

6 | Heritage Impact Assessment



Figure 6.10 Materiality of the front elevation [taken from DAS by FCH Architects]



Figure 6.11 Details of brick work [taken from DAS by FCH Architects]

6 | Heritage Impact Assessment

- 6.21 The Bugle pub facade is restored and integrated in the scheme. The rear of the building features a Rainscreen cladding system with high-quality render finish.

Public realm improvements

- 6.22 Alongside activation of Friar Street, the proposal also includes enhanced public space and landscaping along Fife Court. There is potential for outdoor seating to support wider area traders, subject to access rights. There would be a direct connection with the Market Square contained within Phase 1. This will result in considerable enhancement of the public realm, increasing permeability within the town centre.



Figure 6.12 Materiality of the set back upper floors [taken from DAS by FCH Architects]

6 | Heritage Impact Assessment

Assessment of Heritage Impact

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>6.23 It is evident that the part demolition of the rear wing of the Bugle would result in some low level of less than substantial harm. However, the restoration and retention of the Bugle's front and flank elevation, and incorporating it within the proposal is considered the right heritage approach. This would mean the fabric that is of most historic and architectural value would be retained. Other parts would be removed and a new use would be introduced to allow for the optimised use of the building. This would result in a 21st Century layer to the building, adding to the historic narrative of the pub and result in considerable heritage benefit.</p> | <p>6.25 Within the wider Site, buildings of poor quality that make little contribution to the street frontage would be redeveloped in a contemporary and contextual manner.</p> |
| <p>6.24 It is also considered that a Level 2 recording of the building to the rear (of Bugle) would allow a greater level of understanding of the historic fabric, currently entirely behind modern finishes. Any historic feature of importance would be retrieved and reinstated insitu alongside appropriate interpretation. This would also add to the attractiveness of the Hotel and its connection with Reading's history. This would allow better understanding of the tenements and their construction technique, thus resulting in heritage enhancement.</p> | <p>6.26 The proposal takes cues from the design and proportion of the historic street frontage and rhythm. Materiality and architectural animation has been carefully considered to create a 21st Century High Street frontage, which appears contextual and high quality. The subtle detailing adds to the architectural interest of the street without appearing intrusive to the setting of heritage assets within the wider area.</p> <p>6.27 Overall, the proposals would improve the architectural quality and character of the area resulting in considerable heritage benefits and enhancements. The proposal offers genuine opportunity of regeneration creating a new commercial quarter within Reading.</p> |

Assessment against Policies

- 6.28 The most relevant local policies in considering the proposal would be Policies EN1, EN4 and EN6. These require proposals in areas characterised by heritage assets to make a contribution to the historic character of the area by respecting and enhancing its architectural and visual qualities.
- 6.29 As demonstrated above, the proposals have been informed by a detailed understanding of the history and development of the area. Facade studies and materiality have been carefully considered and incorporated within the proposed architectural language. The form of the proposal follows the building line of the street frontage and the rhythm of the bays and party walls. This has resulted in a proposal that is of high quality and enhances the historic setting of the town centre as well as the setting of the listed buildings in accordance with policies EN1 and EN6.
- 6.30 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.
- 6.31 As demonstrated above, the most valued parts of the Bugle PH would be retained, restored and incorporated within the proposal. This would allow new use to this vacant building, retaining its townscape and historic contribution to the area. Parts that are proposed to be demolished would be appropriately recorded and interpretation provided as part of the proposal. This would allow for the netter understanding of the building including parts of the interiors that are currently inaccessible to the members of public. It is, therefore, in accordance with Policy EN4 of the Local Plan.
- 6.32 In accordance with NPPF paragraph 203, the proposal takes a balanced judgment against the limited loss of significance against the significance heritage benefits. It is considered that the heritage benefits of enhancements resulting from the scheme would generously outweigh the limited harm caused due to the demolition of the rear parts of the Bugle PH, considered to be of limited value.



Figure 6.13 Front elevation CGI [taken from DAS by FCH Architects]

Section 6

Townscape Visual Impact Assessment.

7 Townscape Visual Impact Assessment

Introduction

- 7.1 The Site forms part of Reading's Central Core. Historic evolution this area is discussed in Section 3. It is nestled between a diverse range of uses and architectural typology which as described before, has emerged through a process of rapid change in the area's fortunes.
- 7.2 This urban structure expanded "as a grid of north-south and east-west routes, deriving from the original river crossing points."¹ These blocks have been developed and redeveloped over time by multiple land owners in variety of plot sizes with uses based on the 'trend' of occupation. The urban grain, as a result, has remained 'human scaled'.
- 7.3 With the railways, and later the Distributor Road (IDR) built in 1969, the grid was fragmented, with the current 'central core' south of the railway station and contained within the IDR. However, the core has remained fine grained with a generally human scale height.
- 7.4 The Council's Tall Buildings Strategy identifies 26 different character areas within the borough. The Site forms part of Character Area 3 [Friar Street]. The architectural style described within this documents states:



Figure 7.1 Emerging Context showing allocated opportunity sites and identified areas suitable for tall buildings
Local Plan, Reading Council

¹ City Centre Framework, Reading Council, 2008

7 | Townscape Visual Impact Assessment

“The street has been redeveloped over many decades and as such the building frontage line has not been retained consistently and the architectural style is very varied. Some Victorian façades remain above the shop frontages but in many cases the architecture is undistinguished.”

- 7.5 In relation to urban grain and townscape, the document states

“The tightly packed buildings and the relatively low skyline (generally 4-6 storeys) creates a medium scale townscape”

- 7.6 The document describes the townscape sensitivity as medium and states:

“There is a fairly consistent, low rise roof line which is occasionally punctuated with views of taller structures e.g. Ibis hotel. Where the tall structures are visible, they detract from the cohesive character of the shopping street and are overbearing features of an uncharacteristically large scale. Therefore further tall buildings would exacerbate this characteristic further.”



Figure 7.2 Views along Friar Street dominated by Thames Tower (above) and Ibis Hotel



Figure 7.3 Varied architectural typology within the area

7 | Townscape Visual Impact Assessment

Townscape and Character Analysis

- 7.7 The character along Friar Street is characterised by continuous retail frontage with a higher ground floor and wide pavements. The frontage to the south side follows the street with a slight bend, which provides oblique views. The built form appears more uniform, with a brick upper level and gabled roofline.
- 7.8 The architectural language is varied but generally interesting and animated along the south side. There is evidence of redevelopment with some buildings dating from 1840 and others later 19th Century with High Gothick architectural detailing. There are some modern buildings along the south side, but these general follow the datum of height at about four to five storeys.
- 7.9 The north side of the street, however, is more varied with most of the buildings dating from the post-war period. Their quality and appearance is poor.
- 7.10 Towards the east end of the street, and opposite the Site, the glazed and stepped upper floors of the Novotel are a prominent feature on the skyline. The building rises well above the established skyline at 14 storeys and is seen from up and down long views from Friar Street and dominated the skyline intrusively.
- 7.11 Overall, along the south side of Friar Street, there is homogeneity in the fine urban grain and height generally varies between three and six storeys.

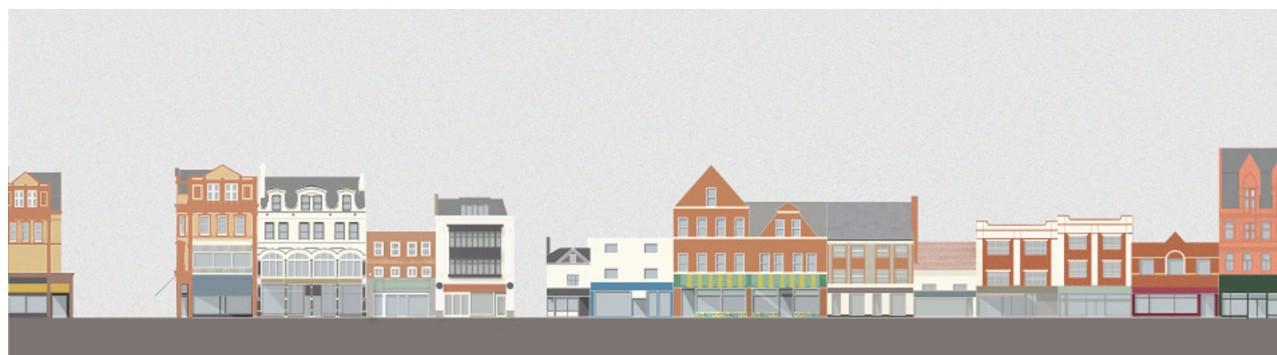


Figure 7.4 Existing street frontage, Friar Street south [taken from DAS by FCH Architects]

Proposed Friar Street masterplan elevation



Figure 7.5 Proposed street frontage, Friar Street south [taken from DAS by FCH Architects]

Wider context

- 7.12 With the wider area, the character is varied with a mix of modern and historic buildings. Whilst the historic core is dominated by the medieval buildings, the retail town centre is primarily late-Victorian and early-20th century. It is dominated by bricks of deep orange-reds, silver-greys and yellow buff, often used together or in patterns. There are several architectural features on key corners that include raised turrets, expressive roofscapes and decorative entablatures.
- 7.13 However, there are many examples of later structures that are larger in their urban form and scale which also form the modern character of the town centre.
- 7.14 Opposite the Station Square, the newly finished Thames Tower is 15 storeys tall. Although this is proposed to be part of a cluster of tall buildings within the Station Square regeneration area, views of the building are available from Queen Victoria Street.
- 7.15 Along Station Road, Brunel House is a post-modern building at six storeys. Its form is that of a large office block with taller floor to ceiling heights, making the building more prominent.
- 7.16 The overall character of the area is eclectic with various phases of developments, each phase with its own architectural language. Scale and materiality is generally consistent with four to six storey buildings in brick with stone dressings and other politely detailed features. Although varied in architecture, there is consistency in proportionality, fenestration and materiality and is considered to be of medium sensitivity.

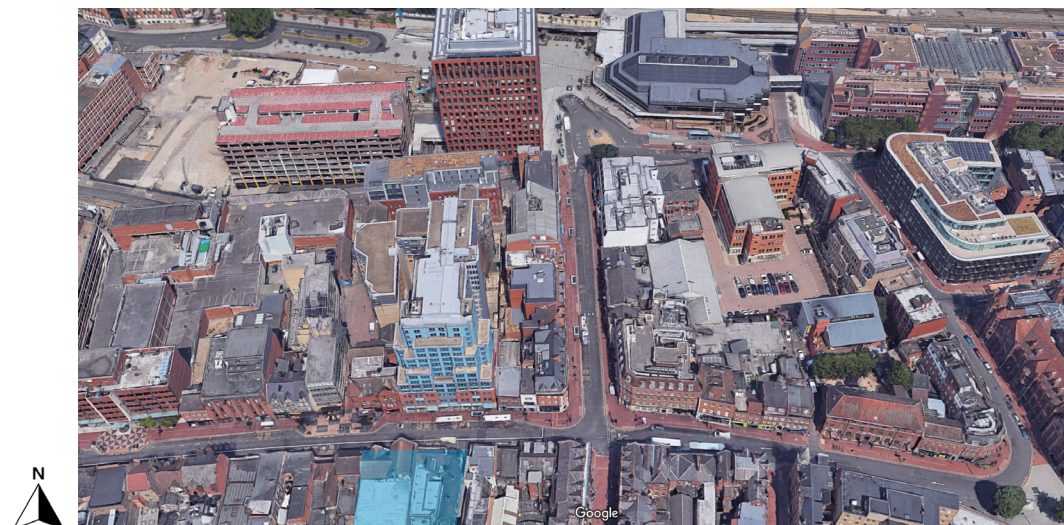


Figure 7.6 Aerial view of Friar Street and Station Road, looking north showing Thames Tower (at the top) and Ibis Hotel (at the bottom)



Figure 7.7 Aerial view of Friar Street and Station Road, looking west showing lower scale buildings south of Friar Street. Thames Tower is at the right side

Emerging Context

Station/River Major opportunity area

- 7.17 The Council's adopted Local Plan has identified the area around the Station as a major opportunity area and envisions:

The station/river area will be a flagship scheme, extending the centre and providing a mixed use destination in itself and centred on the new station and public transport interchange. It will integrate the transport links and areas northwards to-wards the River Thames and into the heart of the centre.

- 7.18 The Council has also indicated this area as a tall building cluster and expects proposals to deliver high-density development. The tall building strategy indicates a mid-rise datum along Friar Street slowly rising towards the Station area.

Station Hill (Outline Planning Permissions ref. 151426 and ref. 151427)

- 7.19 Outline permission for the mixed-use regeneration to the area referred to as Station Hill 1 received a resolution to grant planning permission in 2008. However, the application was withdrawn following the decision by the Secretary of State to 'call in' the proposal. A subsequent application, referred to as Station Hill 2, was then submitted and this sought outline permission for another mixed-use redevelopment. This scheme was granted permission in October 2011.

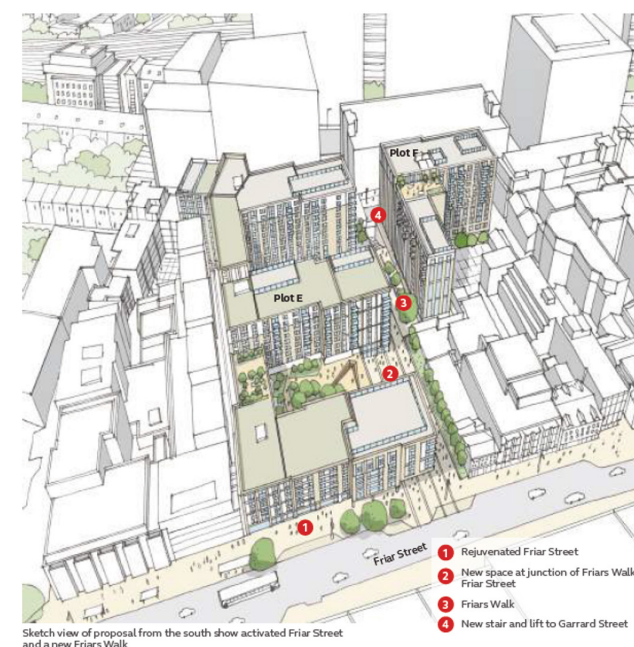
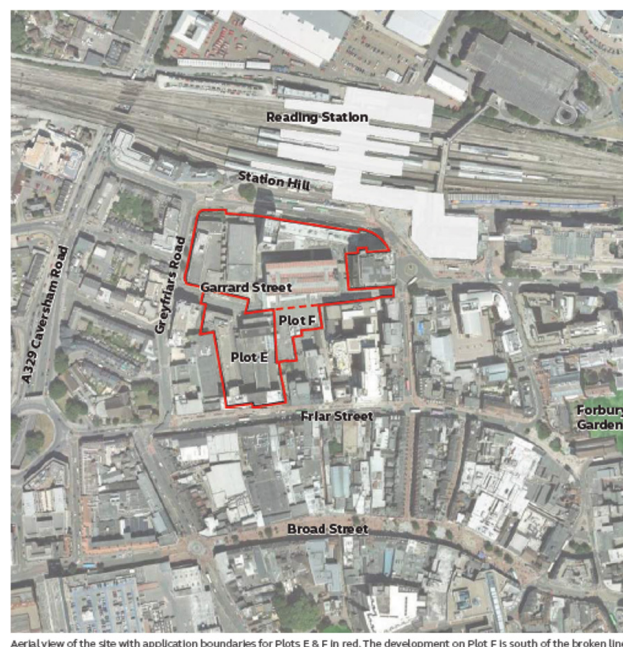


Figure 7.8 Proposed Plot E development as part of Station Hill Phase 3 [taken from DAS submitted as part of the application]

7 | Townscape Visual Impact Assessment

- 7.20 A new outline application was submitted (Ref: 151426/OUT) which sought approval for residential and retail use. An outline planning permission (Ref: 130436) was granted in January 2015 for redevelopment of the whole of Station Hill as offices, retail, leisure and residential, with associated infrastructure and public realm. This was accompanied by a section 106 agreement.

Bristol & West Arcade 173-175 Friar Street and nos 27-32 Market Place

- 7.21 The Council has recently granted (July 2021) planning permission for the redevelopment of site to provide an eight storey building to provide a hotel of up to 182 beds, including a bar/restaurant/gym at ground floor; and demolition of rear parts of 29-31 and 32 Market Place, the change of use of the retained units at 27-28, 29-31 and 32 Market Place at first, second and third floors to provide 8 residential units, retention of flexible Class E uses at ground and basement floors.



Figure 7.9 Emerging context as part of Station Hill Phase 3, seen from Town Hall Square [taken from ES and TVIA submitted as part of the application]



Figure 7.10 Emerging context as part of Station Hill Phase 3, seen from Queen Victoria Street and Station Road junction [taken from ES and TVIA submitted as part of the application]



Figure 7.11 Emerging context as part of Station Hill Phase 3, seen from Friar Street, looking east [taken from ES and TVIA submitted as part of the application]



Figure 7.12 Emerging context as part of Bristol & West Arcade and 173-175 Friar Street [taken from DAS submitted as part of the application]

Key view points

7.22 Given the scale and height of the proposal, the townscape assessment includes close range views from within the setting of listed buildings, conservation area or key vistas that allow better understanding of the impact of the proposed massing.

7.23 The following key views have been selected and described in the next pages:

- 1 View from Greyfriar's Church looking east;
- 2 View from Merchant Place looking south;
- 3 View from Station Road looking south;
- 4 View from King Edward VII Statue at Belgrave Road looking south west;
- 5 View from Queen Victoria Statue at Town Hall Square looking west;
- 6 View from junction with Cross Street and Broad Street looking north west;
- 7 View from junction with Queen Victoria Street and Broad Street looking north;
- 8 View from Union Street, slightly north of the junction with Broad Street; and,
- 9 View from public seating area at Broad Street looking north east.



Figure 7.13 Key viewpoints [taken from DAS by FCH Architects]

7 | Townscape Visual Impact Assessment

View from Greyfriar's Church, looking east

7.24 This view is from the southern pavement of the main shopping thoroughfare of Friar Street, at its junction with Greyfriars Road. This is a very linear view, channelled along Friar Street by continuous development at the back of pavement edge on both sides. The buildings within the immediate vicinity is dominated by red brick buildings. Towards the east end of the street, the glazed and stepped upper floors of the Novotel are a prominent feature on the skyline. The medieval frontage further to the east is obscured as the street curves to the right.

7.25 The proposed view shows the new building rising only slightly above the skyline. However, with the materiality in brick and the upper floor in a terracotta coloured curtain wall, the overall massing will blend into the skyline and the proposal would be entirely inconspicuous within the view.



Figure 7.15 Existing View 1



Figure 7.14 Proposed View 1

7.26 The proposal would be seen against the emerging proposals for Plot E of the Station Hill development shown in orange. The height of the building, at its maximum would be similar to the Novotel/Ibis which continues to extend into the view through its stepped form.

7.27 Along the street frontage, the proposal will correspond to the retail height of the shopfronts. Above street level, the proposal will blend with the street scene with an appropriate materials palette. It will be a new high quality building which will add positively to the varied street frontage and will mark the integrated development with QVS 1 and the new public spaces and activity located there.

View from Merchant Place looking south

- 7.28 Like Fife Court, Merchant Place is one of the remaining Courts along the north side of Friar Street. The view is dominated the early 20th Century brick building at the centre along with the coloured panels on the ground floor of the lower building adjacent to it. However, the modern structures around the brick building are taller and dominate the peripheral views.
- 7.29 The Site and the south side of Friar Street are just visible for a small section. The Site and the proposed development would be hidden behind the brick building and would not be visible.



Figure 7.16 Existing View 2



Figure 7.17 Proposed View 2

7 | Townscape Visual Impact Assessment

View from Station Road looking south

7.30 This is a view from Station Road walking towards Queen Victoria Street and Friar Street. The view is linear and dominated by a mix of architectural styles, ranging from Victorian Gothick of the late 1880s to modern post modern buildings. Station Road has a mixed architectural character. The corner building on the right of the frame is a traditional red brick façade in neo-Georgian in style. The buildings in the foreground have prominent gabled roofs, richly detailed.

7.31 The proposal would be hidden entirely behind this tight urban grain and facade.



Figure 7.18 Existing View 3



Figure 7.19 Proposed View 3

7 | Townscape Visual Impact Assessment

View from King Edward VII Statue at Belgrave Road looking south west

7.32 This is a view from outside the Station buildings, from King Edward VII's statue. The view is dominated by a mix of architectural styles, ranging from early Victorian buildings of the late 1850s to modern post modern buildings.



Figure 7.20 Existing View 4



7.33 The proposal would be hidden entirely behind this tight urban grain and facade. The area would be undergoing dramatic changes in the coming years with several tall buildings within the area.



Figure 7.21 Proposed View 4

7 | Townscape Visual Impact Assessment

View from Queen Victoria Statue at Town Hall Square looking west

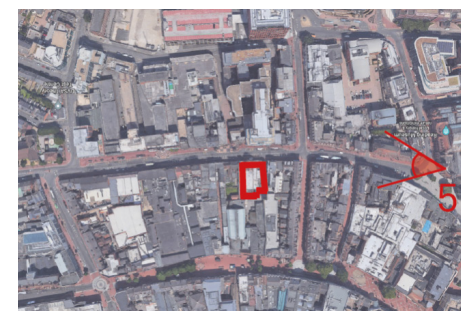
7.34 This is a linear view looking west from the Town Hall Square along the medieval route of Friar Street. There are several listed buildings within the immediate foreground. This is also a key view out of the Conservation Area. The Market Place in the foreground is pedestrianised and forms a focal point of the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area, in which this viewing position lies. This is an attractive central space, with a number of the town centre's significant historic buildings in view.



Figure 7.22 Existing View 5



Figure 7.23 Proposed View 5



7.35 To the left of the trees in the centre, and appearing much lower due to their distance, brick buildings front the south side of Friar Street. They are three to four storeys and have shops at the ground floor, several of the more distant buildings are listed at Grade II. Rising above them in the background is the light blue Angel House, the Novotel.

7.36 The gentle curve of Friar Street does not allow any visibility of the Site from this location. The proposal is hidden entirely behind the existing built form.

7 | Townscape Visual Impact Assessment

View from junction with Cross Street and Broad Street looking north west

7.37 Broad Street is the main High Street within the town centre of high historic and townscape value. The foreground is dominated by the busy pedestrian route and the terracotta buildings along Queen Victoria Street can be seen in further away in the background.

7.38 The Site is not visible from this location and the proposal would remain hidden behind the existing built form.



Figure 7.24 Existing View 6



Figure 7.25 Proposed View 6

7 | Townscape Visual Impact Assessment

View from junction with Queen Victoria Street and Broad Street looking north

7.39 This view shows part of QVS 1 to the right, currently undergoing restoration works, approved under the previous scheme. The listed terrace remains dominant in the view. The architectural features including white gaunt bricks alongside the rich use of terracotta dominate the elevation.

7.40 The proposal is hidden entirely behind the existing built form. As such, there would be no changes to the townscape.



Figure 7.26 Existing View 7



Figure 7.27 Proposed View 7

7 | Townscape Visual Impact Assessment

View from Union Street, slightly north of the junction with Broad Street

7.41 Like Friar Court, Union Street is one of the medieval thoroughfares within the area. This view looks due north along Union Street, a narrow pedestrian passage orientated north-south and leading between Broad Street and Friar Street. There are two storey buildings on both sides, which are only seen obliquely due to the narrowness of the street. The buildings are either brick or white rendered and have shop fronts at street level with residences above. The channelled view has no clear point of termination due to the shop signs and awnings, but a bridging brick building and roof on Friar Street can be discerned between them, with some taller rooftops above.

7.42 The proposal is hidden entirely behind the existing built form. As such, there would be no changes to the townscape.



Figure 7.28 Existing View 8



Figure 7.29 Proposed View 8