement. Overall, the proposals were positively received and supported as an appropriate and positive refurbishment and redevelopment solution for the site. The pre-

“The principle of the proposed uses are likely to be able to be justified, providing clarification as to whether amalgamation of units along Queen Victoria Street are actually proposed. The provision of a courtyard space is welcomed in principle, although some significant clarifications are required in relation to the space in comparison with that separately proposed under applications 210223/210224 and the quality and overall public benefit of the space. Detailed commentary should be included in your future submission to seek to justify the appropriateness of the courtyard space.

In respect of design and heritage matters, the proposed works are largely satisfactory, with the level of intervention to the listed building largely similar to 210223/210224 and the principle of redeveloping No’s 145 (barring the supported front façade retention) and 146 considered appropriate. The scale and massing of the proposed replacement buildings, together with the general design approach, is also considered appropriate.

Given the expanded nature of these proposals in comparison with 210223/210224, there are some further elements to consider and information to submit in support of your future applications. None of the matters commented on in this submission amount to fundamental concerns, with it instead being considered that the proposals should hopefully be able to be shaped into a proposal which will be able to be supported by officers at application stage.”

3.11 This application therefore addresses the points raised in the pre-app and subsequent consultation, a detailed heritage assessment and management plan accompany. Therefore, this application is submitted for determination, which is based on extensive negotiations, and presents a scheme that successfully blends the conservation aspiration of the Council with a high quality design.

Design Review Panel

3.12 The Design Review Panel took place in June 2022, and the presentation by FCH set out the Vision for the development, ‘to create a destination location that restores the listed buildings of QVS and Friar Street, that creates a market square retail experience, provides overnight accommodation in a variety of concepts and that will create vibrancy, job creation and support the local and regional economy’.

3.13 Furthermore, the presentation provided an overview on the site and public realm, historical context, emerging proposals and the story so far, design evolution and planning rationale, and

the comprehensive redevelopment plans were summarised with a list of the proposals, as follows;

- Creation of Exciting New Reading Quarter
- Mixed-Use Development comprising retail, food & beverage and visitor accommodation
- Repair & restoration of Listed Buildings and secure their future
- High quality to design that respects heritage assets and strikes the right balance between conservation heritage and imagination
- High quality hotel development that respects streetscene through intensive townscape assessments
- Reactivation of Queen Victoria Street with heritage shopfronts that returns their retail frontage to their former historic appearance
- Active frontage to Friar Street & Fife Court
- Market Square - visitor attraction, outdoor markets, events
- 3308sqm of retail
- c.160 bedroom international hotel brand
- c.100 suite apart-hotel for business and leisure visitors
- Reinvigorating Fife Court (historic laneway)
- Highly sustainable and highly accessible development offering inclusive design & access
- Significant investment into Town Centre and economic benefits - job creation, independent retail unit et al.
- Approach adopted of working with Reading BC on scheme evolution

3.14 The DRP response stated:

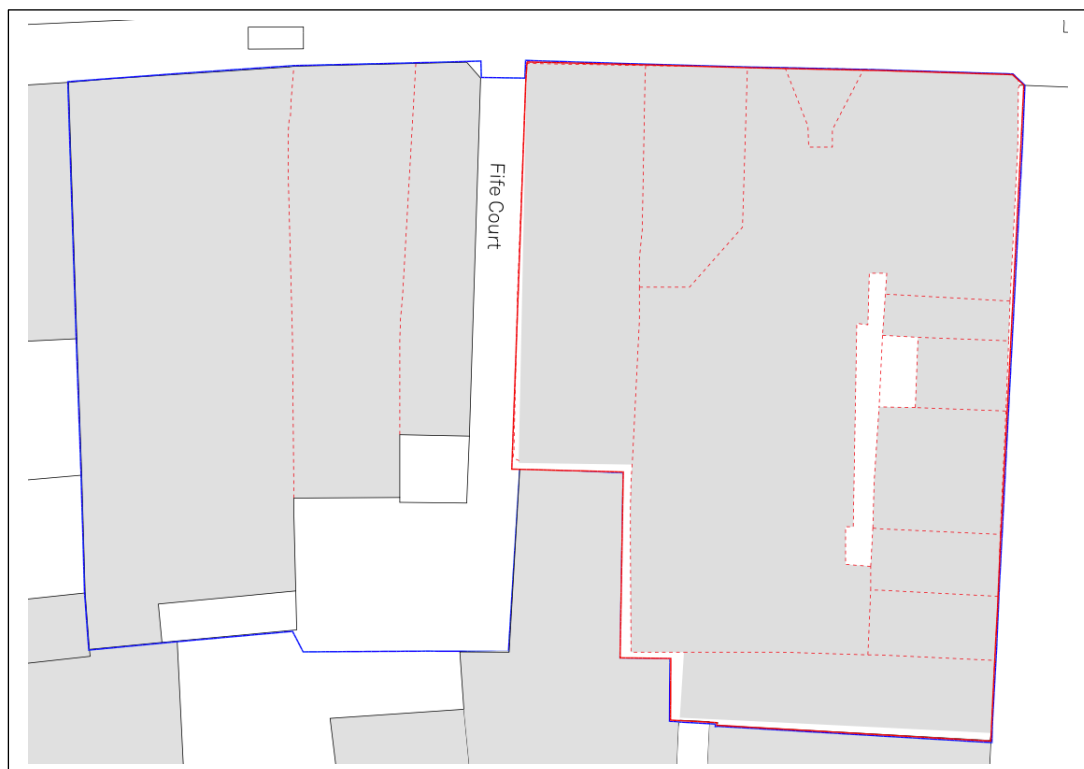
Design Approach
The proposals have the potential to provide a significant townscape benefit to this key intersection at the heart of Reading. The overall vertical hierarchy applied to the scheme is sound, with a public / civic base of 2 storeys and then functional accommodation above. The challenge that remains to be addressed is how can The Bugle be retained as more than just a shell? It's historic volume, entrance and qualities should be respected and referenced in the proposals.
Detailing
The applicant has drawn strong reference to Reading's rich brick heritage, the Panel applaud the integration of detail and the limited diversity of palette applied to the proposals. The Panel request detailed & dimensioned bay elevations, sections and plans are provided to ensure sufficient allowance is available to deliver the aesthetic shown. At present we fear the external walls to Friar Street do not allow enough depth for the articulation / reveal steps shown.
Any further comments
Whilst outside the scope of the review, the proposals for 145 – 146 Friar Street show great promise. The renewal of 141 – 148 Friar Street could act as a valuable catalyst to support wider improvements within this part of the Town Centre. We request this scheme is returned to Panel 1 as it progresses to application stage.

4.0 The Proposals

- 4.1 As advised, this application seeks planning permission and listed building consent for the following description of development:

“Part demolition of rear of site and No.145, demolition of No.146; repair and refurbishment of listed buildings; change of use of upper floors from office (Use Class E(g)) to apart hotel (Use Class C1); erection of a four-storey rear extension with mansard; erection of a part-two, part-three storey rear addition (Use Class E(a) or (b)); alterations to ground floor principle façade; creation of public square; and associated works.”

- 4.2 This application is for QVS1 and although separate, is linked to the application QVS2. Phase 1 will deliver the market square, retail and apart-hotel. This comprehensive redevelopment will provide many jobs, investment, attract visitors and help to act as a catalyst for the continued regeneration of Reading Town Centre. See site plan below to clearly identify the different land parcels of the QVS sites.



- 4.3 The proposals include the redevelopment of 1-15 Queen Victoria Street & 145-148 Friar Street, the repair and refurbishment of heritage buildings, Apart-hotel rooms, high quality heritage retail and a new public market square - this is an amendment to the approved scheme.
- 4.4 The incorporation 145 and 146 Friar Street into the proposals ensures the said sites will be integrated into the market square to improve connectivity and enhance the commercial offering - it is expected there will be direct access via these units to the market square. The upper floors of Nos.145 and 146 have been incorporated into the overall comprehensive redevelopment designs, increasing the number of bedrooms in the apart-hotel. The improved

proposals allow for additional commercial floorspace, more apart-hotel bedspaces and an improved market square to further ensure the schemes viability and enhance viability.

4.5 Each key element of the proposals is summarised below in turn.

Demolition

4.6 Through Site assessments, heritage assessments, archaeological assessments and pre-application advice discussions with the Council, the poor quality and lower value elements of the Site to the rear and No.146 have been identified as suitable for demolition. These (rear buildings) represent more ad hoc additions that are incoherent with one another and the main original buildings, which have been extensively altered. They lack of merit contribute little to the heritage asset value of the listing, and in some cases detract from it. This will make way for a sympathetic, modern, and inventive redevelopment to the rear of the Site and enable the creation of a public square, improved permeability and enhanced retail offering.

4.7 With regard to No.146 - this is identified as a building of little merit and its replacement considered acceptable. No.145 is evolved considerably and original front façade is identified as a feature to retain, which is also welcomed by the Council. Since the pre-app, the façade, and a sizeable part of the side and upper floors of No.145 will be retained, which is shown on the demolition drawings.

4.8 The existing modern shopfronts to QVS and Friar Street will also be removed to enable the more sympathetic façade alterations and shopfront reinstatement.

4.9 Those elements of the Site proposed for removal are summarised as:

- Collection of buildings between the rear Site boundary to the rear of the original buildings along QVS and Friar Street, including connecting walkways and access stairs;
- Removal of the later addition stair and lift tower connected to the rear of No.147;
- Removal of No.146;
- Redevelopment of No.145
- Removal of the modern shopfronts and signage to the ground floors of the QVS and Friar Street frontages; and
- Creation of two ground floor passages: one from QVS and one from Friar Street, to provide pedestrian access to the proposed public square.



- 4.10 No other demolition or removal is proposed, with the exception of elements of the historic façade that are in a poor state of repair, in order to make good and repair.

Change of Use

- 4.11 The upper floors of the existing buildings are in lawful use as offices (Use Class E(g)) and are currently vacant. This application proposes the change of use of the first, second and third floors of the existing buildings and extension to create a 104-unit apart hotel (Use Class C1). The units will be a mix of unit sizes, which will be for short-term let. The below table shows the mix of unit sizes proposed.

Floor / Sizes	20-23sqm	24-26sqm	26sqm+	
First	21	6	6	
Second	23	3	5	
Third	23	4	3	
Fourth	9	1	0	TOTAL
TOTAL	76	14	14	104

Internal Alterations

- 4.12 The application is accompanied by demolition plans and drawings showing the proposed demolition and alteration of the internal layout and features. The proposed plans show the new intended layout for each floor. Of the building elements to be retained, the internal alterations include:

- Removal of internal partitions and doors;
- Removal of fixed furniture and fittings, such as built-in cabinets, counters and sanitaryware;
- Removal of parts of the rear façade to accommodate the proposed extension;
- Removal of some staircases (retention of those with heritage value);
- Removal of some windows and doorways on the external rear façade;
- New partitions and doorways to create apartments; and
- Creation of new internal staircases.

- 4.13 The Heritage Statement submitted with this application details the heritage value of internal features and the justification for retention or removal of internal elements.

Repairs and Refurbishment

- 4.14 The existing buildings are in a poor state of repair and there are elements and architectural detailing that are in danger of being lost without intervention. The proposals include the

identification and restoration of the key architectural features of the existing buildings, principally associated with the front elevations of the QVS and Friar Street façades.

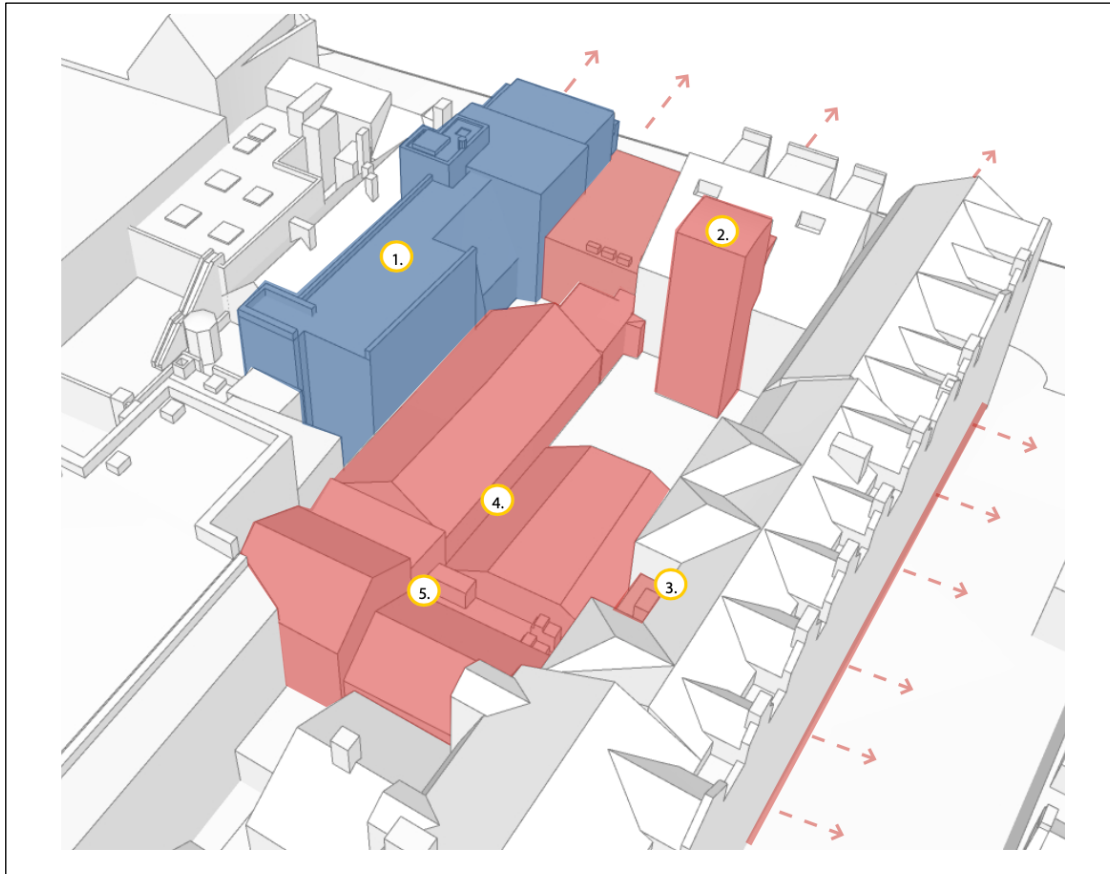
- 4.15 The Heritage Statement identifies those features of merit and their condition and Method Statements have been submitted for various proposed repairs. These include repairs to the roof, gable ends, deteriorating masonry, brickwork and terracotta detailing to restore it to its former glory, with replacement where necessary.



Rear Extensions

- 4.16 The proposals include a new three-storey extension with mansard to the rear of nos. 1-15 QVS to create additional retail floorspace at ground floor and to accommodate part of the proposed apart-hotel on upper floors. The extension will be of red brick construction to match materials used in the existing buildings and will include a mansard roof with dormer windows on the third floor. Windows on the first and second floors will be timber framed sash windows with stone surrounds and lintels.
- 4.17 The ground floor of the rear extension will host new retail shopfronts with double-height, metal framed glazing framed by stone-effect round columns. These will form the rear entrances to the ground floor retail units fronting QVS.
- 4.18 An element of the rear extension will wrap around the southern end of the proposed public square and be stepped down to two-storeys in height with a flat, green roof. This will create additional ground floor retail space and first floor accommodation as part of the apart-hotel.

- 4.19 No.146 will be demolished, rebuilt, and integrated between Nos.147 and 145. The proposals also include a part-two, part-three, part-four and four with mansard storey rear additions that will frame the public square - as part of the redevelopment of the site. This will accommodate additional retail units and provide a food and beverage offering, apart-hotel foyer and upper floors of the apart-hotel. The roof to the rear addition will be pitched with grey slate finish to reflect that of the rear of the existing buildings and is a direct response to pre-application advice received. The red brick finish and shopfronts will match that of the larger rear extension to provide continuity around the square.



Façade Alterations

- 4.20 The principal alterations to the front facades of the existing buildings will be at ground floor with the creation of new, uniform shopfronts. These will reinstate the original shopfront layouts and rhythm to the ground floor façade of QVS, utilising the existing shop frontage spacing, framed by pilasters, which will be retained. The shopfronts will have metal framed glazing and glass single entrance doors, uniform signage and street numbering and a black tiled plinth. This will continue round the corner to include 148 Friar Street, whilst retaining the larger prominent unit here. A new opening will be created between nos. 3 and 5 QVS to create a pedestrian access passage to the proposed public square behind.



- 4.21 The ground floor frontage of 147 Friar Street will be altered to create a flush shopfront and improve the retail, which is more representative of historic layout. The original features of the cast iron columns, colouring and shop front dimensions will be retained. Solid glazing on the first floor of 148 Friar St would not be appropriate to the proposed apart-hotel use and will be replaced by timber windows and brick and terracotta surrounds, matching the materials, and detailing of the building.

145 & 146 Friar Street Facade

- 4.22 No.146 (considered of no architectural merit) will be demolished, and No 145 (considered of some architectural merit) will be redeveloped retaining the majority of the existing built form and adding two floors. The design of the two buildings has evolved through the pre-app engagement and the scheme presented is a cumulation of these discussions.



- 4.23 The front (rear) of No 145 would be retained with a new shopfront to the ground floor. The current modern mansard roof would be replaced with a traditional upper floor, designed with proportions akin to early 20th Century buildings. This would appear congruous with the rest of the building's retained facade. Above this a new mansard roof extension would be introduced

in a material similar to that of No 146. This will have a harmonious effect in terms of the roofline, which will continue to appear animated with slight height differences.

Public Square

- 4.24 The demolition of structures to the rear of the Site will enable the creation of a new public square and public realm. This will provide an open-air public space with additional covered space under the first-floor element of the new rear extension.
- 4.25 The square will be a multi-functional public space that will operate as outdoor seating space associated with the retail units and for general public rest and relaxation. The space will be adaptable for multiple public events and uses, such as hosting outdoor markets, screening of sports events, music, entertainment, and other cultural events.
- 4.26 Responding to the intended multi-functional use, landscaping and street furniture within the square will comprise timber-framed planters with fork-lift lifting points and informal picnic-style or bistro seating and tables to enable easy manoeuvrability. The square paving will be stone sets that are durable and hard wearing and will also complement the brick construction of the main building and reflect the stone detailing in the facades.
- 4.27 It is noted that the first floor terrace, as approved in the former scheme, would be omitted, there were two reasons. Firstly, there was concerns as this would be via a stepped access which would have resulted in this being at first floor and feedback on such a retail unit was negative. Secondly, the encompassing of No.145 & 146 allowed a more comprehensive development and for the aparthotel to be more sustainable with increased room numbers that was a requirement of operators. Thirdly, the amended scheme has significant benefit by removing a new stair from listed building and finally, from an operational perspective, the activation from early morning to the evening from apart-hotel foot traffic and complementary use to underpin.
- 4.28 Pedestrian access to the square will be gained from new passages to be created from both QVS, from Friar Street via Fife Court and secondary accesses via the retail units. This will also create permeability through the Site where this does not currently exist and will enhance the connectivity of Friar Street and QVS. The QVS access will be gated and have restricted access during night-time hours to provide enhanced security to the public square, retail units when closed and the access to the apart-hotel.
- 4.29 This application is accompanied by a Management Plan for the proposed public square, setting out the proposed hours of public access, framework for hosting public events and other management and limitations to ensure safeguarded amenity of existing and future occupants.

QVS1, QVS1+ and QVS2

QVS 1

- Proposals for redevelopment of 1-15 Queen Victoria Street & 147-148 Friar Street.
- Repair and refurbishment of heritage buildings.
- Apart hotel rooms

- High quality retail
- New public market square
- Application approved at Committee June 2021

QVS1+

- Applicant secured ownership of 145 and 146 Friar Street
- Ground floor of 145 & 146 Friar street will be integrated into the market square to improve connectivity and enhance the commercial offering.
- Upper floors of 145 & 146 incorporated into the overall comprehensive redevelopment designs means the number of bedrooms in the apart-hotel can increase.
- QVS1+ will provide additional commercial floorspace, more apart-hotel bedspaces and improved market square further enhancing scheme viability.
- Underpinning food and beverage offer.

QVS2

- QVS2 will integrate with QVS1 and QVS1+ to revitalise this iconic town centre location, comprehensively redeveloping the site(s) to provide a vibrant and attractive mixed use hotel quarter.
- QVS2 will provide a large apart-hotel and food and beverage offer, providing a destination location on Friar Street, increasing footfall and connectivity between the station and shopping areas, creating new jobs and leisure and business accommodation in the heart of the town centre to help sustain the long term success of Reading.
- QVS2 will act as an anchor for the public square, as further detailed below.



5.0 Relevant Planning Policy and Legislation

Changes to the Use Classes Order

- 5.1 An amendment to the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 came into force on 1st September 2020. The effect of the amendment was to amalgamate existing Use Classes A1/2/3, B1, D1(a-b) and 'indoor sport' from D2(e), to a new Class E. The existing use of the Site was defined as a mix of shops (A1), cafes (A3) and offices (B1a) up until 31st August 2020. From the 1st September 2020, the existing use now falls within Use Class E(a) (retail sale of goods), E(b) (sale of food and drink) and E(g) (office use suitable within a residential area).

Planning Policy Framework

- 5.2 In preparing the application proposals, consideration has been given to the relevant development plan for the Site and proposed development, which comprises the key documents and sources set out below.

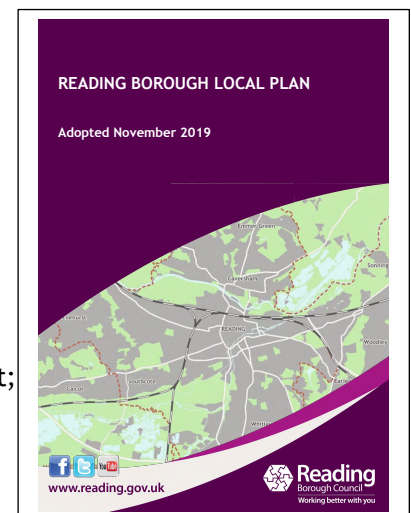
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2021)

- 5.3 The NPPF establishes overarching national policies for plan making and decision taking. At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development where permission should be granted for development that accords with an up-to-date development plan, or where material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 5.4 Whilst the NPPF as a whole has been considered, of particular note is chapter 16: conserving and enhancing the historic environment. This sets out the rigorous policy tests that should be adhered to in the assessment of the significance of a statutorily protected heritage asset and the impacts of proposed development.

Reading Borough Local Plan (RBLP) (2019)

- 5.5 The RBLP provides local policy and guidance, which accords with that set out at national level in the NPPF, providing a greater level of detail. The key policies of relevance to this application are listed below:

- Sustainability, Design and Amenity:
 - 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;
- Natural and Historic Environment:
 - EN1: Protection and enhancement of the historic environment;
 - EN2: Areas of archaeological significance;
 - EN4: Locally Important Heritage Assets
 - EN6: New development in a historic context;
 - EN9: Provision of open space;
 - EN15: Air quality;
 - EN17: Noise generating equipment;



- EN18: Flooding and drainage;
- EM3: Loss of employment land;
- Transport:
 - 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;
- Retail and Leisure:
 - RL1: Network and hierarchy of centres;
 - RL2: Scale and location of retail, leisure and culture development;
- Central Reading:
 - CR1: Definition of Central Reading;
 - CR2: Design in Central Reading;
 - CR4: Leisure, culture and tourism in Central Reading;
 - CR6: Living in Central Reading;
 - CR7: Primary frontages in Central Reading; and
 - CR8: Small shop units in Central Reading.

Planning Guidance

- 5.6 Although not forming part of the development plan, the following Reading Borough Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) have been given consideration in the development of the proposals:
- Design Guide to Shopfronts SPD (January 2022)
 - Revised Parking Standards and Design (2011);
 - Sustainable Design and Construction (2019); and
 - Planning Obligations Under Section 106 (2015).

Other Documents

- 5.7 Some additional supporting evidence and monitoring documents have also been referenced in the preparation and assessment of the application proposals:
- Annual Monitoring Report 2019-20 (2020); and
 - Open Space Strategy (2007).

Planning Policy Designations

- 5.8 The site is subject to the following planning policy designations from the RBC Proposals Map 2019:
- Area of Archaeological Potential;
 - Air Quality Management Area;
 - Adjacent Classified Highway Network (Friar Street);
 - Adjacent identified Cycle Route (QVS and Friar Street);
 - Primary Shopping Area;
 - Office Core;
 - Central Core; and
 - Designated Primary Frontage in Central Reading (proposed).
- 5.9 The Site is located within Flood Zone 1, as identified on the Government Flood Map for Planning. In addition, the site has the following statutory heritage designations:
- 1-15 QVS and 148 Friar Street - Grade II Listed; and
 - 147 Friar Street - Grade II Listed.

6.0 Planning Considerations

6.1 This section of the Planning Statement summarises the relevant planning policy and guidance and assesses the proposals for compliance and other material considerations. The following key issues are considered to be the main points for consideration of this application, which are addressed in turn below:

1. Principle of development and proposed uses
2. Demolition of 146 Friar Street
3. Design Considerations.
4. Heritage Impacts.
5. Impact on Amenity.
6. Open Space Provision.
7. Air and Noise Impacts.
8. Archaeology.
9. Transport and Parking.
10. Flood Risk.
11. Sustainability.
12. Servicing and Waste.

1. Principle of Development and Proposed Uses

General Development Principles

Policy

- 6.2 Paragraph 11 of the NPPF establishes the presumption in favour of sustainable development, whereby proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan should be approved without delay. The up-to-date development plan in this case is the RBLP, which has been prepared with consideration to the NPPF and was adopted after the current NPPF.
- 6.3 **Policy CC1** Reiterates the presumption within the NPPF and will approve developments that are in accordance with policy. Proposals contrary to the development plan will be refused unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 6.4 The following key principles for the central Reading area are set out within the RBLP:
- The centre will contain a broad range of different but complementary uses within an area easily accessed by foot.
 - The centre will appeal to all sectors of Reading's population as a place to live in, work in, study in and visit.
 - New development will exhibit an excellent, safe and sustainable quality of design that contributes to the attraction of the centre.
 - Areas of designated open space within the centre will be protected and new opportunities will be sought.

- Areas and features that positively contribute to the unique and historic character of central Reading will be protected and, where appropriate, enhanced.

6.5 In acknowledgement of the changing context of retail, the Central Reading strategy recognises that the town centre leisure offer will need to expand. This will include arts and cultural provision, sport and recreation facilities, additional restaurants and evening uses that appeal to a wide range of users and continue to provide an 18-hour welcome.

6.6 Reading 2050: A Vision for Reading 2050 is a collaboration between Reading UK (economic development company for Reading), University of Reading and Barton Willmore and is developed by businesses of Reading. This sets out the future vision and ambition for (inter alia) a 'City of Culture' and includes the following areas of focus, relevant to the Site and proposals:

- Build upon the success of the Reading Festival - all year-round cultural events through provision of vibrant public gathering spaces and street life and diverse venues - new 'Reading on Thames Festival';
- Refurbishing existing heritage assets;
- Greater diversification of retail offer;
- Introduce more opportunities for independent retailers;
- Strong, coordinated, and well-marketed leisure offer; and
- Further support growing night economy - capitalise on music heritage.

Assessment

6.7 The general thrust of the RBLP is to encourage and enable the growth and diversification of central Reading, enhancing its role as a Regional Centre. The proposals will play an important role in achieving those objectives, providing enhanced retail offering, a compatible mix of town centre uses, providing visitor accommodation, enhanced public realm with cultural offerings, bringing vacant buildings back into active use and protecting and enhancing key heritage assets.

6.8 The proposals will make efficient use of an iconic key Site within the town centre in a sustainable way that balances the development opportunities with the protection and enhancement of valuable historic buildings and setting. With the vacant use of floors, poor state of repair of the buildings and modern alterations that detract from their former grandeur, a unique opportunity exists for the Site to contribute to a positive future for this part of Central Reading. Therefore, fulfilling and sharing the aspirations of the Reading 2050: A Vision for Reading 2050.

6.9 Consideration must also be given to the long-term potential impacts of the current Covid19 pandemic on the retail and leisure economy and behaviours of shoppers, tourists and workforces. A reinvigorated and enhanced retail, leisure and food and beverage town centre destination and large apart-hotel in the heart of the city, will play an important role in the post-Covid19 recovery of the Reading economy, encouraging a return to physical retailing and adaptable to a post-Covid19 environment. The proposals represent a unique opportunity to

assist in this recovery and drive forward Reading's offer, drawing visitors from the wider region and being part of the much-needed recovery.

Pre-application advice commentary (12 July 2022)

- 6.10 Officers state, the proposals are considered to accord with the development plan. Given that the proposals follow the form and nature of applications 210223/210224 and on the assumption that the Queen Victoria Street commercial units are being proposed for flexible Class E(a) (retail) or Class E(b) (food and drink) use, whereas those on Friar Street would be solely proposed for Class E(a) (retail) use. The upper floor / rear use as a 104 room apart-hotel is assumed to be a Class C1 use, it is considered that a future proposal which follows these principles is broadly appropriate.

Summary

- 6.11 This Planning Statement and other supporting material show that the development proposals presented herewith represent sustainable development, are in accordance with the up-to-date development plan and should be granted planning permission accordingly.

Loss of Employment Floorspace

Policy

- 6.12 Para.122 of the NPPF requires planning decisions to reflect changes in demand for land and uses. Para.122 b) states that a positive approach should be taken to applications for alternative uses of land that is currently developed but not allocated for a specific purpose in a development plan.
- 6.13 The Site is not allocated for an employment use and falls outside of an identified Core Employment Area.
- 6.14 **Policy EM3** of the RBLP states that outside of Core Employment Areas, the following matters will be considered for proposals where employment floorspace is to be lost:
- Is access by a choice of means of transport, including access to the strategic road network, poor, and likely to remain poor?
 - Is the continued use of the site for employment, including the potential for redevelopment for employment uses, viable?
 - Is there a surplus of a similar size and type of accommodation in Reading?
 - Would continued employment use of the site detrimentally affect the amenity and character of a residential area?
 - Is the need for alternative uses stronger than the need for the retention of employment land?
 - Would the proposal result in a piecemeal loss of employment land where there is potential for a more comprehensive scheme?

Assessment

- 6.15 The Site (majority) has been in the ownership of the Applicant for over 5 years, they also hold a comprehensive portfolio of properties in Reading Town Centre. The Site is currently under-utilised with high vacancies, and it has proved no one has wanted to let in the proceeding years. The Applicant has marketed the uppers for office, offering competitive rates. However, the proliferation of modern, purpose-built accommodation, including accommodation with fully compliant DDA facilities, proves significantly more attractive and this modest office unit has proved undesirable and has begun to degrade as a result of the failure to find tenants or investment. The upper floors of 1-15 QVS are predominantly vacant; 148 Friar Street is fully vacant, and part of 145 Friar Street has vacancies.
- 6.16 As noted in the Council's Development Plan and AMR, there is an over proliferation of office accommodation, and this site represents an opportunity for the full restoration of this Site. In any event, the uses proposed are employment generating and it is envisaged that the apart-hotel will create secondary and tertiary employment as a result of visitors making use of the town centre amenities or visiting for business needs.
- 6.17 Policy EM3 sets out a number of criteria against which proposals are assessed against.
- *Is access by a choice of means of transport, including access to the strategic road network, poor, and likely to remain poor?*
- 6.18 The site has excellent public transport access, however, there is no on-site car parking and being located in the town centre, the site is some distance from strategic motorway distance that has to be negotiated at rush hour.
- *Is the continued use of the site for employment, including the potential for redevelopment for employment uses, viable?*
- 6.19 The Applicant has held the site for five years, after initial conversations with officers they have tried on numerous occasions to let the property. The principal reasons for the complete lack of take up has been:
- A substantial offering of more appropriate and better-quality accommodation that is already over provided for.
 - New office schemes being completed.
 - Poor access (non DDA compliant).
 - Convoluted and in-efficient layout for office occupation.
 - Poor energy rating and lack of insulation.
 - Significant costs of repair, restoration and upkeep having a direct impact on rental pricing.
- 6.20 For note, the marketing information and details is private and confidential, and therefore, not presented with the application pack.
- *Is there a surplus of a similar size and type of accommodation in Reading?*
- 6.21 The existing office is out-dated and not to modern standards, there was an over proliferation of accommodation in Reading town centre pre-pandemic. As a result of new working practise people have adopted, it is expected that there will be a further increase in vacant space across the town centre and both locally, regionally and nationally.

- *Would continued employment use of the site detrimentally affect the amenity and character of a residential area?*

6.22 The site is not in a residential area.

- *Is the need for alternative uses stronger than the need for the retention of employment land?*

6.23 We submit this is clearly the case, the site is outside the identified Core Employment Area and within the town centre. The existing employment floorspace is piecemeal in nature having been predominantly created through ad-hoc and poorly designed alterations, which is convoluted and not fit-for-purpose, especially in comparison to modern provision that Reading has a ready supply of. The majority of the floorspace is vacant and the loss of which will enable the comprehensive redevelopment of the site, including the provision of employment generating uses, both via primary job creation and secondary associated servicing. The proposals will also enable the retention, restoration, and enhancement of heritage assets, that secure their longevity.

- *Would the proposal result in a piecemeal loss of employment land where there is potential for a more comprehensive scheme?*

6.24 The site is a listed building and the scheme being put forward is for a comprehensive heritage led comprehensive redevelopment of the site.

Summary

6.25 The lack of desirability of the existing use, the demand for apart-hotel uses and the opportunity for preservation and enhancement of a heritage asset and the other benefits the scheme will deliver represent a strong justification for alternative uses. It is regretful that the office accommodation is lost, however, as it clearly been established, the current lack of occupation does not currently contribute to the area's office stock. Furthermore, none of the office space is DDA compliant and the associated works to bring this up to a reasonable standard are unsustainable when there is clear lack of demand. There are strong material considerations when considered, the only conclusion we can reach is that the proposals are in compliance with the provision of the NPPF and RBLP Policy EM3, especially as they will generate jobs in their own right, as well as creating secondary and tertiary employment opportunities.

Retail Use

Policy

6.26 At paragraph 86, the NPPF requires planning decisions to support the role of town centres, taking a positive approach to their growth and adaptation. The focus of main town centre uses being located within town centres is highlighted at paragraph 87.

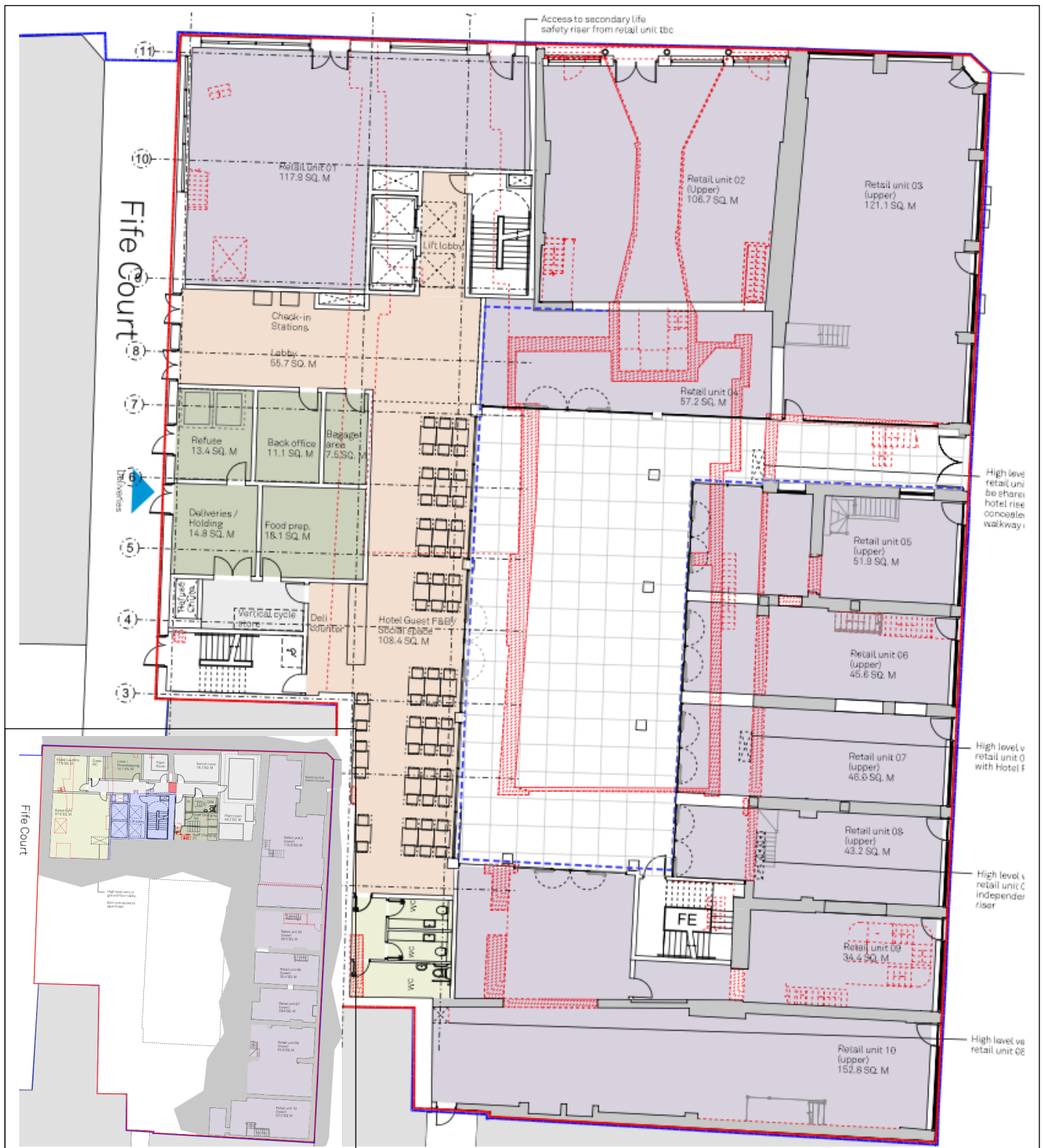
6.27 The Site is located within Reading Town Centre and is within an area designated as a Primary Shopping Area (including Primary Shopping Frontage), Office Core and Central Core.

- 6.28 **Policy CR1** states that for proposed main town centre uses, the following will apply:
- Retail development will take place in the Primary Shopping Area;
 - Major office development of over 1,000 sqm will take place in the Office Core; and
 - Other main town centre uses will take place in the Central Core.
- 6.29 Reading is identified as a Regional Centre under **Policy RL1**, where the greatest levels of development and change will be seen. The vitality and viability of centres should be maintained and enhanced. The following improvements will be acceptable:
- Accessibility and transport improvements;
 - Broadening range of facilities;
 - Residential use of upper floors; and
 - Environmental enhancements.
- 6.30 **Policy RL2** focuses retail and main town centre leisure and culture development of over 2,500 sqm to within town centres.
- 6.31 Under **Policy CR7**, ground floor uses in primary frontages in Central Reading should be in use classes A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, C1, D1, D2 or related sui generis uses (as per defined Use Classes prior to 1st September 2020). Development must provide an active frontage with a display window or glazed frontage at ground floor level.
- 6.32 QVS is identified under **Policy CR8** as a street that is characterised by small shop units, of less than 75 sqm, which make an important contribution to the diversity of the town centre. In these areas, the amalgamation of individual shop fronts will not be permitted and major new retail development in the Primary Shopping Area should include a range of small shops.

Assessment - Retail

- 6.33 The proposals will enhance existing, and create additional, retail floorspace, bringing a total of over 1108 sqm of net internal enhanced retail space in new functional and modern fit-for-purpose layouts of Use Class E(a) and E(b), plus a further 164sqm in food and beverage use = total of 1272sqm. Six of the proposed retail units will be under the 75 sqm identified for small shop units, which will retain and enhance this existing provision and character to QVS, assisting small businesses and a community of independent retailers and groups such as 'Reading Indies'. The principle of retail uses, and the provision of smaller shops was supported by the Council as part of pre-application advice discussions and approved scheme.
- 6.34 The scheme also includes a food and beverage offering, this will for the purposes of the scheme be part of the apart-hotel but will be open to the public. This is a key aspect of the square and a key driver was to ensure that there was continued activity from early (breakfast) through to the evening. This underpinning use will ensure that the market square has a 'buzz' and activity, plus it will provide foot fall and visitors that will assist in sustaining the retail function of the square - this is a key benefit of this approach. The food and beverage area would be 108sqm and lobby of 56sqm (164sqm) - if regard is had to the page over, one will note on the floorplan

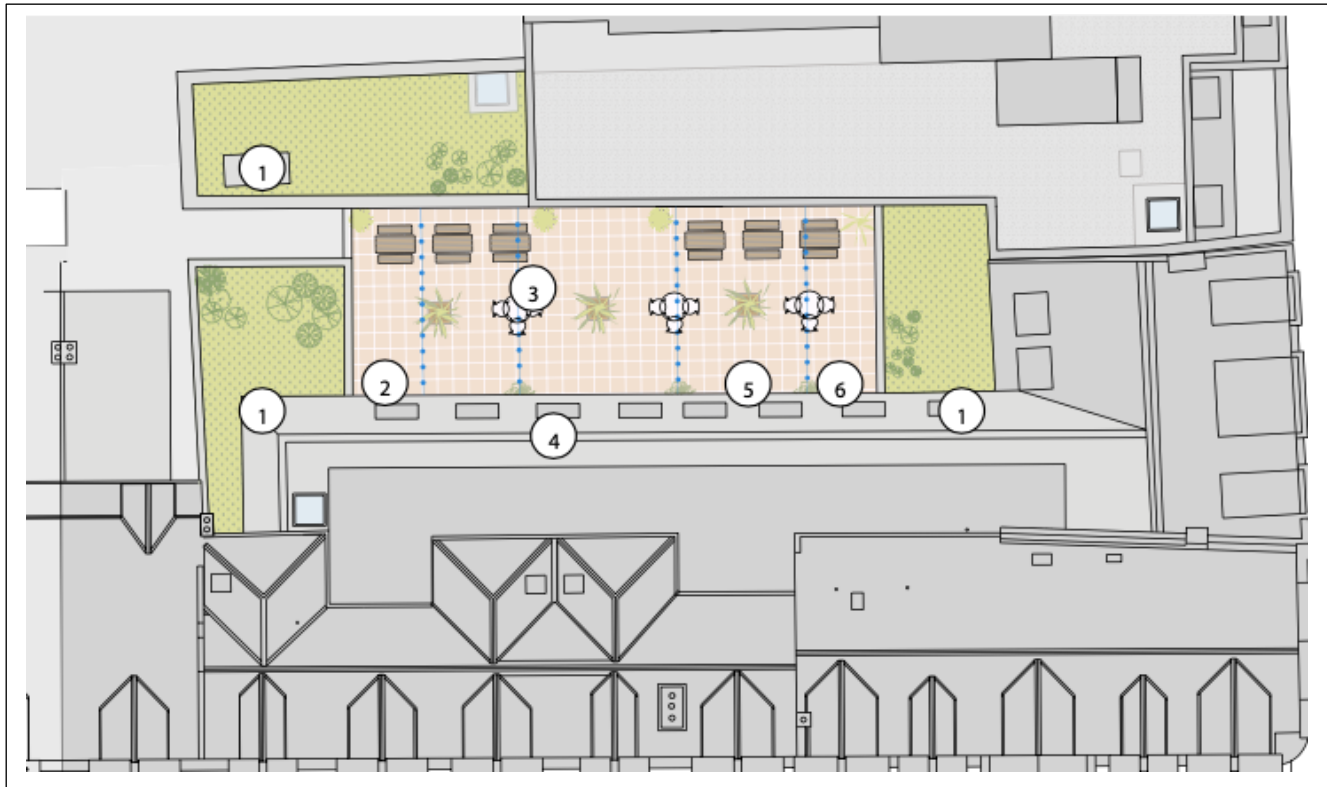
that the F&B and lobby are combined and shaded in a buff colour to distinguish from the guest only part of the apart-hotel, which is requested by officers.



- 6.35 It was noted during consultation that there were questions raised regarding the change to No.145 and WHSmith's. It is noted that WHSmith's will retain their access form Broad Street, however, we are advised that they have south to reduce their shop area, and this is why the Applicant has been able to include No.145 in this development scheme. To reiterate, a reduction of the size of WHSmith's will allow them to sustain their vitality/viability that a smaller rental area as the rent paid and more importantly, Business Rates will be substantially reduced.

Assessment - Market Square

- 6.36 The creation of the public square will create a boutique market retail feel and accompanied by public and cultural uses and events within the square, will bring a new vibrancy and vitality to this part of the town centre, helping to halt the decline of QVS and is supported by Officers. The retail provision and public square will create a destination for shoppers, tourists, and other visitors to Reading, enhancing the vitality and viability of QVS, Friar Street and the surrounding areas of the town centre.



- 6.37 The provision of an enhanced retail offering and open, functional public space and retail destination is seen as an important contributor to the post-Covid19 recovery of the town centre and local retail and leisure economy. Recent experience has shown that some large footprint retailers and department stores are struggling to adapt to the competition of online retailing. This has increased the demand for smaller units with short leases, enabling businesses to be more flexible and adaptable. The proposals offer that smaller, boutique retail environment and opportunity for independent retailers to create a destination and community of businesses.

- 6.38 In response to officer questions during pre-app:

- *Connectivity to market square*

- 6.39 Officers have enquired regarding changes to the market square when compared to the approved scheme, which is responded to in the DAS. But for completeness, the secondary entrance from Friar Street has been omitted, based on the Applicant's feedback, a single access from QVS and access via Fife Court was supported. But a further point is that secondary accesses will be possible via the retail units, and the provision of two accesses in close association was

considered unnecessary and there will be significant permeability via the retail units not to require a second dedicated access, which could be better used as providing an enhanced retail unit and improvement to the shop front of No.147. It should be noted, the scheme presented has been tested in the market, which has driven the changes. The Applicant has sought to also provide shop units over 43sqm (save for unit 09) - the demand for really small units of circa 30sqm or less is currently served by the Harris Arcade, which the Applicant does not seek to compete with.

- *Footfall to Square*

6.40 The Applicant has significant experience of developing retail schemes across the country and has worked with a range of stakeholders on such and brings that experience. An aim is to populate the square throughout the day to ensure activity. The provision of a public accessible food and beverage venture, as well as being used by the apart-hotel guests, would ensure that the square has activity from breakfast time through to the evening, plus providing a captive customer base. On consultation with the operators of well-regarded market squares in London, the strong advice was secure an underpinning use, much the same as a shopping centre has an anchor tenant.

6.41 We submit that the permeability of the retail use and access from Fife Court and QVS, as well as an anchor use, will help drive footfall.

- *Daylight / Sunlight*

6.42 The square is south facing in a densely developed part of central Reading, on consultation of the Applicant has found that the change to the scheme would be modest and the form and function of the market square would not be hindered in daylight and sunlight terms by the increased massing. However, the significant benefits of a 104 bedroom apart-hotel are significant ie. more than double the rooms and therefore consequently guests.

- *Apart-hotel entrance*

6.43 For note, and to clarify an officer question, the apart-hotel check-in would be via Fife Court and or the market square, as such, we submit that the overriding perception of the market square will be that, a market square with retail units having direct access to the square. It should also be noted that the approved scheme entrance to the apart-hotel was solely via the square, this scheme changes that focus split between Fife Court and via the square.

6.44 Therefore, we submit that the addition of the food and beverage use will bring further activity to the square, and the increased retail offering, we submit will provide the increased viability and consequently vitality the market square needs to be a success.

- 6.45 If regard is had to one public consultation comment¹, they stated, which we consider is very appropriate:

"I've frequently emphasised the need to drive Reading's offer forward, to keep the visitors from neighbouring towns coming, and therefore to underpin the overall vitality of the town centre. Yet I reflect now that perhaps the biggest competition to those aims is not Oxford, Basingstoke and Newbury, but rather Amazon, Deliveroo and Netflix. Will the Covid lifestyle stick, or will there be a collective clamour to return to the physical, or the "in real life"? Thankfully, whilst lockdowns have shut us all indoors, that hasn't stopped the investors and architects forming new plans to haul us off our sofas and back into town."

Summary

- 6.46 The retail provision proposed is an appropriate use within the town centre and will continue to ensure the enhancement of its vitality and viability, this scheme builds on the approved and provides increased retail and a more robust function for the market square. The proposals are therefore in accordance with the NPPF and policies CR1, CR7, CR8 and RL2 of the RBLP.

Apart-Hotel Use

Policy

- 6.47 As above, paragraph 85 of the NPPF supports the adaptation of town centres and promotes their long-term vitality and viability by allowing them to grow and diversify that can respond to industry changes and allow a suitable mix of uses.
- 6.48 **Policy RL1** emphasises this in encouraging a broader range of facilities and residential uses on upper floors and **Policy CR1** supports other main town centre uses in the Central Core.
- 6.49 **Policy CR4** states that the Central Core will be the prime focus for major leisure, culture, and tourism development. Uses that would attract a wide range of people into the centre will be encouraged. Innovative solutions to leisure provision will be encouraged, particularly those that make the best use of available (often limited) site area.
- 6.50 **Policy CR6** requires apart-hotel development outside of Use Class C3 to be located within the Central Core. This policy stipulates a restriction to occupation to ensure this is kept to a short-stay basis with monitoring on the implementation of this being regularly supplied to the Council.

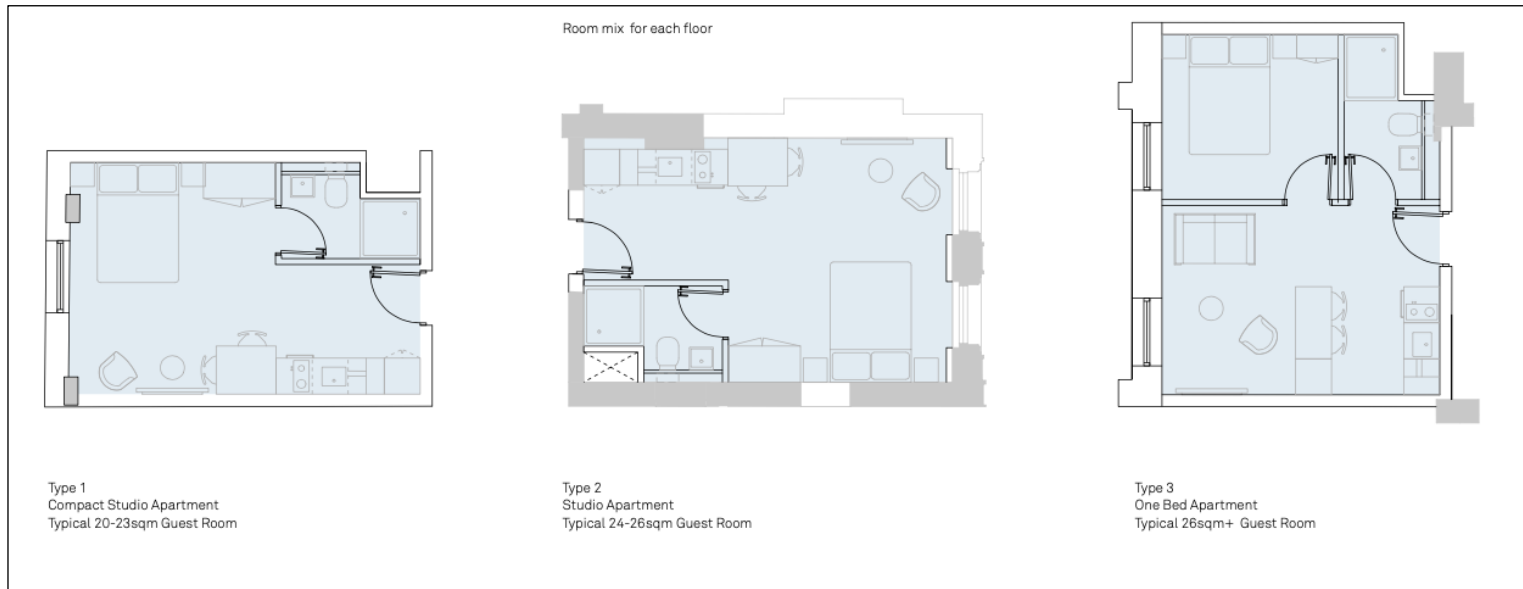
Assessment

- 6.51 The introduction of the apart-hotel uses will add to the variety of uses and attractiveness of the town centre for visitors and workers. This represents an inventive diversification of town centre uses, making effective use of vacant floorspace where previous uses have become unattractive and unviable.

¹ <https://readingonthames.com/2021/01/29/queen-victoria-courtyard-scheme-unveiled/>

- 6.52 The 2018-19 Reading Annual Monitoring Report (“AMR”) notes an exceptionally low provision of C1 floorspace within the monitoring year, with only 1,500 sqm permitted within Reading and none delivered. The 2019-20 AMR shows a dramatic increase in permitted C1 floorspace at 10,350 sqm but with only 848 sqm (8%) completed during the monitoring year. The 2020-21 AMR (December 2021) shows permitted C1 floorspace at 188 sqm but with 1066 sqm completed during the monitoring year. However, the AMR notes *‘There has also been an increase in C1 use that is entirely due to a new development of serviced apartments.’* Accordingly, the delivery of C1 floor space is still low.
- 6.53 The proposals will provide a compatible town centre use that will assist in increasing the provision to meet demand for short-term letting accommodation within the town centre, a use that the market indicates is required. The Applicant is working with the future operator on the design and layout, as such, this is a scheme that will be delivered as opposed to speculative.
- 6.54 Serviced apartments are a relatively recent phenomenon. They are fully furnished flats that have similar amenities to hotel rooms and can be used for either short-term or longer-term stays, offering a more home-from-home type experience. Governments and local council have been cracking down on Airbnb rentals, which in part allows for success in the serviced apartment market. Serviced apartments differ in that they are not flats owned by individuals looking to achieve a supplementary income, but rather they are owned by a company with the sole purpose of renting them out on either a short-term or long-term basis to individuals who need somewhere to stay. Unlike Airbnb, the apartments are not someone permanent residence and the crackdown of Airbnb rentals in some locations is allowing serviced apartments the opportunity to accommodate those who would have used Airbnb, further boosting demand for the units.
- 6.55 The evidence of their popularity lies in occupancy rates. Serviced apartments in the UK averaged an 81% occupancy rate in 2019, and outperformed hotel rooms which stood at 77.2%. Amongst businesses, their usage is also increasing. In Reading at Green Park Business Park there are many frequent users of Serviced Apartments, including life science companies and technology companies such as Huawei. In 2019 leasing agents, Saxbury, received eleven offers at the guide leasing price for the neighbouring serviced apartment scheme (17-27 Queen Victoria Street, Reading). The success of this campaign demonstrates not only the strength of the macro location, but that there is indeed robust operator demand for licensed Serviced apartments in Reading.
- 6.56 The principle of apart-hotel use on the Site was deemed acceptable as part of pre-application advice received from the Council and the approval of planning permission in 2021. The Applicant is committed to appropriate restrictions on the occupation length of the apart-hotel units to ensure they are not occupied as standard residential accommodation and continue to meet the market need.

- 6.57 The fit out of the apart-hotel will be operators' task, however, the rooms will be constructed to a high standard that incorporate period feature. Further, the layout has been designed with input from a Fire Engineer. Of course, at detailed design stage there will be extensive work on this, however, the layout and necessary fire suppression needed has been designed to comply with all necessary legislation.



- 6.58 The Applicant has received specific market intelligence and responses to enquiries which supports the demand for apart-hotel uses in this location and this scheme has been designed for the operator who is expected to occupy the premises. The layouts, sizes and mix of units has been devised in coordination with specific operators. Furthermore, there has been specific interest and demand for more bespoke and unique buildings, environments and fit-outs that distinguish a product from the conventional and 'bland' purpose-built apart-hotel buildings. The proposed use of the iconic Listed Buildings and the enhanced offering provided by the proposals with the complementary retail uses and public square, make the Site and proposals unique and attractive to the market, enabling a distinctive and distinguished product to be able to be offered.

Summary

- 6.59 The apart-hotel use is a compatible and supporting use for this location within central reading and will assist in enhancing the vitality and viability of the centre. The proposals comply with the provisions of the NPPF and RBLP Policies RL1, CR1, CR4 and CR6.

2. Demolition of 146 Friar Street and Alteration to 145 Friar Street

Policy

- 6.60 Para.121 of the NPPF advises that Local planning authorities should take a proactive role in identifying and helping to bring forward land that may be suitable for meeting development needs. This should include identifying opportunities to facilitate land assembly.

- 6.61 Para.122 of the NPPF requires planning decisions to reflect changes in demand for land and uses.
- 6.62 Para.123 b) states that Local planning authorities should also take a positive approach to applications for alternative uses of land which is currently developed but not allocated for a specific purpose in plans, where this would help to meet identified development needs.
- 6.63 The Site is not allocated for an employment use and falls outside of an identified Core Employment Area.
- 6.64 **Policy EN4** notes that where some loss or harm to locally important heritage asset is permitted, recording of the heritage asset should be undertaken. Additionally, replacement buildings are required to draw upon heritage elements of the previous design, incorporating historical qualities that made the previous building significant.

Assessment

- 6.65 The site comprises two buildings that did not form part of the approved scheme, these are:
- 6.66 146 Friar Street: was originally built in the mid 19th Century. However, it has since undergone several alterations including new front façades, shop fronts and windows. It is particularly modest in its height and appearance, with a string course between the floors. The roof is hidden behind a tall parapet with stone coping.
- 6.67 The HS finds (paras.4.36 and 6.5 respectively):

“...No 146 has limited architectural or historic value, having been altered beyond recognition...”

...No 146 Friar Street is unlisted and has 6.8 been altered beyond recognition and has no architectural value. In townscape terms, whilst it follows the rhythm of the street frontage, its scale appears to be disproportionately smaller. The modern shopfront further detracts from the contribution to the setting of the listed buildings and wider the townscape of the area. The proposal to rebuild it to a more appropriate scale whilst adhering to the modesty in architectural detailing would ensure that the character and appearance of the listed buildings continues to be distinctive.”

- 6.68 145 Friar Street: has an attractive front façade from early 20th Century and a later mansard roof extension. The party wall has been raised considerably in height to allow for the extension. The blank brick wall is visible in some long-distance views. Although the shop front is modern, the Art Modern style elevation appears particularly attractive within the street scene. As such it contributes positively to the setting of the listed buildings in so far as the commercial street frontage, rhythm and scale.
- 6.69 The HS finds (paras.4.36 and 6.5 respectively):

“...No 145 has architectural interest, limited to its front facade above ground floor...”

...The front facade of No 145 would be retained with a new shopfront to the ground floor. The current modern mansard roof would be replaced with a traditional upper floor, designed with

proportions akin to early 20th Century buildings. This would appear congruous with the rest of the building's retained facade. Above this a new mansard roof extension would be introduced in a material similar to that of No 146. This will have a harmonious effect in terms of the roofline, which will continue to appear animated with slight height differences."

- 6.70 The pre-app response supports the proposal and confirms:
"In terms of the works to No's 145 and 146 Friar Street, the retention of the front façade of No. 145 is welcomed, supported, and considered necessary, whilst it is confirmed that there are no in- principle concerns with the demolition of No. 146 in full from a heritage perspective. Commentary within your future heritage statement should nevertheless provide a full policy assessment to justify these works."
- 6.71 For note, as the façade of No.145 will be supported by the greater retention of the rear of the said building, therefore, it is not applicable to provide a façade retention methodology.

Summary

- 6.72 The HS and officers find that the existing buildings at No.146 has limited architectural or historic value, having been altered beyond recognition. Whereas No.145 has architectural interest, limited to its front facade above ground floor. Officers state, the retention of the front façade of No. 145 is welcomed, supported, and considered necessary (we reiterate a large proportion of the building is now retained), whilst it is confirmed that there are no in- principle concerns with the demolition of No. 146. Therefore, the conclusion we reach is that the proposals are in compliance with the provision of the NPPF and RBLP Policy EN4, and the principle of demolition of No.146, and partial demolition of No.145 meets the tests of both national and local planning policy.

3. Design Considerations

- 6.73 There are several key separate elements to the design of the proposals that warrant individual focus as part of the policy assessment. The following elements of the proposed external works are addressed in turn below. The internal works are discussed below under heritage considerations, we also refer readers to the DAS, Heritage Statement, Schedule of Works and also the drawings presented.

- Repairs/works to the principle facades;
- Shop fronts;
- Three-storey rear extension with mansard;
- Part-single, part-two storey rear addition; and
- Public Square.
- Rebuilding of No.146.
- Extension to No.145.

Policy

- 6.74 The NPPF identifies at paragraph 126 that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development.
- 6.75 Paragraph 130 requires developments to function well and be visually attractive, be sympathetic to local character, whilst not preventing appropriate innovation or change.

Proposals should use street layouts, spaces, building types and materials to create distinctive places.

6.76 **Policy CC7** reflects the national position in seeking high quality design, maintaining and enhancing the character and appearance of the area within which it is located. Design will be assessed to ensure a positive contribution to the following objectives:

- Character - a place with its own identity and sense of place
- Continuity and enclosure
- Quality of the public realm and provision of green infrastructure and landscaping
- Ease of movement and permeability
- Legibility - clear image and easy to understand
- Adaptability - capable of adaptation over time
- Diversity - meets a wide range of needs

6.77 Under **Policy CC7**, developments will also be assessed to ensure that they:

- Respond positively to their local context and create or reinforce local character and distinctiveness, including protecting and enhancing the historic environment of the Borough and providing value to the public realm;
- Create safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder or fear of crime does not undermine quality of life or community cohesion;
- Address the needs of all in society and are accessible, usable and easy to understand by them, including providing suitable access to, into and within, its facilities, for all potential users, including disabled people, so that they can use them safely and easily;
- Are visually attractive as a result of good high-quality built forms and spaces, the inclusion of public art and appropriate materials and landscaping.

6.78 Building upon these principles and with a focus on Central Reading, **Policy CR2** requires proposals to demonstrate the following attributes:

- Respect the existing grid layout, provide continuity and enclosure and frontages that engage with the street at lower levels. Enhance ease of movement through and around the central area;
- Provide well designed public spaces and other public realm, hard and soft landscaped areas, public art, sense of place and linkages to adjoining areas;
- High quality architectural details and materials should be used, respecting form and quality in local areas;
- Should contribute to the diversity of the central area, be capable of easy adaptation over time and be designed to enhance community safety;
- Should be designed with consideration to adjacent development sites, not preventing or causing unreasonable burdens on future development.

6.79 In terms of density, **Policy CC6** states that scale and density to be related to the level of accessibility by walking, cycling and public transport to a range of services and facilities. The supporting text for the policy notes that the highest levels of accessibility in Reading are within the town centre, which is also one of the most accessible locations in the South East. Good levels of accessibility are considered to be those within 400m of a defined centre with a good range of facilities by pedestrian routes, and within 400m by pedestrian routes of a bus stop with a service frequency better than one bus every 20 minutes in each direction.

Assessment - Repairs/works to the principal facade

- 6.80 Urgent repairs and replacement works will be undertaken to the deteriorating architectural detailing of the building facades, particularly along QVS. These will be sensitive like-for-like replacements and retaining and repairing existing elements where possible, representing a sympathetic restoration and enhancement of character of the existing buildings, as detailed by the security strategy in the accompanying DAS.
- 6.81 A pedestrian passageway to the new public square will be created from QVS. And will be located between nos. 3 and 5 QVS, utilising the existing entrance to a servicing area for no.1. The entrance will be gated to enable enhanced security at night
- 6.82 147 Friar Street entrance will be assimilated into the existing ground floor frontage design and occupy the space between the retained iron pillars (third and fourth from the left), retaining the historic ground floor shopfront rhythm. The introduction of this shop front will be consistent with the historic appearance - see the attached photograph.



Shop fronts

- 6.83 Care has been taken in the design of the ground floor shopfronts to closely reflect the design, scale and detailing of the original shopfronts of the QVS terrace, as understood from historic photographs and records. The original uniformity and consistency of the QVS frontage has been

lost over time with the alteration of individual shopfronts, amalgamation of units and addition of signage. Historic imagery included within the supporting DAS shows an identifiable consistent pattern to the shopfronts on QVS. Whilst they differ in their lettering and window displays, the dimensions of the shopfronts are consistent and the uniform, continuous shop name fascia is a predominant feature.



- 6.84 The proposals seek to reinstate the historic shopfront design and uniformity, creating a unique historical character to this part of QVS in the style of boutique heritage retail. Along the main QVS frontage, each shopfront will have the same metal framed glazing with single access door, wooden sill and black tiled base plinth. The existing shop fascia will be retained and revealed with the removal of inconsistent later signage additions and alterations. Each shopfront will include consistent shop name lettering and street number engraving. This will recreate the original uniformity of the QVS frontage and bring back the former historic character and glory.
- 6.85 The prominent corner unit at 148 Friar Street will be of the same detailing and treatment as the remainder of QVS, whilst retaining the scale and character of this larger corner unit. The first-floor of 148 Friar Street currently incorporates large glazing, which is not appropriate for the apart-hotel use and will be replaced with timber-framed sash windows and redbrick infill with stone lintels and surrounds. This will match the rhythm and detailing of the remainder of the QVS frontage, enhancing the continuity of the frontage at first-floor level.
- 6.86 The historic frontage of 147 Friar Street differs from the remainder of the QVS terrace and has largely retained its original features and appearance over time, with some alterations to the first floor and modern signage. The proposals will retain the key architectural detailing of the

shopfront and return to their historic appearance, such as the painted black cast iron pillars, first floor architraves and the ground floor shop front rhythm.

Assessment - Three-storey rear extension with mansard

- 6.87 The proposed rear extension has been specifically designed to be sympathetic in scale, massing, design, and materials, to that of the host building and surrounding buildings. At three-storeys in height, with additional mansard roof, the extension will be subservient to the main building of 1-15 QVS and will sit below the existing rear roofline, respecting the predominant local skyline. The use of a mansard roof with dormer windows will reduce the perceived bulk of the extension and reflects features of the rear of the QVS terrace. The highly accessible location of the Site lends it to higher density and larger scale development, which the proposals achieve, whilst still being in keeping with, and respectful to, the existing buildings and setting.
- 6.88 The use of redbrick in construction with lighter, pale coloured architectural detailing is characteristic in this part of Central Reading and a feature of the listed QVS terrace with its red terracotta detailing and lighter yellow brick construction. The rear extension respects and reflects this in its red brick construction and with the inclusion of stone window surrounds, lintels and horizontal divides.
- 6.89 The provision of rear entrances to the retained retail units at ground floor will provide an attractive and active frontage to the public square and engage with the public realm, helping to enliven the square assist with enhancing vitality and viability with increased retail frontage and enhanced footfall. The stone pillars framing the shopfronts will continue the reflection of characteristic lighter coloured materials and will give a sense of grandeur and interest to the frontages of the public square, which reflects that of the principal façade and former glory of the QVS terrace.
- 6.90 The proposals are consistent with the former application that was fully supported by the Council and were noted as being appropriate in scale and design, with suggestions for some alterations which have been incorporated. The proposals represent an appropriate and sympathetic design response that will respect and enhance the listed building and provide a high-quality visual and functional environment that is secure and accessible to all, in compliance with the NPPF and RBLP policies.

Assessment - Part-two, three and four storey with mansard rear addition

- 6.91 The rear addition within the public square mirrors the design and architectural detailing of the rear extension of 1-15 QVS, whilst introducing its own unique features and interest. The addition frames the western edge of the public square, providing the food and beverage offering.
- 6.92 The rear addition will be of the same red brick construction with lighter material detailing and full-height metal-framed glazing to the retail units, framed by stone pillars.

- 6.93 The rear addition is lower level and stepped back to ensure subservience to the retained and existing surrounding buildings, also enabling a degree of natural lighting for the square and the rear windows of the rear extension.
- 6.94 The design of the rear addition reflects the character and detailing of the host building and setting and is considered an appropriate design response to the Site. This element of the proposals is therefore in compliance with the NPPF and policies of the RBLP

Assessment - 145 and 146 Friar Street

- 6.95 No.146 (considered of no architectural merit) will be demolished, and No 145 (considered of some architectural merit) will be redeveloped retaining the majority of the existing built form and adding two floors. The design of the two buildings has evolved through the pre-app engagement and the scheme presented is a cumulation of these discussions.



- 6.96 The front (rear) of No 145 would be retained with a new shopfront to the ground floor. The current modern mansard roof would be replaced with a traditional upper floor, designed with proportions akin to early 20th Century buildings. This would appear congruous with the rest of the building's retained facade. Above this a new mansard roof extension would be introduced in a material similar to that of No 146. This will have a harmonious effect in terms of the roofline, which will continue to appear animated with slight height differences.
- 6.97 No 146 is to be rebuilt with two additional storeys. The third floor has been designed to replicate the more traditional design of the main building, in brick. The fourth floor extension is designed to appear as a minimalist roof form in grey cladding that will give the impression of a mansard roof.
- 6.98 The front facade of No 145 would be retained with a new shopfront to the ground floor. The current modern mansard roof would be replaced with a traditional upper floor, designed with proportions akin to early 20th Century buildings. This would appear congruous with the rest of the building's retained facade. Above this a new mansard roof extension would be introduced in a material similar to that of No 146. This will have a harmonious effect in terms of the roofline, which will continue to appear animated with slight height differences.

6.99 Taken together, the additional massing would appear well designed and belonging to the current rhythm of the street and townscape. While providing additional accommodation for the Hotel, it would have a positive effect on the street frontage by removing poorly designed shopfront and modern roofs. There would be no impact on the listed buildings or their settings and the proposal would result in enhancements.

6.100 Overall, due to the appropriate scale, carefully considered and high-quality design, the introduction of additional massing over No 145- 146 would not affect the heritage significance of the grade II listed buildings on the site.

6.101 We also must draw attention to the Reading Design Review Panel's consideration of the proposals for Nos.146 and 145,

"Whilst outside the scope of the review, the proposals for 145 - 146 Friar Street show great promise. The renewal of 141 - 148 Friar Street could act as a valuable catalyst to support wider improvements within this part of the Town Centre."

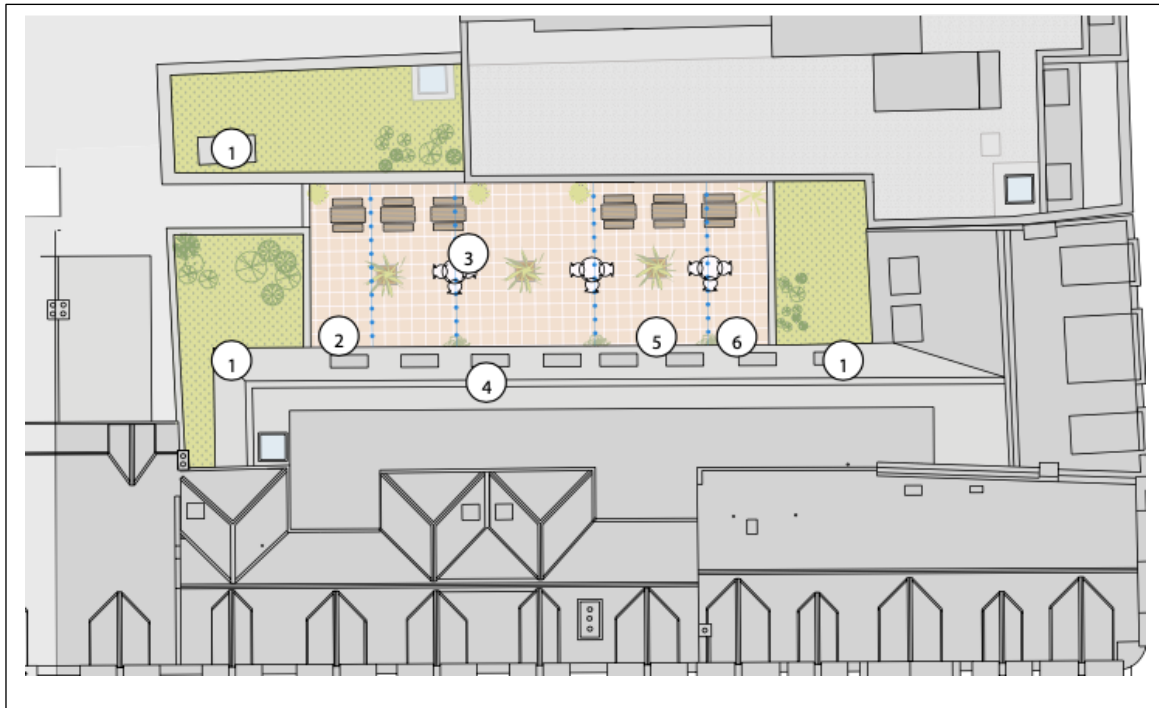
6.102 Finally, the pre-app response concludes:

"In respect of design and heritage matters, the proposed works are largely satisfactory, with the level of intervention to the listed building largely similar to 210223/210224 and the principle of redeveloping No's 145 (barring the supported front façade retention) and 146 considered appropriate. The scale and massing of the proposed replacement buildings, together with the general design approach, is also considered appropriate."

Assessment - Public Square

6.103 One of the unique benefits of the proposals is the removal of the unsympathetic and eclectic modern additions to the rear of the main buildings and the creation of a new public square. The proposed use and management of the square is discussed later in this section, with the design specifically considered here.

6.104 The public square is a good size for its intended multi-functional use, able to host numerous community and public events, performances and exhibitions, as well as the more general use as a functional outdoor meeting, relaxing and dining space. The square provides sufficient circulation space, access to the retail units and creates permeability through the site between Friar Street and QVS, which currently does not exist. The space will also provide a pleasant, everchanging and active outlook of interest for residents of the proposed apart-hotel.



- 6.105 The stone set paving will provide a light and airy open space that will complement the redbrick façade of the proposed extension and rear additions, as well as reflecting the stone detailing within the façades. This material is also hard wearing and easily washable to assist with the maintenance of the public square. Timber-framed planters and other planted screening will be used to soften the square and add interest to the space, whilst also being easily movable to accommodate the multi-functional use of the square. Picnic-style and bistro street furniture will be used to reinforce the market square feel of the space and the functional use as an outdoor seating and dining area.

Summary

- 6.106 The material submitted with this application shows that due care has been taken to design proposals that strike an appropriate balance with desirable uses; preserve and enhance an iconic listed building; make effective use of the Site and respond to constraints; and create a safe, attractive, and well-designed place for future enjoyment by the public and visitors. The proposals reflect the historic character, built form, street layout, design features, materials and setting of the surrounds and utilise high-quality materials and modern sympathetic design.
- 6.107 The design proposals were supported in principle at pre-application advice stages, have evolved with guidance received and are considered to fully accord with the NPPF and RBLP Policies CC6, CC7 and CR2.

4. Heritage Impacts

Policy

- 6.108 The NPPF requires proposals affecting statutory heritage assets to describe the significance of the assets (paragraph 194). Paragraph 199 states that great weight should be given to the

conservation of designated heritage assets when assessing development and paragraph 194 states that any harm to the significance of an asset will require clear and convincing justification for such harm. Paragraph 202 states that where less than substantial harm would be caused to significance, then public benefits including optimum viable use should be considered.

- 6.109 **Policy EN1** of the RBLP seeks the protection and enhancement of the historic environment. All proposals will be expected to protect and where possible enhance the significance of heritage assets and their settings, the historic character and local distinctiveness of the area in which they are located. Applications affecting Listed Buildings must not have an adverse impact on those elements which contribute to their special architectural or historic interest, including their setting. The Council will proactively seek solutions for assets at risk, including consideration of appropriate development schemes that will ensure the repair and maintenance of the asset.
- 6.110 **Policy EN6** states that, in areas characterised by heritage assets, new development will make a contribution to the historic character by respecting and enhancing its architectural and visual qualities and considering how heritage considerations can influence the design of new development. The following will be considered:
- Positive contribution to the existing historic townscape;
 - Sensitivity to historic context;
 - Reflection of borough-wide major heritage themes that contribute to local distinctiveness;
 - Whether the development promotes and/or improves access to previously undiscovered or neglected historic significance.

Assessment

- 6.111 As identified in Section 5.0, the buildings of the application site are Grade II listed, under list entry 1113488 and 1113564. The listings date from 1978 and focus on the façade detailing and material of the buildings, with particular mention to the shop front designs.
- 6.112 As advised, the application is accompanied by a Heritage Statement prepared by Revive and Taylor, which is an addendum to the Heritage Statement prepared by Heritage Collective in respect of planning and listed building consent applications ref: 210223/210224 referred to as “HS”. This provides a comprehensive historic assessment of the heritage assets, determination of their significance and value, and assesses the potential impact of the proposals on the assets. The HS’ should be referred to for full details of the assessment, the key elements of which are summarised here in relation to the above relevant planning policy.
- 6.113 The HS sets out a detailed history of central Reading and the formation of the streets and building layouts that have resulted in the present-day situation. It identifies that 147 Friar Street was built in the period between 1879 and 1895 and the current QVS layout and buildings were part of a comprehensive redevelopment, completed in 1903. The HS also notes the addition of the more modern rear extensions and alterations, which in some cases detract from the special interest of the original buildings.

Heritage Significance

- 6.114 In line with paragraph 194 of the NPPF, the HS provides an assessment of significance of the heritage assets i.e. the listed buildings, for the avoidance of doubt these are 1-15QVS and 147-148 Friar Street; 145 and 146 Friar Street are not listed nor designated heritage assets. This recognises the architectural and historic merits of the buildings and also the detracting from this arising from the more modern alterations, particularly those of ground floor shop fronts. Overall, it notes the buildings as good examples of late 19th/early 20th century commercial premises.
- 6.115 Full details of the assessment of significance are contained within the Heritage Statement and summarised here:
- 1-15 QVS & 148 Friar St Exterior:
 - Of considerable architectural quality - brickwork, terracotta, decorative gables, granite pilasters and original windows - adding to significance.
 - Modern ground floor shop fronts, signs and lights detract from significance.
 - Modern wooden infilling to double-height shopfront to 148 Friar Street detracts from architectural interest and significance.
 - Heavy alteration to rear of site with limited architectural merit, removal of rear chimney stacks and roofs altered, detracting from significance.
 - Notwithstanding above, rear elevation does retain some value, albeit to a significantly lesser degree than the front elevation.
 - 1-15 QVS and 148 Friar St Interior:
 - Nos. 1-3 QVS and 148 Friar St have been heavily altered and are of no particular heritage value.
 - Nos. 5-15 QVS basement and ground floors have also been heavily altered.
 - Nos. 5-15 QVS upper floors retain elements of original features (plan form, room portions and circulation, staircases, and partitions) which adds to the heritage interest and significance.
 - 147 Friar St Exterior:
 - The double height colonnade shopfront and segmental headed dormer windows are of particular interest and add to the heritage significance.
 - 20th century shopfront with splayed frontage, boarding over the fascias and modern paintwork detract from the heritage significance and provide opportunity for enhancements.
 - 147 Friar St Interior:
 - Parts of interior have been heavily altered and are in a deteriorating condition.
 - 1930s additions of rear stair and lift core with curved walls are of some limited value.
 - Projecting chimney breasts, some partitions with lath and plaster and some elements of plan form add to the heritage significance but are able to accommodate change.
 - Built form to rear:
 - 2no. two and three-storey buildings formerly in use as store and cabinet factory associated with 147 Friar St contribute to its setting but are not of any special interest in their own right.
 - Remaining built form to rear is more modern, heavily altered and is either of neutral or negative heritage significance.

Heritage Impact

- 6.116 The HS assesses the component parts of the proposed works and their impact on the identified heritage significance of the assets. The findings of this assessment are summarised here and are based on the schedule of works and significance drawings prepared:
- Repair works to halt deterioration:
 - Continued deterioration of architectural detailing and external features will cause harm to the heritage significance.

- Reinstating structural stability and repairing and reinstatement of façade detailing will remove risk of harm and represent a benefit to the heritage asset.
- New Shopfronts and signage:
 - Proposed new shopfront design will provide a coherent architectural approach and reinstate consistency to the terrace and street.
 - Detailing, and design will reflect traditional design of historic shopfronts and represent a significant enhancement to the architectural integrity and authenticity of the asset.
 - The 147 Friar St shopfront will be returned to the 1939 arrangement. Whilst not original, this arrangement would only affect modern elements.
 - The original cast iron columns will be retained and these works will preserve the significance of 147 Friar St.
 - Solid glazing on the first floor of 148 Friar St would not be appropriate to the proposed apart-hotel use and the proposed timber windows and brick and terracotta surrounds would be wholly appropriate in terms of form, materials, character and detailing. These works represent an enhancement to the architectural interest.
- Demolition of rear buildings:
 - The modern rear additions are poor quality and detract from the appearance of the listed buildings. Demolition would not affect the heritage significance and offer an opportunity for enhancement to the rear of the site.
 - The three and two storey buildings associated with 147 Friar St do not have value in their own right but their demolition would have a limited effect on the significance of this building due to their historic ancillary use, but would not amount to material harm.
 - The demolition works are essential to the wider goal of reinvigorating the heritage assets and delivering the associated benefits.
- New rear extension:
 - The lack of embellishment and detail of the rear elevation to 1-13 QVS, enables it to accommodate the proposed rear extension. The introduction of the rear extension would result in some harm to the significance of the rear elevation of 15 QVS, which is relatively intact.
 - Elements of the existing rear elevation will be retained within the new rear extension, utilising existing openings and keeping change to a minimum.
 - The rear extension will sit below existing eaves, retaining the historic roof form, with clear subservience and the glazed lift core and circulation space is positioned outside of the host building to preserve legibility and integrity.
 - Architectural detailing reflects that of the high-quality QVS frontage, providing a more contemporary, restrained reference utilising repetitious rhythm of sash windows, red brick and stone materials (in accordance with pre-application advice), similar proportioned dormers, simplified eaves detailing, banding and cornices, and windows surrounds and colonnade. This offers a clear enhancement and experience to the of the rear yard, whilst balancing subservience and increasing vibrancy.
 - Whilst some harm would be incurred, the good design offers and aesthetic enhancement and helps mitigate any harm.
- New rear additions:
 - New buildings are of subservient scale, stepping down from the main buildings, continuing the established character of the rear elevation with brick colonnades and well detailed shopfronts.
 - More contemporary design of first-floor frontages ensures attention is not drawn away from the listed building or overall back of house character.
 - A pitched roof is incorporated for the first-floor in response to pre-application advice and to reflect that of existing surrounding buildings.
 - The rear additions are of high-quality built form and design and would not affect the heritage significance of the listed buildings.
- Internal alterations - 147 Friar St:
 - Loss of 1930s rear lift and staircase will result in some impact to the significance, however the works would be beneficial as a whole, thus outweighing the harm.
 - Replacement of modern basement partitions will not give rise to heritage impact.

- Whilst there would be a change to the character of the ground floor, no historic fabric will be lost, architectural elements will be retained (e.g. tall columns) and the commercial nature and character will be retained. This will not affect the heritage significance.
- Surviving elements, such as exposed roof trussed and timbers, on the upper floors will be retained and new partitions will reinstate the historic compartmentalised nature of the building. These works represent an enhancement to the significance.
- Internal alterations - 1-3 QVS:
 - Due to the heavy alterations, the internal spaces are of no heritage value.
 - Removal of the staircase would result in the loss of some historic fabric but this has already been altered and, along with the other significant previous alterations, any impact would be wholly limited and would not affect the heritage significance.
- Internal alterations - 5-15 QVS:
 - The proposed works would result in some harm to the heritage significance, primarily as a result of changes to the plan form and loss of an original staircase.
 - These works are essential to facilitate the viable reuse of the building and the harm has been minimised wherever possible.
 - Heritage benefits have been introduced, including partial restoration of lost elements of plan form and reinstatement of period detailing, which weigh against harm caused.

Heritage Assessment Conclusions

- 6.117 The HS has identified that there is heritage significance associated with the Listed Buildings, predominantly borne from the high-quality street frontages. The HS recognises that there is some, but limited elements of note internally and that the rear additions and modern shop frontages have a negative impact on the special interest and heritage significance.
- 6.118 The HS assesses that the proposals will have both positive and negative impacts on the significance of the assets. It notes that the negative impacts have been mitigated, if not avoided, by the sympathetic design and considerable enhancements brought about by the benefits of the proposals, including:
- Preventing further deterioration of the Listed Buildings;
 - Reviving the underused and predominantly vacant assets, providing an active and viable use that will provide for their future conservation and maintenance;
 - Reinstatement of in-keeping historic shopfronts, enhancing the significance and authenticity of the buildings;
 - Removal of poor quality rear additions, replaced with a contemporary reference to the established historic architectural pattern, creating a more inviting and accessible space;
 - Retention and restoration of key elements of heritage significance, such as the facades, internal elements of significance and elements of legible historical plan form; and
 - Opportunities to reinstate appropriate detailing internally that retain a higher degree of survival.

Heritage and Public Benefits

- 6.119 The HS concludes that any harm to the significance of the Listed Buildings would be less than substantial (medium level) and that this harm is weighed against the conservation, preservation and enhancement of the heritage assets that the proposals deliver, which are significant. In addition to heritage benefits, the NPPF requires an assessment of the balance of harm against other public benefits arising from development proposals. It is clear that the repair, reinstatement and enhancement of these important heritage assets are in themselves of public benefit, but the proposals will also deliver the following public benefits:

- Repair and reinstatement of the original historic frontages of the listed buildings and the architectural detailing that contributes to their significance.
- Visual improvement to these prominent retail streets with uniform shop frontages, signage and lighting, respectful to the original historic frontages.
- Removal and enhancement to the form and appearance of built form at the rear of the site.
- Provision of modern, subservient and respectful built form to the rear of the site, enhancing the visual appearance and supporting and promoting the grandeur of the retained listed buildings.
- Provision of additional floorspace for retail and appropriate town centre uses in a highly accessible and sustainable location.
- Enhancing the diversity of retail provision and attracting boutique ‘heritage retail’ and independent retailers.
- Provision of a mix of retail uses, providing diversity in town centre offering and opportunities for respite and relaxation, such as with coffee shops.
- Provision for small businesses and shops with appropriate-sized retail units to meet demand and support the small business market.
- Introduction of apart-hotel use, providing short-term let accommodation, supporting the needs of, and attracting, working professionals and visitors to Reading, as well as assisting in remedying an identified under-provision.
- Provision of an enhanced public realm with the public square, providing opportunities for respite, relaxation and play, as well as community and public events and the opportunity to foster and support local community initiatives, exhibitions and performances.
- Provision of a town centre destination that will attract visitors, shoppers and workers to this part of the town centre, enhancing the activity, vitality and viability of this part of the centre.
- The proposals will arrest the decline of QVS and support and bolster the Reading economy, which is of particular importance at this current time and will play an important role in the post-Covid19 recovery of the town centre.

[Pre-application advice commentary \(12 July 2022\)](#)

- 6.120 Officers support the proposed works, provided there are no changes proposed to the elevation along Queen Street, as was the case at the time of applications 210223/210224. A similar conclusion is reached in relation to the rear of 1-15 Queen Victoria Street demolition and new extension works. There are no concerns raised by the Conservation and Urban Design Officer regarding the more intense use of the Apart-hotel space as part of these revised proposals. In terms of the works to No’s 145 and 146 Friar Street, the retention of the front façade of No. 145 is welcomed, supported, and considered necessary, whilst it is confirmed that there are no in principle concerns with the demolition of No. 146 in full from a heritage perspective. In regard to height and massing of the proposed works, the Conservation and Urban Design Officer has confirmed he is content with the height and massing of the proposed works, the impact on the setting of nearby listed buildings (although commentary should be provided within the future heritage statement to justify this) and the general design approach.

Summary

- 6.121 The proposals represent a unique opportunity to save and restore these important heritage assets, breathing new life into the Listed Buildings and this part of the town centre. The significant heritage and public benefits of the proposals far outweigh the less than substantial harm arising to the heritage significance and result in a net benefit and enhancement to the current situation. The proposals are considered to comply with relevant tests and requirements of the NPPF and Policies EN1 and EN6 of the RBLP.

5. Impact on Amenity

Policy

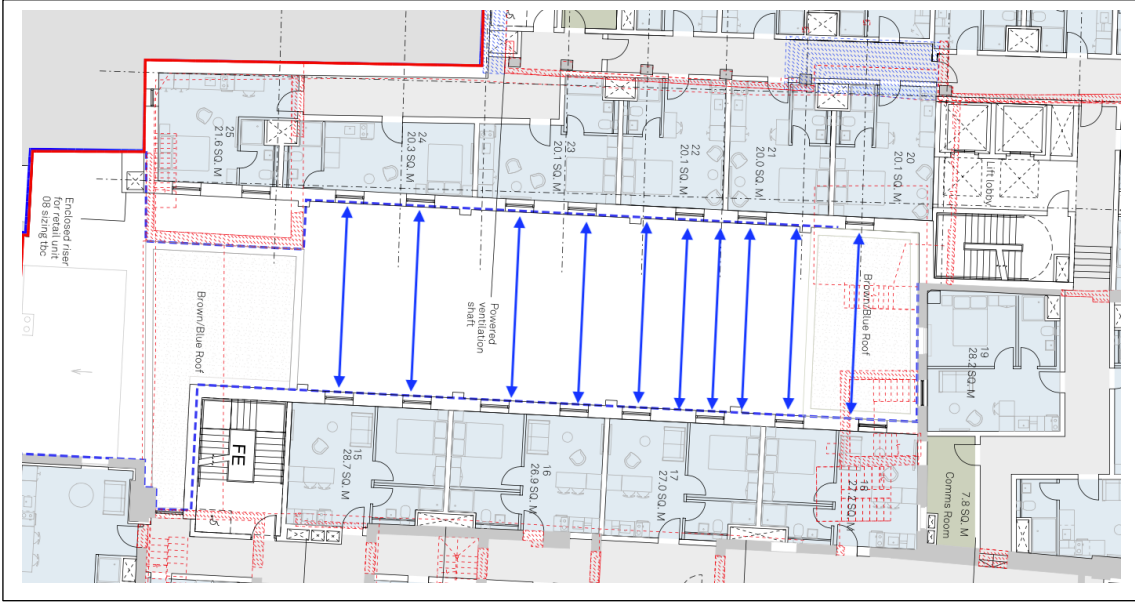
- 6.122 Paragraph 130 f) of the NPPF promotes development that will create a high standard of amenity for existing and future users.
- 6.123 **Policy CC8** of the RBLP stipulates that development Must not cause a detrimental impact to living environment of existing or future residential properties in terms of (inter alia):
- Privacy and overlooking;
 - Access to sunlight and daylight;
 - Visual dominance and overbearing effects of a development;
 - Harm to outlook;
 - Artificial lighting; and
 - Security and Safety.

Assessment

- 6.124 There are several key elements of the proposals and amenity tests that have been addressed as part of their design and assessment. These are taken in turn below.

Privacy and Outlook

- 6.125 Given the existing uses and nature of the functional development at the rear of the Site, there are limited existing properties beyond the Site that currently overlook the Site. The closest existing residential occupiers are those in the upper floors of 32 Friar Street and 1 Station Road.
- 6.126 Officers' comments during the pre-app that there were instances of interface windows of the apart-hotel have direct-window to windows (7.5m gap), albeit this an apart-hotel and therefore temporary accommodation and not residential use, the layouts have been tweaked to address this comment, albeit not all occasions can be mitigated, we submit this, on its own is not a matter of concern to warrant objection to the scheme. However, for the avoidance of doubt, having consulted the future operators, the advice received is this is not a concern, however, the use of single direction glazing can be used.



Public Square Management Plan

- 6.127 As per Officers request at pre-application and the former scheme, a Management Plan is presented that addresses details of the proposed hours of use, noise controls, capacity, alcohol sales, details of external lighting and general management practices including how access from the two entrances would be controlled - we refer readers to the said Management Plan that accompanies the application.
- 6.128 We confirm that the proposals will achieve Secured by Design accreditation and accepted a condition pertaining to compliance with such.

Security and Safety

- 6.129 The Site's town centre location benefits from existing natural surveillance of a busy high street and existing on-street CCTV network. The retail frontages of QVS and Friar Street will therefore benefit from this and additional security measures that may be implemented by individual occupiers, such as internal CCTV.
- 6.130 The rear public square will have gated accessways, which will be open for the majority of the day and trading hours of the associated retail units. Access will be restricted during night-time hours to provide additional security for the rear retail units and the access to the apart-hotel. Access through these gates at this time will be controlled by the apart-hotel reception for residents arriving out-of-hours. Access to the apart-hotel will be via Fife Court or via the market square, both being controlled via audio/visual link to reception and electronic key card access for guest once they have been registered and checked. Internally, guests will utilise passes that will only allow access to their rooms and circulation space associated. Internal CCTV will also be in operation.
- 6.131 The proposed shopfronts and gated public square entryways have been designed to omit any hidden recesses that might encourage loitering or antisocial gathering, a potential problem

with the former scheme. Adequate lighting will be provided in passageways and within the market square to ensure a safe and welcoming environment as well as clear visibility for CCTV cameras. The details of lighting in these areas will be secured by condition pursuant to any planning permission, but is anticipated to include high-level soft lighting, supplemented by wup/down lights on piers and new retail units. Further information is provided within the accompanying DAS.

Summary

- 6.132 The proposals are considered to comply with daylight and sunlight requirements and wind/microclimate matters and these are addressed fully in the accompanying reports that support this planning application submission. The proposals also provide an adequate safe and inviting environment that provides sufficient security and deters crime, without being an overly dominant feature or posing as a deterrent for all users. The proposals are considered to comply with the NPPF and Policy CC8 of the RBLP.

6. Open Space Provision

Policy

- 6.133 In seeking to serve community needs, paragraph 93 a) of the NPPF requires decisions to plan positively for the provision and use of shared spaces, such as meeting spaces and open spaces. Paragraph 123 of the NPPF is concerned with making efficient use of land and requires a positive approach to applications for alternative use of developed land where this would help meet an identified need. Proposals for improving the quality of access to open space should be supported.
- 6.134 **Policy EN9** of the RBLP requires all new development to make provision for appropriate open space based on the needs of the development. New open space should:
- Be in useable parcels of land and not be fragmented;
 - Be safely and easily accessible and not severed by any physical barrier, including a road;
 - Be accessible to the general public and be designed so as to feel that it is part of the public and not private realm;
 - Create a safe environment, appropriately considering lighting and layout to reduce the fear of crime;
 - Provide some informal landscaping for aesthetic, wildlife and recreational purposes; and
 - Link into the Green Network where possible.
- 6.135 The supporting text for Policy EN9 notes that people in and around the town centre are still further away from public open space than guidelines recommend.
- 6.136 **Policy EN10** states that in areas with relatively poor access to open space facilities (including as a result of severance lines), new development should make provision for, or contribute to, improvements to road and other crossings to improve access to green space and/or facilitate the creation or linking of safe off-road routes to parks.

- 6.137 In relation to public realm in Central Reading, **Policy CR3** requires development to make a positive contribution and will be assessed against the following:
- All sites greater than 1ha will need to provide new public open space or civic squares integrated with surrounding development;
 - New open spaces should be of a size and shape to accommodate imaginative uses. Where appropriate, provision of water features, trees, other planting and hard landscaping will be expected;
 - Public realm should conserve and enhance the historic environment of the centre and significance of heritage assets therein and their setting.
- 6.138 Section 7.7.7 of the Reading Open Space Strategy recognises the importance of town centre spaces and their role in creating urban sanctuaries in which people can relax, meet, play or take a break from working or shopping.

Assessment

- 6.139 The RBLP notes a lack of access to open space within Central Reading. Whilst there are some park areas nearby: Lavender Place Community Gardens, 360m straight line to the south west; and Forbury Gardens, 300m straight line to the east, there are limited civic squares or similar areas of public realm designed for congregation, meeting and relaxing. With the exception of the Railway Station approach, there are no such squares within a 500m radius of the Site, and beyond in some directions.
- 6.140 The public square will be integral to the proposed development, providing active, useable public realm in the heart of Central Reading, complementing the retail and apart-hotel uses and acting as a destination in this part of the town centre. The square will be a hub for respite for shoppers and workers within the town centre, a place to meet others, relax, eat and socialise.
- 6.141 The square will be a functional event space, adaptable and able to host numerous different format and size of events, ranging from outdoor markets, and art displays to sports screenings and stage events. At approximately 184 sqm, the main square will be able to host seated events and standing events - the number of attendees will be controlled having regard to Fire Safety and Licencing requirements.
- 6.142 The stone set paving of the square will create a light and airy appearance that complements the materials and features of the proposed rear extension, which in turn is respectful to and reflective of the materials and detailing present in the QVS frontage of the existing buildings. Moveable timber-framed planting and other potted vegetation and screening will assist in softening the square and providing a visually attractive space for users.



- 6.143 In terms of the square, when compared to the approved scheme, this is addressed at paras.6.43 to 6.46, the finding of the assessment is the anchoring of the food and beverage, the QVS access, Fife Court access and retail permeability, the market square as proposed will be an improvement over the approved scheme.
- 6.144 Security and safety matters have been addressed previously in this statement and further details are contained within the security strategy within the accompanying DAS and Management Plan. Appropriate lighting, CCTV and restricted access will create a welcoming but safe environment, free from the fear of crime.
- 6.145 **Biodiversity**: An ecology assessment accompanies that finds there are no greenspace was present or proposed for impact and no signs or evidence of protected, priority or rare species were noted during either survey and habitats were considered highly unlikely to support such species.
- 6.146 The scheme proposes brown roofs where possible and planting to the front, which will aid and improve biodiversity on site, albeit it is acknowledge there is limited scope for ecology improvements, however, best efforts will be made to improve biodiversity with planting, which will make a modest contribution where currently there is no greening.

[Pre-application advice commentary \(12 July 2022\)](#)

- 6.147 In principle the creation of a new courtyard space provides a welcomed and potentially exciting planning benefit of the emerging development. As such, it is supported in principle. Officers queried the changes to the courtyard space from the original applications (210223/210224). Officers noted that the applicant advised the proposed ground floor layout has a number of benefits when compared with that sought with 210223/210224 location of lifts / waste strategy / F&B and apart-hotel entrance helping increase footfall into the space, but in any event, is a substantial enhancement over the 'as existing' position.

[Summary](#)

- 6.148 The proposed public square has evolved since the original QVS1 submission, with improvements to ground floor layout and detailed arrangements have been set out in the DAS and the management plan to support this. The public square is a considerable and significant public benefit of the proposals, and an important part of preserving and enhancing the historic character of the Listed Buildings, as well as improving connectivity and footfall to the comprehensively development space. The addition of the food and beverage use, and increased permeability, will further underpin this development. The proposals are considered to comply with the provisions of the NPPF and RBLP Policies EN9, EN10 and CR3. As set out throughout this document, the proposed public square has also continued to be supported in pre-application advice received, noting it as an inventive design response and a benefit of the proposals.

[7. Air and Noise Impacts](#)

[Policy](#)

- 6.149 NPPF paragraph 185 seeks to protect the natural environment, including preventing new and existing development from unacceptable or adverse impacts of air or noise pollution. RBLP **Policy CC8** also seeks to safeguard existing and future residents from detrimental impact from noise and disturbance, dust and fumes, vibration and smell. **Policy EN15** states that where a development would introduce sensitive uses into, or intensify such uses within, an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA), detrimental effects on that use should be mitigated. Planning obligations may be used to secure contributions to tackle poor air quality or for air quality monitoring.
- 6.150 Where noise generating equipment is proposed, RBLP **Policy EN17** requires the noise source specific level (plant noise level) should be at least 10dBA below the existing background level as measured at the nearest noise sensitive receptor.

[Assessment - Air Quality](#)

- 6.151 Much of Reading is designated as an AQMA and the Site falls within such an area. Major developments are required to be accompanied by an Air Quality Assessment (AQA) if they will

meet a set of criteria, including increasing the level of car parking or give rise to an increase in HGV movements or other detrimental air quality impacts.

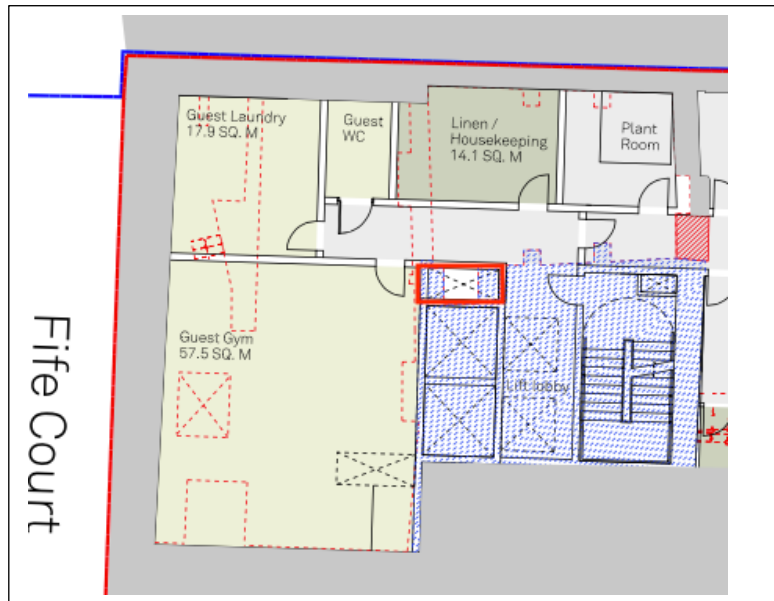
- 6.152 The application is accompanied by an AQA, which assesses the impact of the proposals during construction and occupation, both on existing neighbouring uses and future occupiers of the development. The AQA concludes that the site is a 'low risk' site and the impact of dust soiling and particulate matter from construction activities can be reduced to negligible levels through recommended mitigation measures. Continuous visual assessment of the site is recommended, along with maintaining a complaints log to capture isolated incidents and to rectify them.
- 6.153 For the impact of vehicle emissions on future occupiers, the AQA finds that predicted particulate matter concentrations will be below relevant objectives and an acceptable level. The predicted nitrous oxide concentrations are found by the AQA to be below relevant air quality objectives at all assessed parts of the development, with the exception of the first, second and third levels of the Friar Street façade, where mitigation measures will need to be incorporated. The proposals will include mechanical filtered ventilation for apart-hotel rooms on the Friar Street façade and unopenable windows to these rooms.
- 6.154 The proposals are therefore in accordance with the requirements of the NPPF and policies CC8 and EN15. Please refer to the submitted AQA for further details of the technical assessment and recommendations.

Assessment - Odour and Ventilation

- 6.155 The future tenants and what uses they will seek to operate within has not be secured and as this scheme is at planning stage, the future ventilation to fitted will not be known until post approval and the Applicant goes to market. However, as previously set out, these are modest units and are expected to fall within E(a) and maybe tip in to E(c). However, in preparing the scheme, a M&E assessment that details the ventilation strategy accompanies.
- 6.156 In any event, the retail units benefit from generous floor to ceiling heights, which provide sufficient scope to fit air handling. One such system, which is/ being successfully installed within a building the Applicant owns is the Recon Air Recirculation System that negates the need for a flue. However, risers are proposed and therefore, there is sufficient allowance for roof level ventilation. For note, the food prep area of the food and beverage has again connection to the roof via rises for ventilation flues to be installed.
- 6.157 However, the final end user will be tasked with fitting out and based on initial feedback it is more likely that the end users of the retail will not have a requirement for full cooking facilities, with the site being presented to the independent market with a focus on retail and modest cafes.

Assessment - Gym

- 6.158 The gym will be for guests only, one will note that the gym lays adjacent to the lift core and riser (red box, this will connect to ventilation system providing fresh and cooled air.



Assessment - Noise

- 6.159 This application is accompanied by a Noise Impact Assessment (NIA), produced by KP Acoustics. This assesses the impact of the proposals on existing sensitive receptors, as well as the conditions for future occupiers of the development, notably the proposed apart-hotel. The NIA has focussed on the impact of proposed plant, which will be located on the roof of the proposed rear extension (main plant enclosure), on the roof of the two-storey rear addition in the public square (secondary plant enclosure). The potential noise generation from activity in the public square and the retail units themselves has also been taken into account. We should note, the Applicant controls the first floor of 146 Friar Street and it is not in residential use.
- 6.160 The NIA makes several recommendations to ensure appropriate noise levels are achieved for the apart-hotel use. The following mitigation measures will be incorporated into the proposals accordingly:
- *Use of recommended specified glazing;*
- 6.161 The Applicant confirms the secondary glazing of the apart-hotel/ rear window glazing will comply with this requirement. The restricted and double glazed windows will ensure that noise as a result of the uses, location and plant will not be affected.
- *Use of recommended technical specification of mechanical ventilation systems to meet identified noise levels;*
- 6.162 The Applicant Energy/ Ventilation Strategy that accompanies confirms the plant to be used and the NIA assessment has assessed the said plant.
- *Installation of appropriate underfloor sound insulation between the ground floor retail units and first floor apart-hotel; and*
- 6.163 The Applicant confirms appropriate underfloor sound insulation will be fitted between the ground and first floors, however, the detail of this is not available at submission due to the inability to gain access to ground floor units during this current lockdown and need to undertake

investigation works. However, the method to be used could be subject to a detailed condition requiring submission and agreement.

- *Installation of noise reducing louvres to plant enclosures.*

6.164 The NIA confirms the method of noise reduction required and a specification for the plant enclosure louvres.

Summary

6.165 The NIA concludes that, with the incorporation of the recommended mitigation, the proposals will ensure noise levels to sensitive receptors will remain below the identified standard and requirements of policy and will not give rise to detrimental noise impacts. This will protect the amenity of existing surrounding residential and commercial uses as well as the proposed future occupiers of the apart-hotel. Furthermore, the air quality assessment and ventilation strategy ensure the amenities of the future guests are protected. The proposals therefore comply with the NPPF and RBLP policies CC8 and EN17.

8. Archaeology

Policy

6.166 Paragraph 189 of the NPPF requires an appropriate desk-based assessment for sites that have the potential to include heritage assets with archaeological interest. The Site falls within an identified Area of Archaeological Potential within which, RBLP Policy EN2 requires applicants to identify and evaluate sites of archaeological significance and assess the impacts of development proposals. Where remains cannot be preserved in situ, they should be excavated, investigated and recorded. Where appropriate, Section 106 agreements will be negotiated to protect, enhance and interpret archaeological remains.

Pre-application advice commentary (12 July 2022)

6.167 The site is within an identified area for archaeological potential and proposes excavation (demolition of Friar Street buildings involve an increased sized/footprint basement level). Berkshire Archaeology will be consulted at application stage and a statement will be required to be submitted as per validation requirement 3. Given the expanded application site (in comparison with 210223/210224) it is considered necessary for a fresh archaeological assessment to be submitted at application stage.

Assessment

6.168 An Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment is submitted with this application, which assesses the potential for the Site to contain historic remains and is reflective of its location within an identified Area of Archaeological Potential. The Assessment identifies the potential for remains from the early medieval period onwards but does not identify any over-riding archaeological constraints that would prohibit or significantly constrain the Site's development.

6.169 Notwithstanding this, there is the potential for redevelopment to have an impact on potential remains. As such, the Assessment concludes that further investigation is likely to be required

to ascertain the nature and significance of any potential remains. It is states that this could comprise evaluations following demolition of buildings to the rear of the Listed Buildings, and/or an archaeological watching brief, caried out alongside demolition and groundworks.

Summary

- 6.170 The applicant commits to implementing the recommendations of the Archaeological Assessment and has submitted a fresh assessment for the revised QVS1 scheme at application stage. As such, provisions can of course be secured by way of condition pursuant to any planning permission. The assessment of the archaeological potential and the implementation of appropriate investigative measures is in line with the requirements of the NPPF and Policy EN9 of the RBLP.

9. Transport and Parking

Sustainable Transport

Policy

- 6.171 The NPPF promotes sustainable modes of transport and opportunities for development to increase the use of walking, cycling and public transport as modes of travel. Paragraph 106 a) supports an appropriate mix of uses across areas and larger sites with the aim of minimising the number and length of trips. Paragraph 110 a) seeks to ensure that appropriate opportunities to promote sustainable transport modes in developments have been taken, that safe and suitable access to the site can be gained by all users and that acceptable mitigation can be provided where required.
- 6.172 **Policy TR1** states that developments should promote and improve sustainable transport facilities, encouraging walking, cycling and the use of public transport. The supporting text for this policy recognises that, for major developments, it is important that users of, and visitors to the development can make sustainable travel choices using non-car modes of transport. For developments likely to have significant transport implications, Travel Plans will be sought.
- 6.173 **RBLP Policy TR3** states that development will only be permitted where:
- Accesses and works to the highway comply with the adopted standards of the Transport Authority;
 - The development would not have a material detrimental impact on the functioning of the transport network;
 - The proposals would not be detrimental to the safety of users of the transport network, including pedestrians and cyclists;
 - The proposal would not generate regular movement of heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) on unsuitable roads, or on roads without easy access to the Classified Highway Network; and
 - For non-residential uses, or new dwellings on classified roads, off-street servicing would be provided.
- 6.174 **Policy TR3** also states that proposals involving either the construction of a new site access, or a material increase in the use of an existing site access, directly onto the Classified Highway

Network will not be acceptable if they would be likely to result in the encouragement of the use of the network for short local trips or compromise the safe movement and free flow of traffic on the network or the safe use of the road.

- 6.175 In relation to cycle routes and facilities, **Policy TR4** requires developments to improve access for cyclists to, from and within the development. Development should not detrimentally affect identified cycle routes, of which both QVS and Friar street are.

Assessment

- 6.176 The Site is in a highly accessible location in the heart of the town centre, with immediate access to town centre shops, services and facilities. There is extremely good access to public transport with the busy bus route a long Friar Street and Reading Railway Station approximately 250m to the north. The pedestrianised nature of QVS and other shopping parades, as well as the traffic restrictions along Friar Street, make the area surrounding the Site pedestrian and cycle friendly, enhancing the safe accessible nature of the Site. The Transport Statement submitted with this application provides further detail on the accessibility of the site via pedestrianised areas, extensive cycle network and public transport provisions.
- 6.177 The proposed uses in this location will enhance the town centre offering to existing local residents and visitors, as well as introduce short-term letting accommodation into a highly accessible location. This will encourage the use of sustainable modes of transport and shorter trips to local facilities and services. The apart-hotel use will attract visitors and short-term workers to Reading and provide modern, high quality accommodation in the heart of the town centre that is accessible by public transport to many parts of the country, and highly accessible by foot and cycle to local facilities and amenities, including the central Reading employment market. The apart-hotel also proposes secure cycle parking and changing facilities to encourage the use of cycling as a sustainable mode of transport by staff and guests.
- 6.178 The Site and specifically the apart-hotel is in close association to national rail (250m) and local bus services and as a result of the use proposed (longer stay hotel), it is expected that many users would utilise such modes of transport. The TS shows that the proposed apart-hotel has the potential to generate 56 two-way total person trips during the AM peak and 51 two-way total period trips during the PM peak. However, if patrons were to arrive by taxi, there is a taxi layby located on Friar Street (less than 1minute walk) and there is more than sufficient road and parking capacity for drop off without compromising highway safety or adding to congestion.
- 6.179 For the remaining proportion estimated to travel via public transport, and those additional trips transferring from private vehicles, the Transport Assessment concludes that the existing public transport network has sufficient capacity to absorb these additional trips.
- 6.180 A Framework Travel Plan (TP) has been developed for the proposals and is submitted as part of this application. The aim of the TP is to encourage the use of sustainable modes of transport

and to reduce reliance on the private car. The TP sets out numerous measures and initiatives that can be implemented to meet this aim, including:

- Travel information packs on public transport services available;
- Information on available walking routes and health benefits and other encouragement measures;
- Additional promotion of cycling, beyond facilities provided by the proposals, such as cycle safety and maintenance workshops, encourage participation in cycling events and provide information on routes and health benefits;
- Promotion of public transport services and information, journey planner smartphone applications and display of timetables for staff;
- Provision of local taxi numbers and details to promote this as an alternative to the private car; and
- Local advertisement of jobs for the apart-hotel use within walking and cycling distance.

6.181 The Transport Assessment concludes that the proposals will have a negligible impact on the operation of the surrounding highway and transport networks and that the proposed car-free nature of the development is acceptable. There will be no alterations to the highways network or impact on highway safety in this regard. The collection and disposal of waste and servicing arrangements are addressed later in this Statement.

Summary

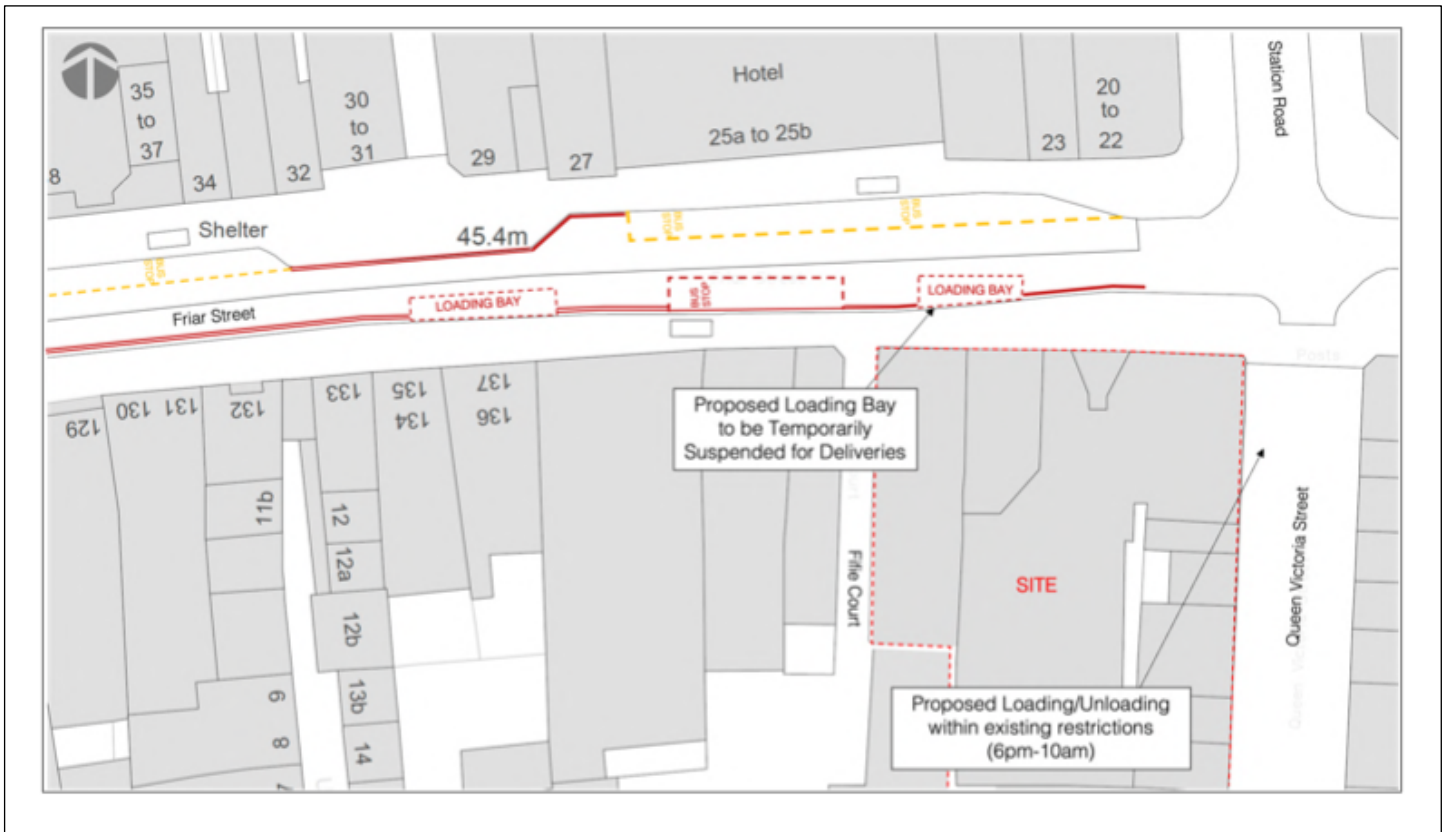
6.182 The location of the Site and the proposed uses are compatible and together utilise and encourage the use of sustainable modes of transport and will have negligible impact on the local highway and transport network. The proposals therefore accord with the NPPF and RBLP Policies TR1, TR3 and TR4.

Assessment - Construction Method Plan

6.183 A draft-Construction Method Plan (CMP) accompanies the application, which provides a basic overview of the potential manor the scheme could be built out. The caveat to place on the CMP is that the full details and assessment would be prepared at the appointment of a construction team and prior to the commencement of development.

6.184 Based on past experience and Applicant input, it is anticipated that construction could be circa 15 months albeit the aim is to be ahead of schedule. The site developer will make use of an existing loading bays via temporary suspensions on Friar Street and also via Queen Victoria Street.

6.185 Accordingly, we submit that the development can be constructed for this town centre site, which has direct highway access, of course subject to resolution at pre-commencement phase.



Summary

- 6.186 The location of the Site and the proposed uses are compatible and together utilise and encourage the use of sustainable modes of transport and will have negligible impact on the local highway and transport network. The proposals therefore accord with the NPPF and RBLP Policies TR1, TR3 and TR4.

Cycle Parking

Policy

- 6.187 Paragraph 107 of the NPPF states that parking standards should take into account the accessibility of sites, type and mix of development and availability of public transport. **Policy TR5** of the RBLP requires car and cycle parking provision that is appropriate to the accessibility of locations to sustainable transport facilities, particularly public transport.
- 6.188 The Reading Parking Standards and Design SPD establishes the following car parking standards of relevance to the proposals that apply to Zone 1 (central Reading) and are a maximum:
- A1-A5 Retail: nil
 - C1 Hotels: 0.25 spaces per room
- 6.189 The following cycle parking standards are a minimum as set out in the SPD:
- A1 Food Retail: 1 space per 6 staff and 1 space per 300 sqm
 - A1 Non-Food Retail up to 1,000 sqm: 1 space per 6 staff and 1 space per 250 sqm
 - A1 Non-Food Retail Over 1,000 sqm: 1 space per 6 staff and 1 space per 300 sqm
 - A2 Financial & Professional Services: 1 space per 6 staff
 - A3 Restaurants & Cafes: 1 space per 6 staff and 1 space per 300 sqm
 - A4 Eating Establishment: 1 space per 6 staff and 1 space per 300 sqm

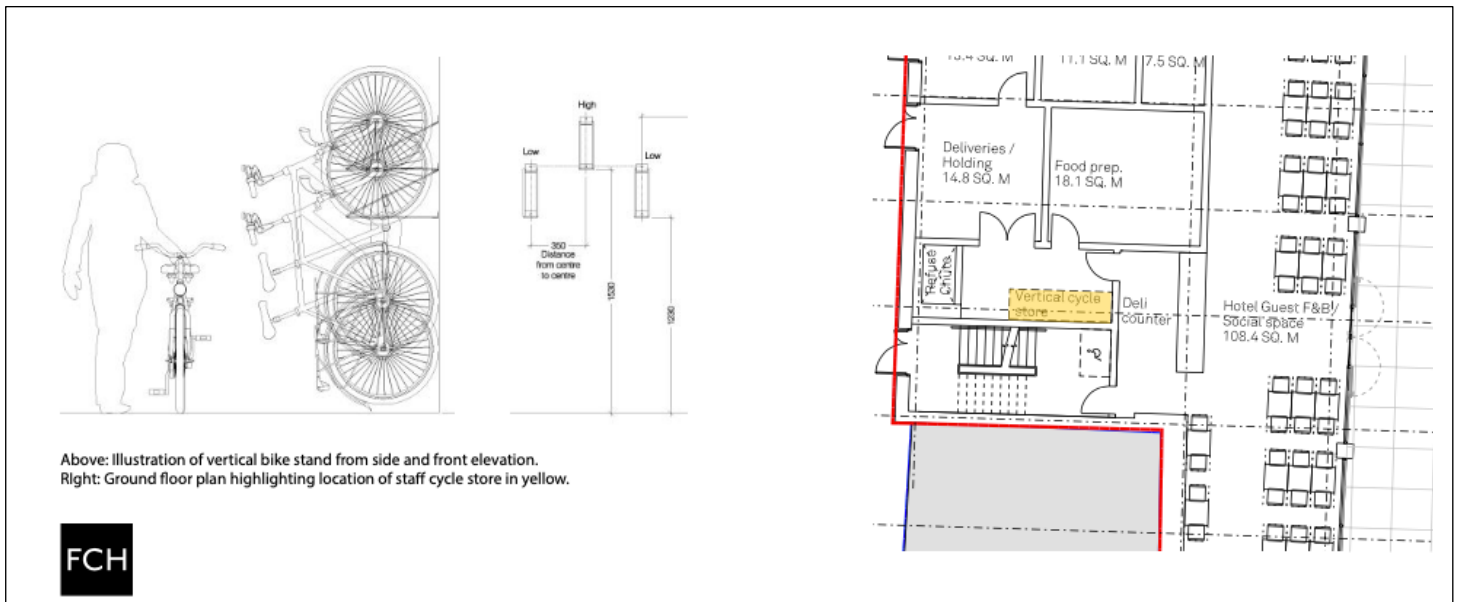
- A5 Hot Food Take-Away: 1 space per 6 staff and 1 space per 300 sqm
- C1 Hotels: 1 space per 6 staff

6.190 Loading bays and facilities for delivery and servicing within Zone 1 will be based on the merits of the individual application.

Assessment

6.191 The proposals are for a car-free development that reflects the highly accessible location of the Site, as described above. The car parking standards are a maximum and the zero-parking provision is reflective of the location and availability of public transport. The principle of a car free development was noted as acceptable in the pre-application advice received on the previous scheme iteration. Reference was also made to the approved apart hotel development at 17-27 QVS, which is also car-free. The proposals are therefore considered to be appropriate and in accordance with the NPPF and Policy TR5 of the RBLP.

6.192 Secure parking spaces will be provided at a level of 1 space per 6 staff to comply with cycle parking standards for C1 use and retail use - with 20 staff, the requirement is for 4 spaces. These will be provided in a designated cycle store in the basement level. Additionally, there are multiple opportunities for cycle parking in the immediate vicinity, with Sheffield-style bike stands located on Broad Street, 100m south of the Site, and slightly further away on Friar Street and Belgrave Street.



Summary

6.193 The scheme has considered how deliveries, including waste collections and commercial deliveries are made to the site. A sketch plan clearly illustrating the location of the loading bay has been included. The provision of cycle parking is in accordance with the parking standards and the development will be car free, therefore it is considered appropriate for the development and complies with RBLP policy TR5.

10. Flood Risk & SuDS

Policy

- 6.194 The NPPF requires development in areas at risk of flooding to be avoided (paragraph 155), utilising the sequential test and directing development towards areas of lowest flood risk (paragraph 162). Development should ensure flood risk is not increased elsewhere and should be supported by a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) where appropriate. Paragraph 169 of the NPPF requires major developments to incorporate sustainable drainage systems unless it can be justified that these would be inappropriate.
- 6.195 **Policy EN18** directs development to areas at the lowest risk of flooding in the first instance. It also states that all major developments must incorporate Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) as appropriate. Runoff rates should aim to reflect greenfield conditions and, in any case, must be no greater than the existing conditions of the site.
- 6.196 The Site is located within Flood Zone 1, as identified on the Government Flood Map for Planning. Flood Zone 1 is at low probability of flooding and defined as land having less than 1 in 1,000 annual probability of river or sea flooding.

Assessment

- 6.197 The Site location is at low risk of flooding and the most suitable location for development, in accordance with the sequential approach. The proposals do not meet the minimum requirements for a Flood Risk Assessment but such an assessment accompanies the application.
- 6.198 To inform the FRA, a drainage strategy has been prepared for the proposed development following a review of relevant planning policy and guidance. To comply, the drainage hierarchy has been followed and SuDS have been considered from the outset of the design process. This has enabled significant areas of brown/blue roofs (222m²) to be included across the roof at 6 locations and permeable paving (including permeavoid) across 140m² of courtyard at ground level.
- 6.199 This will result in 43% of the site draining via SuDS which has the opportunity to more than offset the foul increases arising from the development (+0.63 l/s compared to existing) as long as the receiving sewers are carefully considered and agreed with Thames Water. By attenuating the surface water flows significantly and by removing surface water flows from the foul sewer in Friar Street there will be an overall positive impact on the receiving sewers.

Summary

- 6.200 The proposals are at low risk from flooding and comply with the sequential approach for such development. Policy EN18 provides flexibility in the incorporation of SuDS where this is appropriate for any particular site or development. The Site constraints prohibit the provision of a comprehensive SuDS and significant weight is to be given to the protection and conservation of the adjacent heritage assets and archaeological potential in relation to the

Site. With no additional impermeable area added and a reduction in impermeable area through the inclusion of a brown/ blue roofs, the proposals will provide a lower surface runoff rate than currently exists. Therefore, the proposals comply with the NPPF and Policy EN18 of the RBLP.

11. Sustainability

Policy

- 6.201 Paragraph 154 a) of the NPPF requires new development to avoid increased vulnerability to the impacts of climate change and to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Development plans should identify opportunities for decentralised, renewable or low carbon energy supply systems (paragraph 155). Paragraph 157 a) builds on this and requires the determination of applications to consider the feasibility and viability of compliance with sustainability policies where the type of development and design may justify otherwise.
- 6.202 **Policy CC2** requires all major non-residential developments or conversions to meet the most up-to-date BREEAM 'Excellent' standards, where possible. Development should include recycling grey water and rainwater harvesting where systems are energy and cost efficient.
- 6.203 In considering adaptation to climate change, **Policy CC3** requires the following measures to be incorporated into development:
- Orientated to maximise opportunities for natural heating and ventilation;
 - Designed in resilience to climate change with measures such as solar shading, thermal mass, heating and ventilation, material colour choices, green and brown roofs and walls etc;
 - Trees and planting for shading of amenity areas and buildings, utilising native species;
 - Minimise the impact of surface water runoff and where possible, mitigation and resilience measures for any increase in river flooding levels as a result of climate change.
- 6.204 **Policy CC4** states that development of over 1,000 sqm should consider the inclusion of decentralised energy provision within the site, unless it can be demonstrated that the scheme is not suitable, feasible or viable for this form of energy provision. Developments will be expected to link to existing decentralised energy provision in the vicinity.

Assessment

- 6.205 This application is accompanied by an Energy and Sustainability Statement (ESS), which assesses the sustainability potential of the proposals and makes recommendations, as well as undertakes a BREEAM assessment of the proposals. The ESS recognises the constraints of the Site and the limitations that the conversion of Listed Buildings places on incorporating certain technologies, design elements and sustainability measures. Those measures contributing towards the sustainability of the proposals include:
- Redevelopment of previously developed land;
 - Reuse and refurbishment of existing buildings;
 - Reduction in CO2 emissions associated with the existing site through reduced energy demand and energy efficient building materials;
 - Provision of air source heat pumps and photovoltaic panels;

- Energy efficient light fittings and daylight cut-offs;
- Water efficient fixtures and fittings to achieve over 40% reduction over industry baseline;
- Responsible sourcing of construction materials;
- Construction Waste Management Plan to minimise waste and recycle where possible;
- Operational waste management strategy;
- Minimisation of overheating through adequate insulation, efficient lighting, appropriate glazing materials and blinds and through thermal mass absorption; and
- Provision of a brown roofs within the development and soft landscaping for the public square.

6.206 It is noted within the ESS that the apart-hotel in the new build/extension should aim to meet BREEAM Excellent in accordance with RBLP Policy CC2. The ESS, as per accepted guidance and in consultation with the Council, the two distinct elements of the proposal have been assessed separately i.e. the new build element and the listed building together with the interwoven extension.

6.207 **New Building:** we are pleased to confirm the 'new build' element achieves Excellent. The proposed energy strategy includes:

- + High performing fabric for new build and refurbished elements
- + High performance VRF heat pump heating and cooling
- + Heat pumps for DHW
- + MVHR for ventilation
- + High performance LEDs throughout with presence/absence detection and daylight dimming
- + 130sgm PV on the roof

	Steps	Energy Savings		CO ₂ Emissions Savings			
		in %	in MWh/year	Part L		SAP10.2	
				in %	in tons CO ₂ /year	in %	in tons CO ₂ /year
Refurbishment	Passive Design	4%	10.6	2%	2.2	2%	2.2
	Active Design	15%	36.4	11%	14.8	5%	5.9
	LZC	126%	313.0	27%	37.9	65%	73.0
New build	Passive Design	4%	10.2	4%	2.2	4%	2.2
	Active Design	8%	19.2	11%	6.4	7%	3.5
	LZC	66%	163.5	45%	26.3	72%	36.6

Summary

6.208 The proposals are considered to meet many of the best practice techniques and use of technologies to enhance the sustainability of the Site and the proposed development, within the feasibility of the Site constraints. The proposals will result in a much enhanced sustainability performance than the existing Site and will ensure an efficient reuse of the

existing Listed Buildings. The proposals are therefore considered to comply with the provisions of the NPPF and RBLP Policies CC2, CC3 and CC4.

12. Servicing and Waste

Policy

- 6.209 **Policy CC5** requires development to minimise the generation of waste in construction and use of buildings. Proposals should be well designed to facilitate waste storage, reuse, recycling and composting. The Reading Sustainable Design and Construction SPD details measures that should be considered in the pursuit of minimising and managing waste.
- 6.210 The re-use and refurbishment of existing buildings where possible, rather than demolition, will contribute to minimising waste and a Site Waste Management Plan (contained in the DAS) should be prepared for developments. For during the lifetime use of buildings, the SPD states that adequate provision should be made for both internal and external storage of waste.
- 6.211 **Policy TR3** protects against detrimental impacts to highway safety and requires off-street servicing to be provided for non-residential development. The policy resists development that would give rise to regular movements of HGVs.

Assessment - Servicing

- 6.212 The existing retail units at the Site utilise existing servicing and waste arrangements, where servicing and deliveries to properties along QVS are permitted between 18:00 and 10:00. There are also loading bays present on Station Road and Friar Street to the east of the Site, where loading is permitted between 05:00 and 23:00. Loading is also permitted on sections of double yellow lined kerbside on Friar Street outside of the 07:30-09:30 and 16:00-18:00 exclusion period.
- 6.213 A Delivery and Servicing Plan (DSP) has been prepared and submitted in support of this application, which assesses the current servicing and waste situation and provides a strategy for future servicing of the development proposals. The DSP identifies that the combination of kerbside options on Friar Street and Station Road, along with access from QVS, provide sufficient opportunity to continue servicing the proposed retail units and the additional requirements of the apart-hotel use with more than enough capacity in the existing provision and arrangements.
- 6.214 **Servicing Apart-hotel:** arrangements for the apart-hotel use will be predominantly driven by laundry servicing, which will be combined with other servicing requirements to limit trip generation. It is anticipated, this would be upto one laundry collection per day, one fresh/ dry goods per day and one drinks per week.

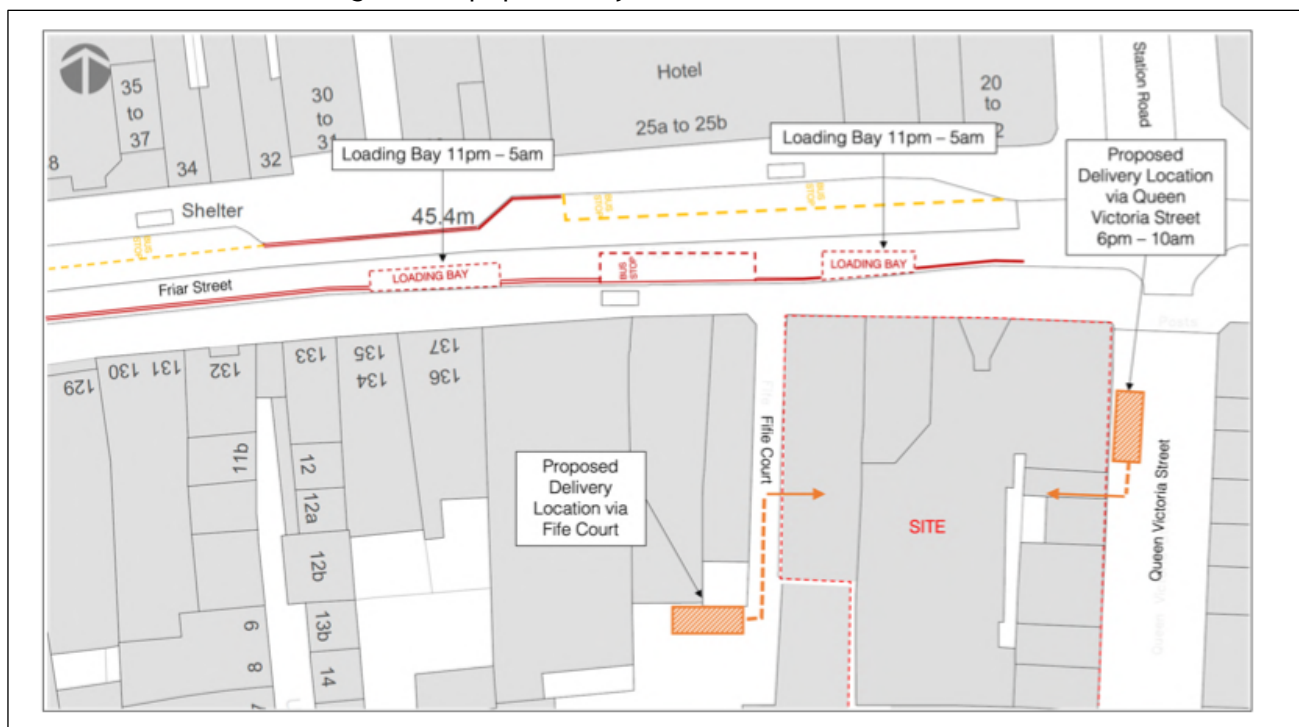
Table 4.1 Delivery Types and Vehicles

Delivery Type	Frequency	Dwell Time	Vehicle Type
Linen Collection / Delivery	Daily	1 hour	4.6T Van
Food (Fresh / Dry Goods)	Daily	30 minutes	4.6T Van
Drinks	Weekly	1 hour	Small Rigid

6.215 This equates to up to 3 deliveries were day, which we are advised is a reduction over the current operation. The servicing with utilise two places:

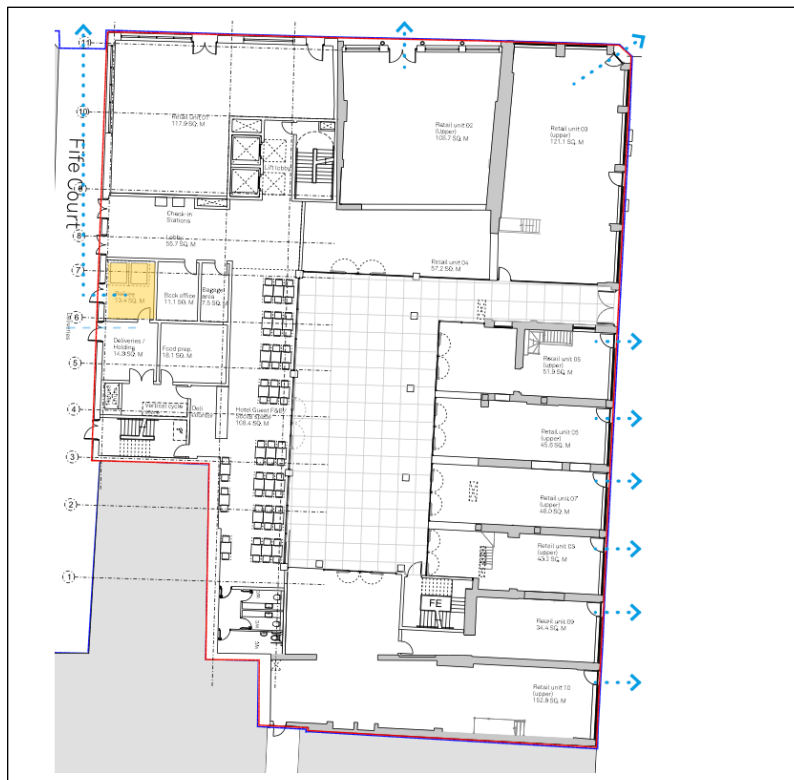
- Delivery entrance from Fife Court.
- Loading bay on Queen Victoria Street.

Details of the loading and swept path analysis is contained in the DSP.



6.216 **Waste Apart-hotel:** they will utilise a self-bin store to be created off the main public square, which will enable easy transportation of waste bins between the site and refuse vehicles. General waste and recyclables will be separated within each apart-hotel unit kitchen and collected with the cleaning of each unit. It is envisaged that waste collections will be undertaken by a private waste contractor with collections daily. This town centre site is already serviced by refuse vehicles and collection would be coordinated with other comparable users so as to simply 'tag on' the extra collection when collecting from other premises locally. Refuse collection for the apart-hotel units will take place from the loading bay located on Friar Street outside the site frontage in accordance with the existing restrictions.

- 6.217 **Servicing Retail:** the DSP notes the existing use of the site and floor area, the proposed use will be consistent in floor area, therefore, the servicing is expected to be similar to the existing situation.
- 6.218 **Waste Retail:** the DSP notes the existing use of the site and floor area, the proposed use will be consistent in floor area, therefore, the servicing is expected to be similar to the existing situation.
- 6.219 Visits by servicing vehicles will be scheduled and coordinated to reduce waiting times and for efficient
- 6.220 To ensure compliance with the DSP and of the servicing arrangements, a member of staff will be appointed responsibility for overseeing and implementing the management plan. They will also be responsible for monitoring and feeding back its implementation over time with record of any incidences and requirements for adaptation/mitigation.



Summary

- 6.221 The DSP concludes that the servicing and waste arrangements will enable the efficient operation of the proposals and will minimise any impact of servicing movements on the existing road network. The Transport Assessment submitted with the application also concludes that the proposals will not give rise to detrimental impacts to the highway network or highway safety. Refuse disposal arrangements will be subject to a condition pursuant to any planning permission to ensure appropriate monitoring and control. For the reasons set out above, the proposals are considered to comply with the NPPF and Policies TR5 and CC3 of the RBLP.

7.0 Summary & Conclusions

Summary

- 7.1 This Planning Statement and supporting material show that the development proposals presented herewith represent sustainable development, are in accordance with the up-to-date development plan and should be granted planning permission accordingly.
- 7.2 The lack of desirability of the existing use, the demand for apart-hotel uses and the opportunity for preservation and enhancement of a heritage asset and the other benefits the scheme will deliver represent a strong justification for alternative uses with a summary of the key matters of consideration set out below.
- 7.3 The pre-application advice given by Reading Borough Council on the proposals refers to the approved scheme (refs: 210223 and 210224) and this revised scheme the subject of this planning statement will follow the form and nature of those approved applications, which has established the principle for the proposals set out within this planning statement and in this summary and conclusion section.
- 7.4 This scheme submitted builds on the approved QVS1 schemes and evolves the original proposals, expanding on the QVS1 vision approved previously. This submission expands the market square and includes Nos.145 and 146 Friar Street, enhancing the retail and commercial offering and providing improved connectivity to the market square from Fife court and surrounding areas. More apart-hotel guestrooms (104 rooms) have been included at the upper level across the QVS1 site. This scheme will align with the QVS2 proposals to rejuvenate and enliven this prominent town centre location and create a comprehensively redeveloped mixed-use hotel quarter. The development of leisure and business visitor accommodation will future proof the site and assist in its long-term economic prosperity, providing a catalyst for the regeneration of Friar Street and Queen Victoria Street.
- 7.5 The proposals represent a unique opportunity to save and restore these important heritage assets, breathing new life into the Listed Buildings and this part of the town centre. The significant heritage and public benefits of the proposals far outweigh the less than substantial harm arising to the heritage significance and result in a net benefit and enhancement to the current situation in full compliance with the tests and requirements of the NPPF and Policies EN1 and EN6 of the RBLP.
- 7.6 There has clearly been established there is no demand for the office accommodation and the associated works to bring this up to a reasonable standard are unsustainable, it would not be DDA compliant. There are strong material considerations when considered, the only conclusion one can reach is that the proposals are in compliance with the provision of the NPPF and Policy EM3.
- 7.7 The scheme will generate jobs in their own right, as well as creating secondary and tertiary employment opportunities.

- 7.8 The retail provision of the proposals is an appropriate use within the town centre and will enhance its vitality and viability in accordance with the NPPF and policies CR1, CR7, CR8 and RL2 of the RBLP.
- 7.9 The apart-hotel use is a compatible and supporting use for this location within central Reading and will assist in enhancing the vitality and viability of the centre in accordance with the NPPF and RBLP Policies RL1, CR1, CR4 and CR6.
- 7.10 The design proposals were supported in principle at pre-application advice stages, have evolved with guidance received and are considered to fully accord with the NPPF and RBLP Policies CC6, CC7 and CR2.
- 7.11 Officers and the Reading DRP fully support the redevelopment of Nos.145 and 146 recognising that the proposals for 145 - 146 Friar Street show great promise. The renewal of 141 - 148 Friar Street could act as a valuable catalyst to support wider improvements within this part of the Town Centre.
- 7.12 The proposals are considered to provide a safe and inviting environment that provides sufficient security and deters crime, without being an overly dominant feature or posing as a deterrent for all users in compliance with the NPPF and Policy CC8 of the RBLP.
- 7.13 The proposed public square is a considerable significant public benefit of the proposals and an important part of preserving and enhancing the historic character of the Listed Buildings, complying with the provisions of the NPPF and RBLP Policies EN9, EN10 and CR3.
- 7.14 The proposed public square was also supported in pre-application advice received, noting it as an inventive design response and a benefit of the proposals.
- 7.15 The NIA concludes that, with the incorporation of the recommended mitigation, the proposals will ensure noise levels to sensitive receptors will remain below the identified standard and requirements of policy and will not give rise to detrimental noise impacts.
- 7.16 This will protect the amenity of existing surrounding residential and commercial uses as well as the proposed future occupiers of the apart-hotel, therefore complying with the NPPF and RBLP policies CC8 and EN17.
- 7.17 The location of the Site and the proposed uses are compatible and together utilise and encourage the use of sustainable modes of transport and will have negligible impact on the local highway and transport network, which complies with the NPPF and RBLP Policies TR1, TR3 and TR4.
- 7.18 The provision of cycle parking is in accordance with the parking standards and the development will be car free, therefore it is considered appropriate for the development and complies with RBLP policy TR5.

- 7.19 The proposals are at low risk from flooding and comply with the sequential approach for such development.
- 7.20 Policy EN18 provides flexibility in the incorporation of SuDS where this is appropriate for any particular site or development. The Site constraints prohibit the provision of a comprehensive SuDS and significant weight is to be given to the protection and conservation of the heritage assets and archaeological potential. With no additional impermeable area added and a reduction in impermeable area through the inclusion of a green roof, the proposals will provide a lower surface runoff rate than currently exists. Therefore the proposals comply with the NPPF and Policy EN18 of the RBLP.
- 7.21 The proposals are considered to meet many of the best practice techniques and use of technologies to enhance the sustainability of the Site and the proposed development, within the feasibility of the Site constraints. The proposals will result in a much-enhanced sustainability performance than the existing Site and will ensure an efficient reuse of the existing Listed Buildings. The proposals are therefore considered to comply with the provisions of the NPPF and RBLP Policies CC2, CC3 and CC4.
- 7.22 The DSP concludes that the servicing and waste arrangements will enable the efficient operation of the proposals and will minimise any impact of servicing movements on the existing road network.
- 7.23 The Transport Statement submitted with the application also concludes that the proposals will not give rise to detrimental impacts to the highway network or highway safety.
- 7.24 The utilisation of a private refuse collection contractor is in accordance with the pre-application advice received are considered to comply with the NPPF and Policies TR5 and CC3 of the RBLP.
- 7.25 We have consulted Planning officers, Councillors, Reading Design Review Panel, Reading BID, Reading Civic, Reading CAAC, amenity societies, business, local residents and social media. The feedback to date has been overwhelming positive and level of support has been beyond the Applicant's expectations. The feedback is encouraging the speedy delivery of the scheme.
- 7.26 In summary, the engagement found that the scheme presented is a positive benefit that on the feedback received, is supported by the local community and key stakeholders.

Public Benefits

- 7.27 The HS concludes that any harm to the significance of the Listed Buildings would be less than substantial (medium level) and that this harm is weighed against the conservation, preservation and enhancement of the heritage assets that the proposals deliver, which are significant.
- 7.28 In addition to heritage benefits, the NPPF requires an assessment of the balance of harm against other public benefits arising from development proposals. It is clear that the repair,

reinstatement, and enhancement of these important heritage assets are in themselves of public benefit, but the proposals will also deliver the following public benefits:

- Repair and reinstatement of the original historic frontages of the listed buildings and the architectural detailing that contributes to their significance;
- Visual improvement to these prominent retail streets with uniform shop frontages, signage and lighting, respectful to the original historic frontages;
- Removal and enhancement to the form and appearance of built form at the rear of the site;
- Provision of modern, subservient and respectful built form to the rear of the site, enhancing the visual appearance and supporting and promoting the grandeur of the retained listed buildings;
- Provision of additional floorspace for retail and appropriate town centre uses in a highly accessible and sustainable location,
- Enhancing the diversity of retail provision and attracting boutique ‘heritage retail’ and independent retailers;
- Provision of a mix of retail uses, providing diversity in town centre offering and opportunities for respite and relaxation, such as with coffee shops;
- Provision for small businesses and shops with appropriate-sized retail units to meet demand and support the small business market;
- Introduction of apart-hotel use, providing short-term let accommodation, supporting the needs of, and attracting, working professionals and visitors to Reading, as well as assisting in remedying an identified under-provision;
- Provision of an enhanced public realm with the public square, providing opportunities for respite, relaxation and play, as well as community and public events and the opportunity to foster and support local community initiatives, exhibitions and performances;
- Provision of a town centre destination that will attract visitors, shoppers and workers to this part of the town centre, enhancing the activity, vitality and viability of this part of the centre;
- This is a proposal, which based on stakeholder consultation, will lead to significant public benefits.
- The proposals will arrest the decline of QVS and support and bolster the Reading economy, which is of particular importance at this current time and will play an important role in the post-Covid19 recovery of the town centre.
- The renewal of 141 - 148 Friar Street could act as a valuable catalyst to support wider improvements within this part of the Town Centre.

Conclusions

- 7.29 Reading is poised for a bright future and to position itself as nationally recognised town of culture and sustainability, leading the way in green tech innovation. The redevelopment and growth of the town centre is a pivotal in achieving this ambition and is already underway with major schemes approved and under construction that will modernise and diversify Reading's offer in culture and leisure, education, research and development, retail, and employment sectors.
- 7.30 The success of Reading's future vision will depend upon its ability to build upon its existing legacy in these sectors and harmoniously assimilating its valuable heritage in a celebration of its past with its future, in terms of direct jobs it estimated to be circa 40.
- 7.31 The QVS/Friar Street Site has an important role to play in the delivery of Reading's wider vision and represents a unique opportunity to retain and promote Reading's heritage as part of a diversified and modernised retail, culture and leisure offering in this key town centre gateway site.
- 7.32 The proposals presented herewith are a chance to save these iconic and recognisable Listed Buildings, breathing new life into them and reinvigorating this part of the heart of Reading 'city' centre, attracting businesses, shoppers, visitors, workers, students, and investment into Reading especially in these current uncertain times.
- 7.33 Through this proposed development, the Site will become a destination within the centre, attracting people from the wider region to its new and refurbished retail offering, sought after apart-hotel accommodation, revered public realm and community cultural events space, all set within sympathetically and lovingly restored Listed Buildings.
- 7.34 This will be a space for small and small-to-medium-sized existing and burgeoning businesses to flourish, creating an enterprise community, with supported from established brands.
- 7.35 A place for the community and public to meet, relax, rejuvenate, perform, rejoice and celebrate in the new public square, becoming a focal point of this part of central Reading.
- 7.36 A place that supports the working population of Reading and local businesses and bolsters the leisure and tourism sector. A scheme committed to local employment, skills enhancement, job creation and driving footfall in this part of the town centre.
- 7.37 The proposals have evolved over time through engagement with the Council and have been carefully designed to achieve an exact balance of considerations that have been rigorously tested through technical assessments and supported with an evidence base and thorough justification. The scheme seeks to be energy efficient with a low carbon footprint development.
- 7.38 The scheme fulfils and shares the aspirations of Reading 2050: A Vision for Reading 2050.

- 7.39 The proposal has been supported by the Council during pre-application discussions and the feedback from key stakeholders to date has been overwhelming positive - the level of support has been beyond the Applicant's expectations. The engagement found that the scheme presented will be a benefit to the town centre and is supported by the local community and key stakeholders, who consider this will be a good thing for Reading.
- 7.40 The world has evolved and adapted over the last year in response to the outbreak of the Covid19 pandemic, which has affected the global economy and life as we know it in a way that could not be anticipated. With the development and rollout of effective vaccines, the path is laid out for a recovery from these impacts, but to exactly what future is as yet unknown. The importance of this Site and proposals is amplified by this situation and they have a key role to play in the recovery of Reading from the impacts of the pandemic, delivering a reinvigorated city centre and flexible and adaptable retail, leisure and cultural offering that will be much needed in the rehabilitation of these sectors and Reading as a whole.
- 7.41 The scheme will provide a much need investment in this site, which requires substantial intervention to protect the heritage asset. This coupled with the enhancement of the retail offering and provision of a much-needed high quality apart-hotel. The vision for QVS1 and QVS2 was first presented to the Council in November 2019 and has been development in conjunction with officers and key stakeholders. Working together the scheme has evolved and will realise a shared vision and we hope will act as a catalyst for the further regeneration of Queen Victoria Street and Friar Street, and enhancement of the public realm.
- 7.42 This application demonstrates compliance with national and local planning policy and guidance, as well as best practice techniques and approaches where possible, all the while continuing to strike that delicate balance. It has been demonstrated through this application that the proposals accord with an up-to-date development plan, represent sustainable development and there are no material indications that indicate otherwise. This heritage led regeneration scheme of this key town centre site should therefore be granted planning permission and listed building consent accordingly.

