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# Planning Statement

71-73 CAVERSHAM  
ROAD, READING RG1  
8JA

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JUNE 2022

Q100020

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# Executive Summary

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- 1.1 This Planning Statement is submitted in support of a full planning application at 71-73 Caversham Road, Reading, RG1 8JA. This document reviews the development proposal in the context of the development plan, national policy, relevant guidance and material considerations, and outlines the demonstrable benefits of the proposal.
- 1.2 This submission follows the refusal of a previous planning application submitted by the applicant in respect of the Site. This proposal represents a revised scheme that seeks to respond to consultee comments, previous reasons for refusal and conclusions of the appeal decision relating to the previous application.
- 1.3 The revised scheme responds to a comprehensive pre-application process which has involved several meetings with Reading Borough Council Officers and discussions with the Bell Tower Association.
- 1.4 The proposed development seeks to provide a sensitive, well designed intervention to the locally listed building on site in order to facilitate the delivery of new homes. The revised scheme seeks to retain a significant proportion of the original retail warehouse building (which is vacant) on the corner of Caversham Road and Northfield Road. In addition, in order to facilitate the delivery of new homes the south eastern element is proposed to be demolished. The 1960s shop front will also be removed and replaced providing enhanced active frontage that is suitable for modern commercial occupiers.
- 1.5 The main benefits of the development can be summarised as follows:
  - Delivery of 29 much needed homes that positively contribute to housing supply in Reading.
  - Breathe new life into a locally listed asset and create a high-quality, mixed use development that contributes positively to the local neighbourhood.
  - Provide dedicated private amenity space in the form of balconies and winter gardens in addition to communal roof terrace.
  - Provide a range of new homes ranging from 1 bed to 3 bed units, appropriate for the site's highly accessible location.
  - Provide enhanced retail space, with active frontages and increasing the employment generating potential of the site.
  - Deliver a high quality, carefully designed solution which retains part of the locally listed building and has been refined throughout the pre-application process.
  - Deliver units with level threshold that follow the requirements set out in Part M of the Building Regulations.
- 1.6 The Planning Statement should be read in the context of the proposed application drawings and other supporting material. Together the suite of documentation demonstrates that planning permission should be granted for the proposals.

# 1 Introduction

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- 1.1 This Planning Statement accompanies a full planning application submitted on behalf of S2 Caversham Ltd in respect of the redevelopment of 71-73 Caversham Road, Reading RG1 8JA ("the Application Site"). The application seeks planning consent for the following:

*Partial demolition of former retail warehouse and erection of a mixed-use building comprising 29 residential units, 318 sqm of retail floorspace (Use Class E(a)) at ground floor and associated car parking, cycle parking and landscaping.*

- 1.2 This Planning Statement reviews the planning application proposals in light of the development plan, national policy, relevant guidance and material considerations and sets out the clear and demonstrable benefits of the retention and partial redevelopment of existing buildings on site in order to deliver new homes in this highly sustainable location.
- 1.3 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires development proposals to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. For reasons more fully set out in this planning statement, the development accords with the development plan and its compliance with other significant material considerations, principally the National Planning Policy Framework (2021) ("NPPF") which further reinforces the case for a grant of planning permission.
- 1.4 The application is submitted with the following accompanying documentation:

Table 1 – Planning Application Submission Documents

| Document                                              | Author                                                |
|-------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| Planning Application Cover Letter                     | Quod                                                  |
| Planning Application Forms                            | Quod                                                  |
| Planning Statement                                    | Quod                                                  |
| CIL Additional Information Form                       | Quod                                                  |
| Application Drawings                                  | JTP                                                   |
| Accommodation Schedule                                | JTP                                                   |
| Design and Access Statement                           | JTP                                                   |
| Statement of Community Involvement                    | KANDA (update included within the Planning Statement) |
| Housing Delivery and Viability Statement              | Quod                                                  |
| Air Quality Assessment                                | RPS                                                   |
| Phase 1 Contaminated Land Preliminary Risk Assessment | RPS                                                   |
| Energy Strategy                                       | Hoare Lea                                             |

|                                                                              |                                                  |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| Sustainability Statement                                                     | Hoare Lea                                        |
| Flood Risk Assessment and Surface Water Drainage Strategy                    | RPS                                              |
| Flood Risk Sequential Assessment                                             | RPS                                              |
| Utilities Assessment                                                         | RPS                                              |
| Planning Noise Assessment                                                    | Waterman                                         |
| Planning Obligations – Draft Heads of Terms (included in Planning Statement) | Quod                                             |
| Transport Statement                                                          | Mayer Brown                                      |
| Daylight and Sunlight Report                                                 | Calfordseaden                                    |
| Heritage and Townscape Assessment                                            | Iceni Projects                                   |
| Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment                                             | Amphibian, Reptile & Mammal Conservation Limited |

1.5 The suite of documents demonstrates that the application proposals accord with development plan policy and that there are significant material considerations which weigh in favour of the development.

1.6 This Planning Statement is structured as follows:

- **Section 2 - Development Context:** This section discusses the planning history for the Application Site, the local surrounding area and pre-application consultation.
- **Section 3 - Details of the Proposed Development:** This section describes the application proposals.
- **Section 4 - Development Plan Policy:** This section provides a commentary on the development plan and NPPF, together with other material considerations.
- **Section 5 - Planning Assessment:** This section evaluates the proposed development against the relevant policies of the development plan and National Planning Policy/Guidance and material considerations.
- **Section 6 - Planning Obligations:** This section reviews the potential planning obligations that will be provided in connection with the development and considers the Community Infrastructure Levy liability arising from the development.
- **Section 7 - Conclusions:** This section provides a summary of the justification for granting planning permission for the development proposals.

1.7 This application submission follows a period of pre-application engagement with relevant stakeholders, notably Reading Borough Council representatives. The full extent of this consultation is discussed in detail within the following section, the Design and Access Statement and the Statement of Community Involvement.

## 2 Development Context

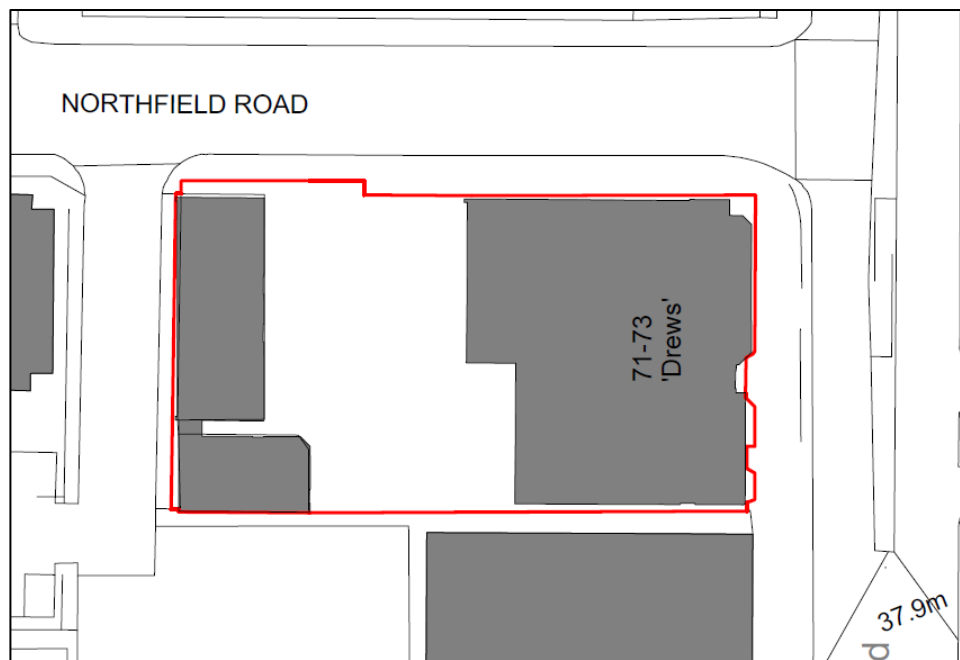
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- 2.1 This section reviews the current characteristics of the Application Site and provides an overview of the surrounding area to provide a physical context to the application proposals. Photographs of the Application Site appear within the accompanying Design and Access Statement.
- 2.2 This section also identifies the historic context of the proposals and their evolution through discussion with Reading Borough Council.

### Application Site

- 2.3 The Site Location Plan is re-provided below:

Figure 1 – Site Location Plan



- 2.4 The site is level, rectangular in shape and extends to approximately 0.16 hectares.
- 2.5 At present the site comprises a 2-storey vacant retail warehouse, known as 71-73 Caversham Road, with a service yard and car parking area to the rear, together with 2 no. detached 2.5 storey office buildings, known as The Brewery and The Malthouse.
- 2.6 The Brewery and The Malthouse office buildings are located within the site application boundary but are retained and remain unchanged by the proposal.
- 2.7 The retail warehouse on the site is vacant and was formerly used as an ironmonger. The site is bordered by Caversham Road at its eastern boundary, Northfield Road at its northern

boundary, a development of 3 storey flats known as Monmouth Court at its western boundary and a gym at its southern boundary.

- 2.8 Vehicle and pedestrian access to the site is achieved from Northfield Road whilst the retail warehouse is accessed via Caversham Road.
- 2.9 The buildings on site are not statutory listed buildings, nor are there any located in the immediate vicinity. The site is not located in a conservation area.
- 2.10 The buildings on site are locally listed.

#### Surrounding Context

- 2.11 The immediate area is largely characterised by commercial and service sector uses. To the immediate south of the site is a single storey (with mezzanine) D2 (Pure Gym) unit. Beyond this is an adjoining music shop and Reading Fire Station.
- 2.12 A three storey B8 (Safeguard) storage unit lies to the north of the site along with other town centre uses – including a furniture shop and several restaurants.
- 2.13 To the west of the site is a part two, part three storey residential block of flats (Monmouth Court).

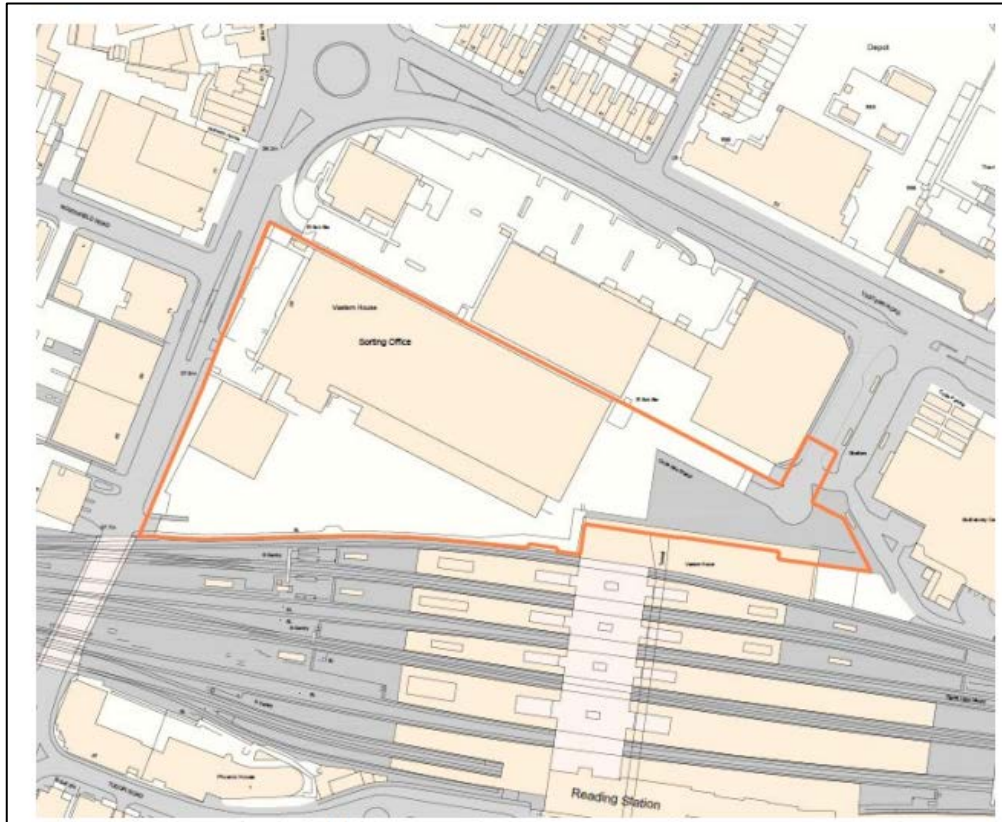
#### Surrounding Development Context

- 2.14 The site to the east (former Royal Mail Depot, 80 Caversham Road), recently received resolution to grant planning approval at planning committee on 30<sup>th</sup> March 2022 (ref: 182252) for the following development:

*Outline application considering access, landscaping, layout and scale involving the demolition of all existing buildings and structures (Classes B1a & B2) and erection of new buildings ranging between basement and 2 – 25 storeys in height, providing 658 (79 x studio, 227x1, 335x2 & 17x3-bed) residential units, office accommodation (Class B1a), flexible ground floor Class A1-3 uses, a community centre(Class D1), health centre uses (Class D1) and various works including car parking, servicing, public and private open space, landscaping, highways, pedestrian and vehicular access and associated works.*

- 2.15 The site location plan is re-provided below:

Figure 2 - 80 Caversham Road Site Location Plan



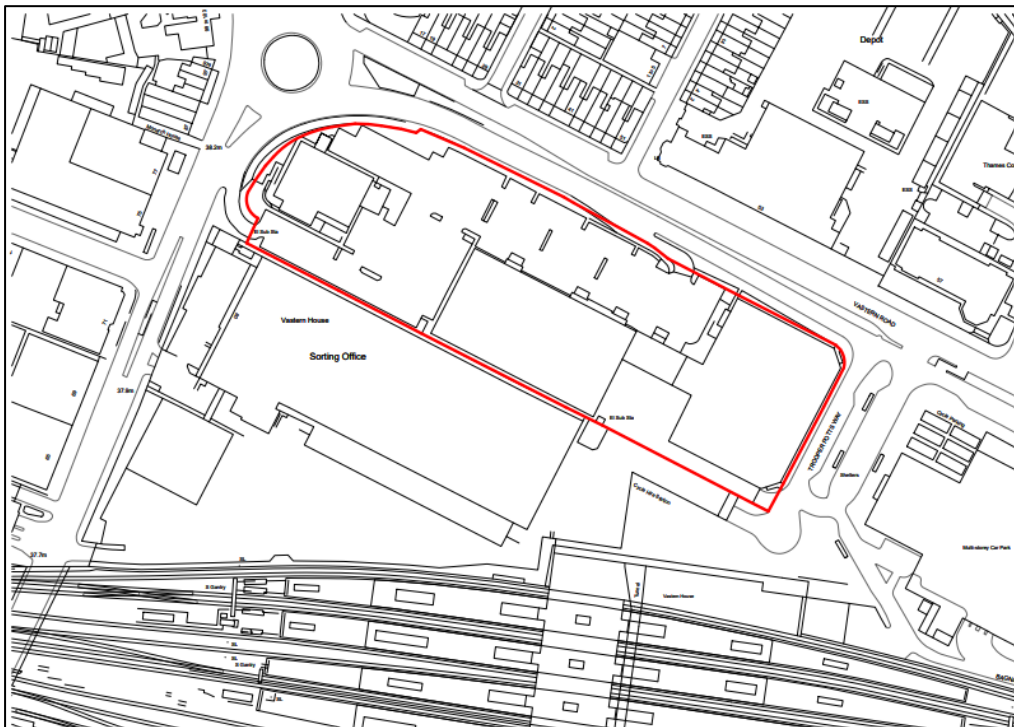
2.16 Heights proposed opposite the site are 8 storeys, but as highlighted above range from 2 – 25 storeys across the site.

2.17 In addition to the above the site to the north east (Vastern Court) on the corner of Caversham Road, and Vastern Road, is currently the subject of an appeal following non-determination (ref: 200328) for the following development:

*Outline planning permission with the details of access, appearance, landscaping, layout and scale reserved for later determination. A demolition phase and phased redevelopment (each phase being an independent act of development) comprising a flexible mix of the following uses, Residential(Class C3 and including PRS), Offices (Use Class B1(a), development in Use Classes A1, A2, A3(etail), A4(public house), A5(take away), D1 and D2(community and leisure), car parking, provision of new plant and renewable energy equipment, creation of servicing areas and provision of associated services, including waste, refuse, cycle storage, and lighting"*

2.18 The site location plan is re-provided below:

Figure 3 - Vastern Court Site Location Plan



2.19 The application was validated on 27 February 2020. The applicant submitted an appeal based on non-determination of the application on 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2021.

2.20 The application is outline at this point, but the planning statement indicates that the expected heights of the proposed development, following submission of a reserved matters, will be at least ten storeys at the eastern part of the site, with the building heights stepping down to eight, seven and six storeys.

## Planning History

2.21 A full review of available planning records identifies two applications relative to the site:

Figure 2-4 - Application Site Planning History

| Ref. No. | Description of Development                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Decision/Date      |
|----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| 950014   | To fit roller shutters to front windows on outside.                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Refused 15/06/1995 |
| 191792   | Demolition of former retail warehouse and erection of a mixed-use building comprising 44 residential units consisting of x5 affordable units, 194sqm of retail floorspace (Use Class A1) at ground floor and associated car parking, cycle parking and landscaping. | Refused 16/10/2020 |

2.22 Application Ref. 19172 was submitted by the current applicant (S2 Caversham Ltd).

2.23 Despite recommendation for approval from Reading Borough Council Officers, the application was refused by Members at planning committee on 16 October 2020.

2.24 The decision was appealed by the applicant in May 2021. However, the appeal was dismissed by the Planning Inspectorate with the main issues cited as follows:

- The effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area; and
- The effect of the proposal on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset.

2.25 In the context of the above, a revised proposal has been designed reflective of consultee comments and the conclusions of the appeal decision.

### **Refused Application (Ref. 191792)**

2.26 The following text provides consultation context in relation to the previously refused application at the site (Ref. 191792). This context and history has informed the evolution of the current planning application proposals.

#### **Pre-application Process in respect of refused application (Ref. 191792)**

2.27 The applicant completed two pre-application meetings with Council officers prior to the submission of the original planning application. The pre-application meetings were conducted on the following dates:

- 14<sup>th</sup> January 2019; and
- 10<sup>th</sup> June 19

2.28 Following the initial pre-application submission, the Applicant met with Reading Borough Council's Design Review Panel on 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2019.

2.29 The proposal at this stage had responded to initial Officer comments and comprised the demolition of the retail warehouse fronting Caversham Road and the provision of 49 residential units and commercial spaces alongside the retention of the existing office buildings at the rear of the Site.

2.30 Design feedback was presented by the panel and helped shape the following pre-application submission.

2.31 The applicant's second pre-application related to a full application comprising the demolition of the retail warehouse fronting Caversham Road and the provision of 57 units and commercial spaces alongside the retention of the existing office buildings at the rear of the Site.

2.32 Written comments were received 5<sup>th</sup> July 2019. Officers concluded that there were several positive aspects to the proposed development, including the uplift in housing delivery, the efficient use of land in a sustainable location and a positively evolving design concept.

2.33 Officers also suggested several revisions to the scheme including a wider mix of dwellings and an affordable housing commitment. It was also suggested the height be lowered from 8 storeys to 7 storeys to reflect the transitional location and emerging heights opposite.

#### Public Consultation in respect of refused Application (Ref. 191792)

2.34 A public consultation event was held 24<sup>th</sup> July 2019 at Greyfriars Church, Reading located near the site. The public exhibition gave residents an opportunity to see the proposals for the site and discuss the scheme with the project team.

2.35 Community groups were formally invited to the public exhibition. These groups included:

- Bell Tower Community Association
- Caversham and District Residents Association
- Reading Civic Society
- Reading and Wokingham Chamber of Commerce

2.36 The key themes of discussion during consultation included:

- The height of the proposals
- The heritage aspects of the site
- The mix of uses
- Parking provision
- The precedent set by the new scheme

2.37 The exhibition was attended by approximately 30 residents.

2.38 The Statement of Community Involvement is provided at **Document 1**.

#### Submission of Application Ref. 191792

2.39 An application was submitted on the 7<sup>th</sup> of November 2019 for the following development:

Demolition of former retail warehouse and erection of a mixed-use building comprising 44 residential units consisting of x5 affordable units, 194sqm of retail floorspace (Use Class A1) at ground floor and associated car parking, cycle parking and landscaping.

2.40 Despite Officer recommendation for approval, the application was refused by Members at Planning Committee on the 7<sup>th</sup> of October 2020 with the decision notice being issued 16<sup>th</sup> October 2020.

2.41 The applicant progressed a planning appeal which was ultimately dismissed on 14<sup>th</sup> May 2021 with the Planning Inspector concluding:

*“The main issues are:*

- The effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area and;*
- The effect of the proposal on the significance of a non designated heritage asset.”*

2.42 In the context of the above and the applicant's aspiration to deliver new homes at the underutilised, highly sustainable site, the design team have sought to address concerns raised from the former application as part of a new proposal which is the subject of this planning application.

## **Revised Application Proposal**

2.43 The applicant has completed a further period of pre-application engagement with RBC and other key stakeholders including The Bell Tower Association to ensure the delivery of a sustainable mixed-use development that responds to the previous reasons for refusal and conclusions of the appeal decision. This builds on the public consultation undertaken and detail contained within the Statement of Community Involvement (provided at **Document 1**) in respect of the site relative to the refused application ref. 191792.

2.44 The extent of pre-application consultation undertaken in regard to the revised application proposal is provided below.

### *Pre-application Consultation in respect of the revised application proposal*

2.45 Four pre-application meetings were conducted with the council in respect of the revised application proposal.

2.46 Meetings were held with RBC Officers on the following dates:

- 12/08/2021
- 01/09/2021
- 10/11/2021
- 25/11/2021

### *Pre-application Meeting 1 – 12/08/2021*

2.47 The design team presented the (revised) scheme to Reading Borough Council on the 12<sup>th</sup> of August 2021. Issues around retention of the retail warehouse were discussed and two design options were reviewed in greater detail. The preferred option omitted the south-east building and the alternative option, retained the facade of the south-eastern building.

2.48 The pre-application feedback noted that the part demolition of the retail warehouse was accepted by officers as an improvement on the previous proposal. The heritage officer recommended a lighter material for the front balconies on the upper floors. It was also noted that the southern building should appear to step back from the adjacent building line and provide a connection to the gable that is to be demolished.

#### Pre-application Meeting 2 – 01/09/2021

- 2.49 An updated scheme based on the preferred option was presented to Reading Borough Council on the 1<sup>st</sup> of September 2021.
- 2.50 The case officer was supportive of the revised design, use of materials and building form.
- 2.51 Revisions were requested in respect of fenestration pattern and shopfront design.

#### Pre-application Meeting 3 – 10/11/2021

- 2.52 Following further refinements, an updated scheme was presented to Reading Borough Council on the 10th of November 2021.
- 2.53 Comments received included:
- Southern façade would benefit from further refinements by including greater modelling and detailing such as shaded brick.
  - Request to consider additional detail such as green brick incorporated in the stall risers to help ground the building.
  - Request to consider lightweight and paler colour for the dormer design so that the overall appearance is less dominant.
  - Request to revise the brick detailing to south-eastern building to reflect existing brick patterns, i.e. blue/yellow bands.
  - Request for a stronger cornice detail between the brickwork and metal frame to give a clearer definition.

#### Pre-application Meeting 4 – 25/11/2021

- 2.54 The design team presented an updated scheme with 2 options showing different use of materials to Reading Borough Council on the 25th of November 2021.
- 2.55 The case officer was supportive of the use of metal cladding on the new building extension in the context it responded to the character of the existing cast iron structure within the existing retail warehouse.
- 2.56 With regards to materials officers showed a preference for buff/cream brick to the top floor and set back front return on the basis it reduces the amount of grey cladding, giving a lighter appearance. It was also felt the use of brick is also more in keeping with the robust brick malthouse building.
- 2.57 With regards to the shopfront the case officer was supportive of the revised design and material use but requested inclusion of an arch detail, similar to the detailing proposed elsewhere in the scheme to reflect the existing brick arch detailing.
- 2.58 Full detail relating to the pre-application design development discussion is provided on pages 44-49 of the Design and Access Statement.
- 2.59 Formal written pre-application comments from RBC were received on 2<sup>nd</sup> of March 2022.

### Bell Tower Association (BTA) Meeting – 10/05/2022

- 2.60 The applicant met with the BTA on 10<sup>th</sup> of May 2022 to discuss the updated scheme. Following the meeting on site the BTA were provided with a design document to enable them to share proposals with their committee.
- 2.61 It was acknowledged that the new proposal represents a significant improvement on the previous design, with the retention of the majority of the malthouse buildings being very welcome.
- 2.62 The BTA also had comments with regards to the building height and whether there was a way to redistribute height, extending further westwards to allow the building to be reduced to five storeys and with regards to the use of buff brick.
- 2.63 The team explained that the option of extending further westwards and reducing the height had previously been considered. However, given the distance from the front on Caversham Road to the rear this proved very difficult without compromising outlook and daylight/sunlight for residential units. It was also felt this detracted from the rear buildings being retained in their entirety as well as the building footprint being restricted owing to surface water flood risk. The use of materials is also guided by the Council's Heritage Consultant.
- 2.64 The team discussed a suggestion relating to the inclusion of swift bricks, which are now included as part of the application proposals as identified in the DAS.
- 2.65 The above demonstrates the applicant has completed a comprehensive pre-application process which has informed and shaped the development proposals that deliver significant associated benefits, as described at Section 3.
- 2.66 Positive responses are presented within the application relative to themes identified throughout the pre-application process. This represents a positive pre-application process to attempt to front-load planning issues ahead of submission, to enable a swift determination, cognisant of relevant material considerations; this is supported by policy guidance at all levels.

## 3 Proposed Development

- 3.1 This section describes the proposed development and defines the principle components of the scheme.
- 3.2 The application is accompanied by a full set of visual and illustrative material, prepared by JTP which illustrates the development proposals and explains the rationale behind the design of the building.

### Key Development Proposals

- 3.3 The scheme proposes the following:
- Retention and enhancement of the locally listed corner element of the Site including provision of a high quality, sensitively designed part 6, part 5, part 2.5 storey building at the junction of Caversham Road and Northfield Road.
  - The entirety of the Northfield Road façade will be preserved alongside the entirety of the northern building located at the corner of Caversham and Northfield Road. While some fabric would be lost to the front building, the most significant and characterful portions, which survive to the greatest extent, will be retained and sensitively knitted into the new build element resulting in the preservation of the architectural character of the Non-Designated Heritage Asset.
  - Retention of existing Brewery and Malthouse office buildings at the rear of the site. These buildings are fully occupied by office tenants and remain unchanged as part of the proposal.
  - Replacement of unoriginal shopfront with a new, sympathetic intervention that responds sensitively to the existing building and provides a modern frontage that is suitable for commercial use.

Figure 5 - Existing Site Plan



- Provision of 29 new homes (located at ground to fifth floor) including the following mix:

Table 2 - Proposed Unit Mix

| Unit Type          | Number Proposed |
|--------------------|-----------------|
| 1 Bedroom 2 Person | 22              |
| 2 Bedroom 3 Person | 1               |
| 2 Bedroom 4 Person | 5               |
| 3 Bedroom 5 person | 1               |
| <b>Total</b>       | <b>29</b>       |

- Re-provision of high quality retail space at ground floor totalling 318 sq.m (GIA), enhancing the employment generating potential of the site, and offering an active ground floor frontage.
- Provision of homes that are of a high quality design and meet Nationally Described Space Standards, and provide good quality internal space.
- Every home is provided with a balcony or winter garden apart from two homes within the conversion element of the proposals (retained corner element). These two homes are oversized to allow for larger living space to compensate for lack of outdoor amenity.
- Provision of two homes which are compliant with M4(3) of the Building Regulations located on the first and fifth floors.
- Fifth floor communal roof terrace (totalling 74sq.m) including seating and low-level planting at the perimeter.
- Inclusion of sensitive material palette refined throughout the pre-application process and inspired by the existing building. This includes a mix of pale buff brick, red brick, blue brick banding, green glazed brick, steel-coloured frame winter gardens and buff soldier course headers.
- Provision of 14 car parking spaces (designed to serve both residents and existing/ proposed retail unit) comprising 5 residential car parking spaces, 4 office car parking spaces, 1 commercial car parking space, and 4 retail car parking spaces.
- Provision of 15 two-tier bicycle racks in a secure, covered storage area on the ground floor, providing 30 cycle spaces. All the cycle spaces will be secured and accessible via pin pad-controlled entry points.
- Provision of two external Sheffield Stands located along Caversham Road, and two located within the courtyard, providing an additional 8 cycle spaces for visitors and other users.
- Provision of an 11m loading bay for servicing on Northfield Road. This has been achieved by utilising the site frontage made available by consolidating the points of access to the site.
- Communal refuse store located at ground floor and designed in accordance with adopted waste capacity guidelines. The proposed location of the communal refuse store and

route of the refuse collection vehicle has been given careful consideration to provide ease of access both for the residents and refuse collection teams.

- Provision of a green roof with PV panels located on the roof (164 m<sup>2</sup>) on the new southern building element fronting Caversham Road.
- Improved local views towards the site.

## 4 Development Plan Policy

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- 4.1 This section provides a commentary on the development in the context of development plan policy, policy guidance and other material considerations. An assessment of local development plan policy and specific local policy issues are dealt with in Section 5 within this statement.
- 4.2 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) requires that proposals shall be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The site is in Reading, and as such the development plan consists of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).
- 4.3 The development plan should be read in the context of National Policy Guidance which is a material consideration.

### Development Plan

#### Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

- 4.4 The Reading Local Plan is the primary policy document within the borough. It sets the policy framework against which new planning application proposals will be assessed and represents the starting point for the determination of planning applications.
- 4.5 The document sets out a vision and nine objectives for the borough which comprise the following:
  - 1. Strengthen the role of Reading, including central Reading, as the hub for the Thames Valley, providing an accessible focus for the development of employment, housing, services and facilities, meeting the needs of residents, workers, visitors, those who study in Reading Borough, and the wider area;
  - 2. Make the most efficient use of Reading's limited land, particularly previously developed land, to ensure that as many new homes as possible are delivered to meet identified needs, particularly needs for affordable housing;
  - 3. Improve the quality of life for those living, working, studying in and visiting the Borough, creating inclusive, sustainable communities with good access to employment, open space and waterspace, transport, education, services and facilities (such as sustainable water supplies and wastewater treatment, healthcare services, social and community facilities, sport and recreation, etc.) to meet identified needs;
  - 4. Form the basis for co-operation with neighbouring authorities to consider the wider West of Berkshire area as a whole;
  - 5. Ensure new development and existing areas are accessible and sustainable, in accordance with the sustainability appraisal objectives, including reducing its effects on, and adapting to, climate change;

6. Maintain and enhance the historic, built and natural environment of the Borough through investment and high quality design, and capitalise on these assets to contribute to quality of life and economic success;
7. Improve and develop excellent transport systems to improve accessibility within Reading and for the wider area by sustainable modes of transport, including walking and cycling;
8. *Offer outstanding cultural opportunities, which are based on multiculturalism, local heritage and high quality, modern arts, leisure and visitor facilities;*
9. *Ensure that Reading is a healthy, clean, safe and socially-inclusive community where the needs of all its citizens are met by high quality, cost effective services and outstanding levels of community involvement. (Quod emphasis)*

4.6 Reading Local Plan Policy CC1 (Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development) identifies A positive approach to considering development proposals will be taken that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Where appropriate, policy identifies the Council will work proactively with applicants jointly to find solutions which mean that proposals can be approved wherever possible.

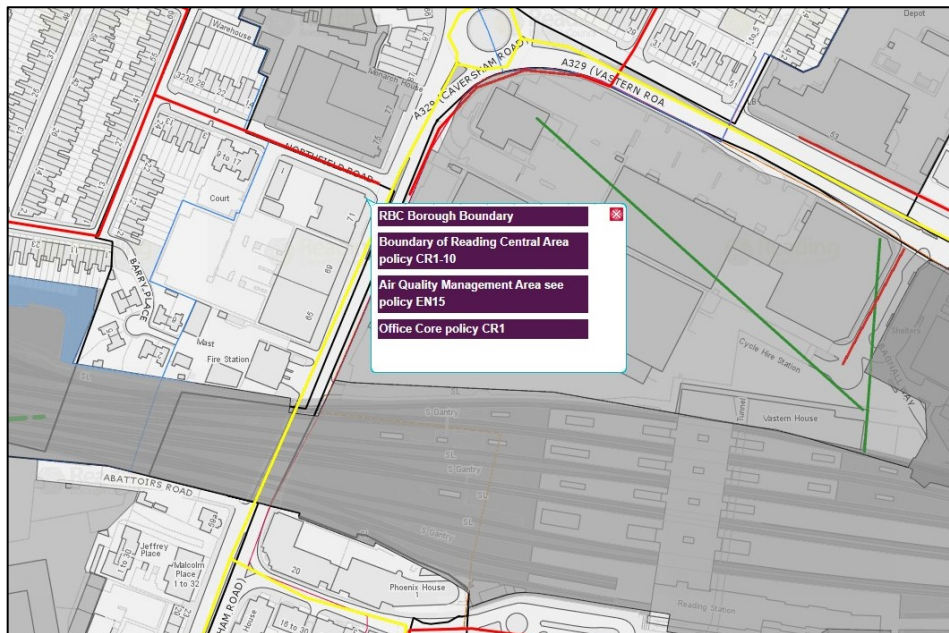
4.7 Section 3.2 of the Local Plan identifies the spatial strategy for Reading. With regards to central Reading it states:

*The centre of Reading is the main hub of retail and employment for the Borough and for much of the surrounding area. It is one of the most accessible locations in the South East, boosted by recent major investment in an upgraded station, new transport interchanges and by the forthcoming arrival of the Elizabeth Line. At the same time, there are considerable areas of underused land around the edge of the centre which offer an opportunity to accommodate a considerable amount of development at a high density, which will include some opportunities for new tall buildings in appropriate locations.*

*Therefore, a significant proportion of the development to be provided in Reading within the plan period will be within the central area. This will include around 7,600 homes (around 49% of the total planned for), 71,000 sq m of offices (around 63% of the total planned for) and up to 27,000 sq m of retail and related uses (virtually all of the total planned for).*

## Development Plan Designations – Proposals Map (2019)

Figure 6 - Local Plan Proposal Map Extract



4.8 The Local Plan Proposals Map extract above confirms that the site is subject to the following designations:

- Office Core
- Reading Central Area
- Air Quality Management Area

4.9 The building on site is not a statutory listed building or located in a Conservation Area.

4.10 The policies relevant to the current proposals are considered individually within the analysis section (Section 5) of this report.

## Material Considerations

### National Planning Policy Framework (2021)

4.11 The revised National Planning Policy Framework was published in July 2021.

4.12 Paragraph 2 of the NPPF states:

*Planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The National Planning Policy Framework must be taken into account in preparing the development plan and is a material consideration in planning decisions. Planning policies and decisions must also reflect relevant international obligations and statutory requirements.*

- 4.13 The NPPF introduces the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Paragraph 7 of the NPPF states:

*The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. At a very high level, the objective of sustainable development can be summarised as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.*

- 4.14 As clearly stated at paragraph 11:

*Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development.*

*For **decision-taking** this means:*

*c) approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or*

*d) where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:*

*i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or*

*ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.*

- 4.15 Section 11 of the NPPF relates to making effective use of land. Paragraph 119 identifies:

*Planning policies and decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions. Strategic policies should set out a clear strategy for accommodating objectively assessed needs, in a way that makes as much use as possible of previously-developed or 'brownfield' land*

- 4.16 Paragraph 120 sets out several objectives for planning policies and decisions including:

*Give substantial weight to the value of using suitable brownfield land within settlements for homes and other identified needs, and support appropriate opportunities to remediate despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated or unstable land;*

*Promote and support the development of under-utilised land and buildings, especially if this would help to meet identified needs for housing where land supply is constrained and available sites could be used more effectively (for example converting space above shops, and building on or above service yards, car parks, lock-ups and railway infrastructure)* (Quod Emphasis)

- 4.17 The central theme of the NPPF is the presumption in favour of sustainable development, it encourages local authorities to approve applications swiftly that are in accordance with the development plan.

## Conclusions

- 4.18 Development plan policy and guidance is supportive of sustainable development. The delivery of housing in sustainable locations is encouraged at all policy levels particularly where this relates to previously developed land in town centre locations.
- 4.19 The following section sets out the topic-based references to the relevant policies from the documents identified within this section.

## 5 Planning Assessment

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- 5.1 This section provides an assessment of the application proposals in the context of the development plan and material considerations relevant to the scheme.
- 5.2 The Planning Assessment considers the main issues and planning considerations raised by the planning application proposals as follows:
- Heritage
  - Principles of Development – Retail floorspace
    - Employment
  - Principle of Development – New Homes
    - Affordable Housing
  - Design
    - Building Height
  - Residential Design
    - Density
    - Mix
    - Amenity Space
  - Daylight/ Sunlight
  - Parking and Transport
  - Energy/ Sustainability
  - Air Quality
  - Noise; and
  - Waste Storage/ Management.
- 5.3 Each consideration is addressed in turn within this section.

### Heritage

- 5.4 Local Plan Policy EN1 relates to the protection and enhancement of the historic environment and states:

*Historic features, areas of historic importance and other elements of the historic environment, including their settings will be protected and where possible enhanced. This will include:*

- *Listed Buildings;*
- *Conservation Areas;*

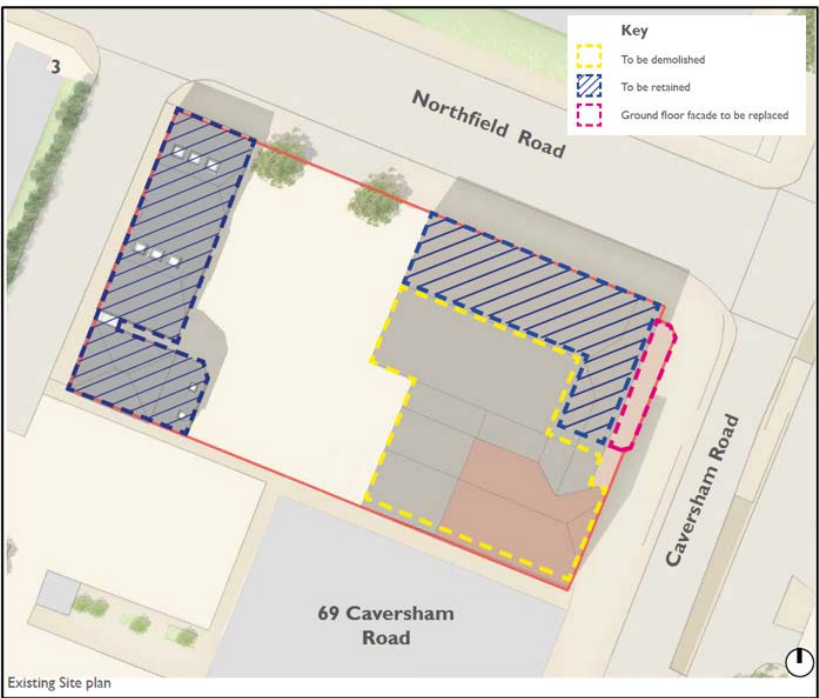
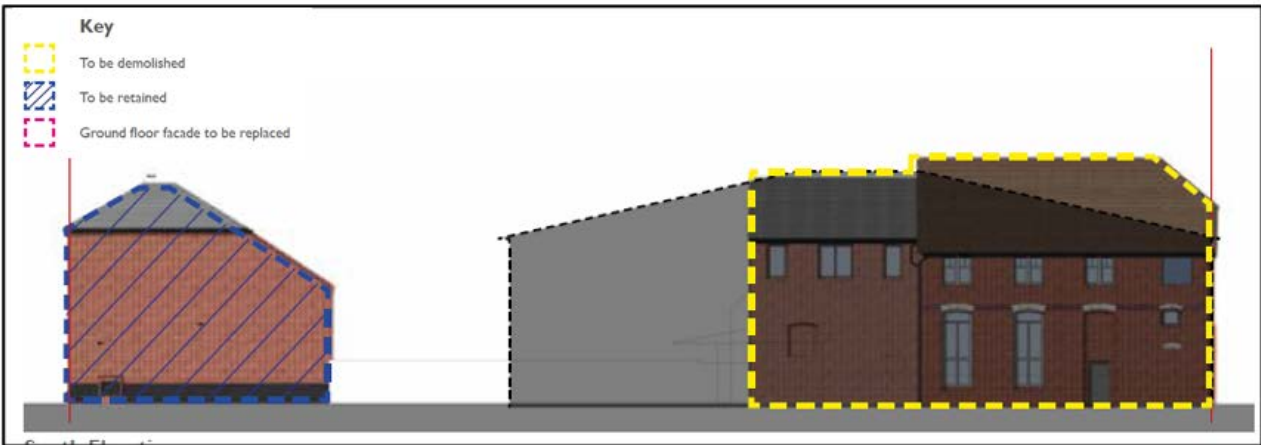
- *Scheduled Monuments;*
- *Historic parks and gardens; and*
- *Other features with local or national significance, such as sites and features of archaeological importance, and assets on the Local List.*

*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. Proposals should seek to avoid harm in the first instance. Any harm to or loss of a heritage asset should require clear and convincing justification, usually in the form of public benefits.*

*Applications which affect Listed Buildings will not have an adverse impact on those elements which contribute to their special architectural or historic interest including, where appropriate, their settings.*

- 5.5 The buildings on site were locally listed in February 2020 due to their “strong historical/social and industrial connections to the Reading beer industry” and now form part of the RBC Local List. The Site is not located in a conservation area.
- 5.6 Following the appeal decision in respect of the previous application (ref. 191792) the design team have engaged with Reading Borough Council and the Bell Tower Association and re-designed the scheme to address the previous reasons for refusal and appeal decision.
- 5.7 The revised scheme seeks to retain a significant proportion of the original retail warehouse building on the corner of Caversham Road and Northfield Road. In addition, in order to facilitate the delivery of new homes the south eastern element is demolished. The 1960s shop front will also be removed and replaced with a new, sympathetic intervention that responds sensitively to the existing building and provides enhanced active frontage that is suitable for modern commercial occupiers.
- 5.8 The building intervention is identified on Figure 7 below:

Figure 7 - Retention & Demolition Strategy



- 5.9 The revised scheme has taken on board the conclusion of the appeal decision and feedback received during the pre-application meetings with Reading Borough Council post-appeal.
- 5.10 The aim of the proposal is to breathe new life into a locally listed asset and create a high-quality, mixed-use development that contributes positively to the local neighbourhood.
- 5.11 The planning application is supported by a full Heritage Assessment which concludes the following with regards to the site:

*The buildings are of minimal historical value in terms of the history of industrial development in the area, they are recognised locally by RBC as being of historic/ social and industrial interest for their associations with the Reading beer industry.*

*The architectural character of the main building along Caversham Road however, has been wholly eroded by its subsequent and unsympathetic reuse and alteration, throughout the 20th and 21st centuries, which have involved a large amount of demolition, rebuilding and poor quality extensions.*

*The Site has not been in maltings use for over a century, does not retain any industrial machinery indicative of this former use, and as such is highly unlikely to retain any communal value for this use amongst the local community.*

*The design of the updated proposal by JTP Architects has evolved through intelligently considering the Site's heritage and previous use, which have either been decayed or lost entirely on the current building, incorporating these into this final design.*

*From a townscape view, we have concluded that the current proposal to retain a significant proportion of the 'L'shaped corner building in addition to the two buildings to the rear of the Site, with the incorporation of the new built proposals would make a significant contribution that would enhance the character and appearance of the Area and see the landmark corner buildings largely retained and reused.*

*The contribution the existing buildings make to the character of the corner site would remain, with the original buildings still being legible within a new site context.*

- 5.12 In the context of the above, the proposal is considered to be in compliance with development plan policy relating to heritage and ought to be supported.

## **Principle of Development – Retail Floorspace**

- 5.13 Paragraph 123 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) advises local planning authorities to take a positive approach to applications for alternative uses of land which is currently developed but not allocated for a specific purpose in plan, where this would help to meet identified development needs. Specifically, it states that they should support proposals to:

*“use retail and employment land for homes in areas of high housing demand, provided this would not undermine key economic sectors or sites or the vitality and viability of town centres, and would be compatible with other policies in this Framework.”*

- 5.14 Local Plan Policy RL1 outlines details of the network and hierarchy of centres and identifies Reading as the Regional Centre within the area. The policy states that the vitality and viability of these centres should be maintained and enhanced. The following improvements are considered acceptable in the centres:
- [Accessibility and transport improvements;](#)
  - [Broadening range of facilities;](#)
  - [Residential use of upper floors; and](#)
  - [Environmental enhancements.](#) (Quod Emphasis)
- 5.15 The policy also highlights that Central Reading will see the greatest level of development and change.
- 5.16 Local Plan Policy RL2 (Scale and Location of Retail, Leisure and Culture Development) sets out that provisions will be made for up to 34,900sqm of retail and related facilities in Reading to 2036.
- 5.17 The application proposal seeks to demolish the south-eastern element of the vacant retail warehouse building and part of the rear wall of the retained corner element that fronts Caversham Road and Northfield Road. The existing floorspace on site does not meet the requirements for modern occupiers (as demonstrated by internal photographs provided within the supporting Design and Access Statement) and retention of the existing retail warehouse in its entirety does not allow for redevelopment of the site and delivery of new homes. It should be noted that the retail warehouse is vacant and has been for a considerable period (December 2018).
- 5.18 While the site occupies an edge of centre location in retail planning policy terms, the site represents an established existing retail location and the commercial use of the site is being re-provided as part of the proposals with the provision of a new 318 sqm (GIA) retail unit being provided at ground floor. The site sits directly opposite the boundary of the Primary Shopping Area and Central Core and the new unit will provide floorspace suitable for modern occupiers while also providing enhanced active frontage at the site, meeting all criteria set out in Policy RC1.
- 5.19 In light of NPPF support for alternative uses for unallocated land being used to better suit strategic needs for a local area, and the lack of policy protection for retail warehouse provision in this location, the part demolition and redevelopment of the existing vacant retail warehouse and provision of improved retail space is considered to be appropriate.
- 5.20 The provision of an improved retail unit is considered to align with Local Plan Policy RL2 and aspirations of Policy RL1 which will be delivered as part of the development and therefore ought to be supported.

## Employment

- 5.21 Given the proposed development involves the retention of the existing office buildings (Malthouse & Brewery Building) at the rear of the site, and the redevelopment of the vacant existing retail warehouse, it is not necessary to review the proposals against policies concerning the retention of employment uses in the borough.
- 5.22 In the context of the existing retail unit being vacant it is important to note the proposals will increase the employment generating potential of the site. In accordance with the Homes & Community Agency's Employment Density Guide the provision of commercial retail space can be expected to provide in the range of 16-21 new jobs. This is in addition to the number of jobs to be retained through the retention of the Mews office buildings at the rear of the Site.

## Principle of Development – New Homes

- 5.23 Paragraph 60 of the NPPF sets out that LPA's should support the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes.

- 5.24 Paragraph 11 of the NPPF sets out that LPA's should:

*as a minimum, provide for objectively assessed needs for housing and other uses.*

- 5.25 Paragraph 119 of the NPPF confirms the Government's support for prioritising the use of Brownfield Land, stating:

*Strategic policies should set out a clear strategy for accommodating objectively assessed needs, in a way that makes as much use as possible of previously-developed or 'brownfield' land.*

- 5.26 Policy H1 of the Local Plan supports the provision of housing across Reading Borough Council stating:

*Provision will be made for at least an additional 15,847 homes (averaging 689 homes per annum) in Reading Borough for the period 2013 to 2036.*

*The Council will continue to work with neighbouring authorities within the Western Berkshire Housing Market Area to ensure that the shortfall of 230 dwellings that cannot be provided within Reading will be met over the plan period.*

- 5.27 Supporting justification for the policy highlights there is a pressing need for additional housing in Reading and the surrounding area.
- 5.28 The provision of 29 new homes on an under-utilised, highly sustainable brownfield site is therefore a significant material consideration in the determination of this planning application.
- 5.29 The benefits of the proposal are significant, in contributing to meeting an identified need for housing within Reading, which fully accords with development plan policy.

5.30 The provision of new market homes in this location is explicitly supported by the development plan and therefore ought to be acceptable.

### Affordable Housing

5.31 Local Plan Policy H3 sets out that residential developments will make an appropriate contribution towards affordable housing. On sites of 10 or more dwellings, 30% of dwellings will be in the form of affordable housing.

5.32 Policy H3 outlines, in all cases where proposals fall short of the policy target as a result of viability considerations, an open book approach will be taken, and the onus will be on the developer/landowner to clearly demonstrate the circumstances justifying a lower affordable housing contribution.

5.33 The scheme is not required to provide any Affordable Housing in accordance with the Local Plan (Policy H3) due to financial viability. Notwithstanding this, the applicant has confirmed that the scheme will provide a £165k cash in lieu contribution (equivalent to c.15% affordable housing based on c.£40k per unit as agreed with RBC).

5.34 The scheme provides the maximum contribution to the borough's affordable housing provision as set out in the supporting application Housing Delivery & Viability Statement. It is therefore considered to be in compliance with development plan policy outlined above.

### Design

5.35 Policy CR2 identifies the overarching design criteria for Central Reading. A detailed assessment of the proposals considering the requirements of CR2 is provided below:

Table 3 - CR2 Policy Matrix

| CR2 Requirement                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Proposal Response                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Compliance |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| a. Development will build on and respect the existing grid layout structure of the central area, providing continuity and enclosure through appropriate relationships between buildings and spaces, and frontages that engage with the street at lower levels, and contributing towards enhanced ease of movement through and around the central area; | In response to existing context the proposed development maintains the existing building footprint respecting the grid layout structure of the central area.<br><br>The proposal also introduces an enhanced shopfront designed to maximise engagement with the street. It is therefore considered to comply with this element of Policy CR2. | ✓          |
| b. Development will provide appropriate, well designed public spaces and other public realm, including squares, open spaces, streetscape, utilising high quality and well maintained hard and soft landscaped areas, and public art,                                                                                                                   | The existing site is completely covered in hardstanding and therefore opportunities to improve public realm and landscaping are limited. The proposal does however seek to maximise hard and soft landscaping                                                                                                                                 | ✓          |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |   |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|
| that provide suitable functions and interest, sense of place and safe and convenient linkages to adjoining areas;                                                                                                                                  | through the provision of a communal terrace and soft landscaping at ground floor level fronting the Northfield Road entrance to the development.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |   |
| c. Development should consider and, where possible, include ways of providing green infrastructure designed into the development, for instance through roof gardens, green walls and green roofs, to enhance the otherwise very urban environment; | <p>As highlighted above opportunities to enhance the greening of the existing site are limited owing to it being entirely formed of hardstanding. The proposal does however seek to maximise landscaping through the provision of a planted communal terrace and new soft landscaping at ground floor level fronting the Northfield Road entrance to the development.</p> <p>The proposal also includes a 74m2 green roof at roof level.</p> | ✓ |
| d. The architectural details and materials used in the central area should be high quality and respect the form and quality of the detailing and materials in areas local to the development site;                                                 | As detailed by the Design and Access Statement, the proposed building retains a significant portion of the locally listed building, resulting in the preservation of the architectural quality of the Heritage Asset. All other aspects of the development draw influence from both the existing building to be demolished and surrounding context of the Site.                                                                              | ✓ |
| e. Development and any associated public realm should contribute to the diversity of the central area, be capable of easy adaptation over time to meet changing circumstances, and be designed to enhance community safety;                        | The proposal seeks to enhance the active frontage on the corner of Northfield and Caversham Road and is therefore considered to be compliant with this element of the policy.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | ✓ |
| f. Development should be designed with consideration of adjacent development sites and should not prevent or cause unreasonable burdens on the future development of those sites.                                                                  | <p>The approved development to the east (Former Royal Mail Sorting Office) proposes 8 storeys fronting the site, while this scale steps down to 2-3 storeys at the residential area to the west of the site.</p> <p>In response to this context and the site's transitional location the building proposes 6 storeys fronting Caversham</p>                                                                                                  | ✓ |

Road stepping down to 5 storeys at the rear of the new residential element and 2.5 storeys at the retained office buildings to the west of the site.

Further to the above the proposal provides a blank wall on its southern elevation to enable a 'party wall' approach and facilitate further development on Caversham Road should it come forward at a later date.

5.36 The above matrix demonstrates that the proposed development is in full accordance with Local Plan Policy CR2.

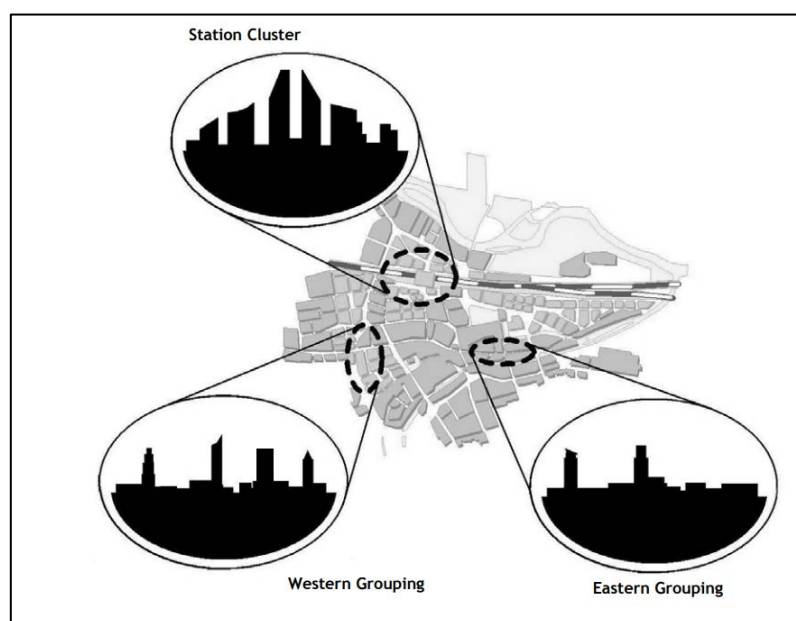
### Building Height

5.37 The site lies close to the boundary of the Station Area Cluster of tall buildings identified as part of Local Plan Policy CR10 – Tall Buildings. The policy defines a tall building as being 12 storeys for residential developments. The policy highlights that within Reading Borough, tall buildings will only be appropriate within the 'areas of potential for tall buildings' as defined on the Proposal Map. These areas are as follows:

- CR10a: Station Area Cluster
- CR10b: Western Grouping
- CR10c: Eastern Grouping

5.38 These areas are identified on figure 8 below:

Figure 8 - Diagrammatic indicative representation of the differing approach to tall buildings in each area



5.39 Policy CR10a relates to the Station Area Cluster and states:

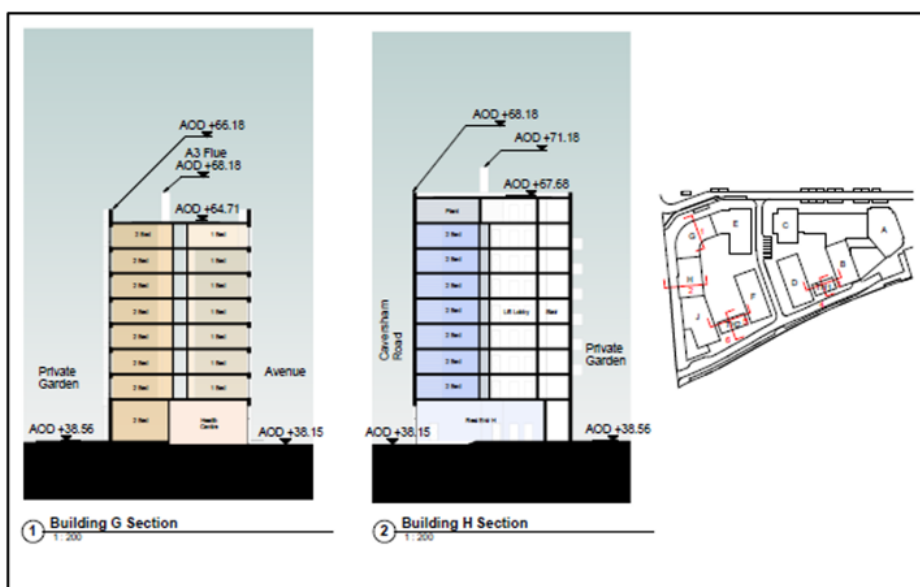
*A new cluster of tall buildings with the station at its heart will signify the status of the station area as a major mixed-use destination and the main gateway to and most accessible part of Reading.*

*Tall buildings in this area should:*

- *Follow a pattern of the tallest buildings at the centre of the cluster, close to the station, and step down in height from that point towards the lower buildings at the fringes;*
- *Contribute to the creation of a coherent, attractive and sustainable cluster of buildings with a high quality of public realm;*
- *Ensure that adequate space is provided between the buildings to avoid the creation of an overly dense townscape and to allow buildings to be viewed as individual forms;*
- *Be designed to fit within a wider planning framework or master plan for the area, which allows separate parcels of land to come forward at different times in a coordinated manner.*

5.40 The site lies just outside the Major Opportunity Area, but within the Reading centre boundary. The site performs a transition between the central, higher density and commercial uses to the east (noted in Section 2 and described visually within the accompanying Design and Access Statement), and the lower scale, predominantly residential areas to the west. As detailed previously this is particularly relevant in the context of the recent resolution to grant development proposed at 80 Caversham Road which will deliver heights ranging from 2- 25 storeys, with 8 storeys fronting the development site on the opposite side of Caversham Road (182252). The relevant section from emerging development is re-provided below:

Figure 9 - 80 Caversham Road Section Extract



- 5.41 The urban design strategy conceived relative to the Opportunity Area and Station Area cluster to the east recognises the appropriate transition point toward lower density arising at the west and beyond the subject site.
- 5.42 Whilst not comprising a tall building (by Reading's established definition) this site is appropriate for a part 6/part 5 storey building which transitions to the retained 2.5 storey office buildings, circa 16m away to the west.
- 5.43 Additionally, the tallest elements of the Site, at 6 storeys, is only reached at the southern part of the Site fronting Caversham Road. Height at the corner of Caversham and Northfield Roads is limited to 2.5 storeys.

## Residential Design

### Density

- 5.44 Local Plan Policy H2 (Density & Mix) identifies appropriate density will be informed by:
- *the character and mix of uses of the area in which it is located, including the housing mix, and including consideration of any nearby heritage assets or important landscape or townscape areas;*
  - *its current and future level of accessibility by walking, cycling and public transport;*
  - *the need to achieve high quality design;*
  - *the need to maximise the efficiency of land use; and*
  - *the need to minimise environmental impacts, including detrimental impacts on the amenities of adjoining occupiers.*
- 5.45 Policy H2 goes on to highlight that the indicative density for Town Centre sites is above 100 dwellings per hectare, but the criteria above may indicate that a different density approach is appropriate.
- 5.46 The application proposes a density of 182 dwellings per hectare at the site. As demonstrated in Section 2 of this report the character and mix of uses surrounding the site is varied with residential density in the direct vicinity of the site set to increase significantly through the redevelopment of the former Royal Mail Sorting Office (ref: 182252). This particular development will deliver a density of 281.82 dwellings per hectare.
- 5.47 In addition to the above (as identified in the enclosed Transport Statement, the application site has an accessibility index (AI) of 31 (which is the equivalent of a PTAL of 6a) and translates to an 'Excellent' level of accessibility to public transport (further evidence of the AI level can be found within the Transport Statement).

- 5.48 With regards to design quality, the proposal has been the subject of multiple pre-application meetings with the Planning Case Officer, Council's Heritage Officer and Bell Tower Association. As demonstrated within the accompanying Design and Access Statement the design has been updated as a direct response to feedback and is therefore considered to be of high design quality. Additionally, the site sits in a transitional location between the River Major Opportunity Area and the lower density residential area to the west, the building height responds to this location and is therefore considered to be appropriate, particularly in the context of the recently consented scheme at 80 Caversham Road.
- 5.49 The existing site comprises two office buildings and a vacant retail warehouse located on previously developed land within the town centre. The proposal retains the existing office buildings at the rear of the site and seeks to re-develop the vacant retail warehouse via part retention and sensitive enhancement of the locally listed asset in order to provide new homes alongside a new retail unit maximising the efficiency of the site.
- 5.50 The application site is in a predominantly commercial area on a busy road, therefore sensitive receptors in the vicinity of the site are limited with the closest residential properties being Monmouth Court which lies some 40m west of the proposed building, and emerging development on the opposite side of Caversham Road. The application is supported by a full suite of technical documents including Noise, Air Quality and Daylight and Sunlight Assessment, all of which demonstrate the acceptability of the proposals.
- 5.51 In the context of the above the proposed density of 182 per hectare is appropriate for the site and ought to be supported.

#### Mix

- 5.52 With regards to mix, Local Plan Policy CR6 (Living in Central Reading) sets out:

*All proposals for residential development within the central area will be required to contribute towards a mix of different sized units within the development. This will be measured by the number of bedrooms provided within individual units. Ideally, a mixture of one, two and three bedroom units should be provided. As a guide, in developments of 15 dwellings or more, a maximum of 40% of units should be 1-bed/ studios, and a minimum of 5% of units should be at least 3-bed, unless it can be clearly demonstrated that this would render a development unviable.*

- 5.53 The proposal seeks to deliver the following unit mix:

**Table 5 Proposed Unit Mix**

| Unit Type | Number of Units | %    | Policy Requirement |
|-----------|-----------------|------|--------------------|
| 1B2P      | 22              | 75.9 | >40%               |
| 2B3P      | 1               | 3.4  | No set requirement |
| 2B4P      | 5               | 17.2 |                    |
| 3B        | 1               | 3.4  | <5%                |

5.54 Whilst the unit mix is not aligned with the “guide” set out in Policy CR6, the unit mix is explored within the Housing Delivery and Viability Statement which supports this application and considered appropriate for the following reasons:

- **General Suitability:** The site is more suited to smaller households, with fewer children, due to its Town Centre location. There is therefore unlikely to be sufficient demand for a larger number of family sized flats due to both their affordability and general suitability.
- **Financial Viability:** Smaller residential units create more value relative to their floorspace. The introduction of larger units would therefore result in a less efficient scheme constraining viability and the resultant financial contribution in lieu of affordable housing.
- **Design Quality:** The introduction of additional larger units would result in the need to reconfigure the design which in turn would compromise the overall quality of the scheme.

5.55 This application therefore delivers a mix of one, two and three bedroom dwellings aligned with the guidance set out in policy H2. The proposed mix is deemed optimal for the site's location and context.

### Amenity Space

5.56 The amenity space on site comprises the following:

Table 5-4 Proposed Amenity Space

|                       | Size (m <sup>2</sup> ) | Total Provision (m <sup>2</sup> ) |
|-----------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Balcony/Wintergarden  | 6-20                   | 248.8                             |
| Communal Roof Terrace | 74                     | 74                                |

5.57 All homes have a balcony or winter garden accessed directly from living areas with the exception of 2 units within the conversion (locally listed element) on the first floor. The two homes result from the design aspiration to retain the locally listed heritage asset and are oversized to allow for larger living space compensating for a lack of outdoor amenity space.

5.58 The projecting balconies are located on the south facing facades to allow for maximum sunlight.

5.59 In addition to the above the scheme provides a fifth-floor communal roof terrace (totalling 74sq.m), which would serve the overall development, but also offers the two homes noted above with outdoor amenity space.

5.60 The proposal therefore maximises the provision of amenity space given the limitations of the existing site.

## Parking and Transport

### Transport

5.61 Local Plan Policy TR1 ‘Achieving the transport strategy’ sets out that:

*Proposed development should contribute appropriately to meeting the objectives of the most up-to-date Local Transport Plan or any successor document, including sub-strategies, specific projects identified and the local action plans.*

*Planning permission will not be granted for major development proposals unless there is a commitment to implement measures to promote and improve sustainable transport facilities, such as through provision to encourage walking, cycling and the use of public transport; and through agreed travel plans, safe routes to local facilities and services, including schools and parks, and similar measures.*

*All development proposals should make appropriate provision for works and contributions to ensure an adequate level of accessibility and safety by all modes of transport from all parts of a development, particularly by public transport, walking and cycling, in accordance with any agreed transport assessment submitted as part of the application.*

- 5.62 The planning application is supported by a full Transport Assessment which identifies the application site as being a 550m walk from Reading train station. The location of the site provides convenient access to a wide range of existing public services and local amenities, within reasonable walking distance.
- 5.63 The site is well located for access to regular bus services with six routes offering half-hourly services or better available from bus stops on Caversham Road, which are within 2 minutes-walk of the site access with further bus services available from the A4155 Caversham Road and Station North Interchange.
- 5.64 The accessibility of the site to public transport has been rated as Excellent, based on an Accessibility Index assessment.
- 5.65 The Transport Assessment demonstrates it is estimated that the site would generate an additional five vehicle trips in the AM peak hour and 19 less vehicle trips during the PM peak hour. As a result of the proposals at the site, public transport trips are estimated to increase by up to 4 during weekday peak hours with active modes (pedestrians and cyclists), increasing by four trips during weekday peak hours. This change in activity is therefore unlikely to result in any noticeable effect on the operation of the local transport network.
- 5.66** Based on the findings of the Transport Statement, the location of the site, near to the centre of Reading, provides convenient access to a wide range of existing public services and local amenities and the development proposals are unlikely to result in any adverse impacts on the operation of the local transport network. Therefore, it is considered that there is no reason why the scheme should be resisted on transport grounds and that the proposal is compliant with development plan policy relative to Transport.

### **Car Parking**

- 5.67 Parking requirements have been taken from the Reading Borough Council Revised Parking Standards and Design and are based on accessibility zones. The site is in Zone 2, which is the primary core area.

Table 5-5 Proposed Car Parking Provision

| Parking Type                  | SPG Standard                                                                                        | Maximum Requirement | Proposed Provision            |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------|
| Car Parking (Residential)     | A requirement of one car parking space per 1- 2 bed flat and 1.5 car parking spaces per 3+ bed flat | 29.5                | 5 (including 2 disabled bays) |
| Car Parking (Offices)         | A maximum of one car parking space per 100 sqm                                                      | 4                   | 9 (including 1 disabled bay)  |
| Car Parking (Non-Food Retail) | A maximum of one car parking space per 50 sqm                                                       | 7                   |                               |
| <b>Car Parking Total</b>      |                                                                                                     | <b>40</b>           | <b>14</b>                     |

5.68 Car Parking will be arranged in an 'L' shape within the site and be located between the proposed residential and commercial building, and the existing office buildings to the rear of the site.

5.69 The above demonstrates car parking provision for the offices and retail elements of the development are below maximum standards and the disabled parking requirement has been met by the proposals.

5.70 During the pre-application process officers advised that given the site's close proximity to the centre of Reading, and easy access to public transport connections and the facilities in the town centre, reduced parking provision would be supported.

**5.71** The proposed car parking is therefore considered to be appropriate and reflective of the site's highly sustainable location.

### Cycle Parking

**5.72** The following table outlines the cycle parking provision for the site.

Table 5-6 Proposed Cycle Parking Provision

| Parking Type                    | SPG Standard                                                                                  | Requirement | Proposed Provision |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|--------------------|
| Cycle Parking (Residential)     | Minimum of 0.5 cycle parking space per 1-2 bed flat and 1 cycle parking space per 3+ bed flat | 15          | 30                 |
| Cycle Parking (Offices)         | Minimum of one cycle parking space per 200 sqm                                                | 2           | 4                  |
| Cycle Parking (Non-Food Retail) | Minimum of one cycle parking space per 6 staff and one cycle                                  | 2           | 4                  |

|              |                              |           |           |
|--------------|------------------------------|-----------|-----------|
|              | parking space per 200<br>sqm |           |           |
| <b>Total</b> |                              | <b>19</b> | <b>38</b> |

- 5.73 The proposed cycle parking provision exceeds minimum policy requirements with each household having access to a cycle parking space in a secure cycle store and therefore ought to be supported.

## Flooding and Sustainable Drainage Systems

- 5.74 Local Plan Policy EN18 relates to Flooding and sustainable drainage systems and states:

*Development will be directed to areas at lowest risk of flooding in the first instance, following the Sequential and Exceptions Test set out in the NPPF, and taking into account the effects of climate change. It will consider flooding from all sources, including fluvial, surface water, groundwater and sewer flooding. Where development in areas at risk of flooding is necessary, it will not reduce the capacity of the flood plain to store floodwater, impede the flow of floodwater or in any way increase the risks to life and property arising from flooding. Wherever possible, development should be designed to reduce flood risk, both on- and off-site.*

*All major developments must incorporate sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) as appropriate and in line with the Government's Technical Standards. Smaller schemes are encouraged to incorporate SuDS, where possible. Runoff rates should aim to reflect greenfield conditions and, in any case, must be no greater than the existing conditions of the site. Schemes should ensure that the movement of water through vertical infiltration as well as horizontal run-off does not worsen contamination effects. Wherever possible, SuDS provision should maximise ecological benefits, link into the existing Green Network, incorporate tree planting and landscaping and avoid damage to existing significant trees, including through changes to the site hydrology. All new developments in areas of flood risk should give priority to SuDS."*

- 5.75 The application is supported by a Flood Risk Assessment, Surface Water Drainage Strategy and Flood Risk Sequential test prepared by RPS.
- 5.76 The Flood Risk Assessment and Surface Water Drainage Strategy submitted in support of this application demonstrate that the development will be safe, without increasing flood risk elsewhere, and that a positive reduction in flood risk would be achieved through the inclusion of surface water attenuation techniques.
- 5.77 The Flood Risk Sequential Test prepared by RPS demonstrates:

*There are no reasonably available, sequentially preferable sites within the surrounding area which are at a lower probability of flooding and that would be suitable for the proposed development. On this basis, it is considered that the Sequential Test has been satisfied.*

*The development is considered to pass the Exception Test as it is providing further residential housing on a brownfield site that has existing transport links and services. The proposed development will provide positive benefits in accordance with the three pillars of sustainability. Additionally, a site-specific Flood Risk Assessment has been prepared demonstrating that the*

*residential units will be safe for their lifetime, without increasing flood risk elsewhere. This demonstrates that elevation of the flats to first floor level and above and the incorporation of flood resilience techniques can mitigate the flood risk at the site.*

5.78 The proposal is therefore considered to be in direct compliance with development plan policy set out above relating to Flooding and Sustainable Drainage Systems.

## **Air Quality**

5.79 Local Plan Policy EN15 relates to Air Quality and outlines:

*Development should have regard to the need to improve air quality and reduce the effects of poor air quality.*

*i. Development that would detrimentally affect air quality will not be permitted unless the effect is to be mitigated. The following criteria should be taken into account:*

- Whether the proposal, including when combined with the cumulative effect of other developments already permitted, would worsen air quality;*
- Whether the development is within, or accessed via, an Air Quality Management Area; and*
- Whether it can be demonstrated that a local worsening in air quality that would not detrimentally affect human health or the environment would be offset by an overall improvement in air quality, for instance through reduction in the need to travel.*

*ii. Development that would detrimentally affect air quality will not be permitted unless the effect is to be mitigated. The following criteria should be taken into account measures should be detailed in any planning application. If there are significant detrimental effects that cannot be mitigated, the application should be refused.*

*iii. Where required, planning obligations will be used to secure contributions to measures to tackle poor air quality or for air quality monitoring.*

5.80 This application is supported by a full Air Quality Assessment (prepared by RPS). The assessment considers dust effects during the construction phase and the air quality impacts during the operational phase of the proposed development. The document identifies:

- Implementation of recommended mitigation measures described in the IAQM construction dust guidance should reduce the residual dust effects to a level categorised as “not significant” during the construction phase.
- The operational impact of the proposed development on existing receptors in the local area is predicted to be ‘negligible’ considering the changes in pollutant concentrations and absolute levels.
- Regarding suitability of air quality at the site for introducing new occupants, pollutant concentrations at the façades of the proposed residential receptors are predicted to be within the relevant health-based air quality objectives.

- 5.81 The document therefore concludes that the resulting air quality effect of the proposed development is 'not significant' overall.
- 5.82 The application proposals do not, in air quality terms, conflict with national or local policies, or with measures set out in RBC's Air Quality Action Plan. There are no constraints to the development in the context of air quality. It is therefore considered that the proposal follows development plan policy relating to air quality.

## Noise

- 5.83 Policy CC8 'Safeguarding Amenity' of the Local Plan and sets out that development will not cause a detrimental impact on the living environment of existing residential properties or unacceptable living conditions for new residential properties, in terms of, inter alia, noise and disturbance.
- 5.84 A Noise Assessment was undertaken by Waterman to assess the potential impact resultant from the Development once operational; namely from any plant that may form part of Development.
- 5.85 The noise assessment indicates that through incorporation of good acoustic design and selection of appropriate glazing and ventilation, together with compliance with building regulation requirements, suitable residential amenity would be provided.
- 5.86 Potential impacts associated with the operation of the development can be controlled to a level of negligible significance provided careful attention is paid to the building design, plant selection, installation and noise attenuation and therefore it is considered compatible with surrounding land uses and would not adversely impact on the existing residential amenity. Therefore, it can be concluded that the scheme complies with development plan policy in relation to noise.

## Energy and Sustainability

- 5.87 Local Plan Policy CC2 relates to sustainable design and construction and states proposals for new development, including the construction of new buildings and the redevelopment and refurbishment of existing building stock, will be acceptable where the design of buildings and site layouts use energy, water, minerals, materials and other natural resources appropriately, efficiently and with care and take account of the effects of climate change.
- 5.88 The Policy outlines that to meet these requirements:
- *All minor non-residential developments or conversions to residential are required to meet the most up-to-date BREEAM 'Very Good' standard as a minimum;*
  - *All non-residential development or conversions to residential should incorporate water conservation measures so that predicted per capita consumption does not exceed the appropriate levels set out in the applicable BREEAM standard. Both residential and non-residential development should include recycling greywater and rainwater harvesting where systems are energy and cost effective.*

- 5.89 The application is supported by a Sustainability Statement, which is aligned with the requirements of the Council's Sustainable Design and Construction SPD.
- 5.90 The report covers the following, demonstrating the acceptability of the proposal with regards to sustainability:
- Climate Change and Adaptation;
  - Water Management, including water conservation and flood risk and drainage;
  - Waste Reduction;
  - Material Usage;
  - Transport;
  - Ecology;
  - Pollution;
  - A BREEAM Pre-Assessment;
  - Energy Efficiency of the Building; and
  - Health and Wellbeing.
- 5.91 With regards to Energy, Local Plan Policy CC3 relates to adaptation to climate change and states all developments will demonstrate how they have been designed to incorporate measures to adapt to climate change. The policy also outlines criteria which should be incorporated into new development.
- 5.92 The application is supported by an Energy Strategy (prepared by Hoare Lea). The report evaluates the proposed development against the energy hierarchy; Be lean, Be clean and Be green.
- 5.93 The retail unit has been assessed as a 'shell only' assessment in lieu of the fit-out details for these areas. An initial simulation has been evaluated using standard fabric and system performance values. Initial simulations show that the retail unit could achieve a 5% decrease in carbon emissions when compared to a Part L baseline.
- 5.94 Combining passive design and energy efficiency measures with ASHPs and PV, the Proposed Development demonstrates that the annual regulated carbon dioxide emissions are 89.4% less than the Part L 2013 Target Emission Rate (TER) and the Fabric Energy Efficiency (FEE) is approximately 6.6% better than the Target Fabric Energy Efficiency (TFEE).
- 5.95** Through the use of efficient building fabric and building services, Air Source Heat pumps and PV and a S106 Contribution the Caversham Road development can meet the requirements of the Reading Borough Local Plan. The proposal is therefore considered to comply with Planning Policy set out above.

## Daylight and Sunlight

- 5.96 Policy CC8 'Safeguarding Amenity' states development will not cause a detrimental impact on the living environment of existing residential properties or unacceptable living conditions for new residential properties, in terms of (amongst other items) access to sunlight and daylight.
- 5.97 This application is supported by a Daylight and Sunlight assessment prepared by Calfordseaden which considers daylight and sunlight impacts for both existing and proposed buildings.

### Existing Buildings

- 5.98 With regards to existing buildings the report states all the surrounding windows analysed will meet the BRE recommendations for Vertical Sky Component or are within a negligible distance of the recommendations.
- 5.99 All the rooms analysed for Daylight Distribution in the emerging scheme opposite at 80 Caversham Road either meet the BRE recommendations or are within a negligible distance of the recommendations.

### Proposed Development

- 5.100 Regarding the proposed building on site, the results demonstrate that the majority of the rooms will meet the BRE recommendations for Average Daylight Factor and Daylight Distribution or will be within a negligible distance.
- 5.101 Where the rooms are below negligible, these rooms are situated on the elevation that faces the proposed scheme at 80 Caversham Road. The assessment concludes that having due consideration for the nature of urban development it is encouraging to note that the proposed development causes the minimum impact on existing surrounding dwellings whilst achieving results expected in an urban area within the proposed development.
- 5.102 In the context of the above it is considered that the proposal is compliant with planning policy relating to daylight sunlight.

## Waste Storage/ Management

- 5.103 Local Plan Policy CC5 (Waste minimisation and storage) notes that developments should provide adequate, well-designed spaces to facilitate waste storage, reuse, recycling and composting.
- 5.104 A communal refuse store beneath the development is provided for the apartments, and the size and location of the residential refuse store has been designed in accordance with current borough policy as described in the Reading Borough Council Waste Management Guidelines.
- 5.105 The proposed location of the communal refuse store and route of the refuse collection vehicle has given careful consideration to the servicing of the residential apartments on site. It is therefore considered to comply with development plan policy.

## Summary

- 5.106 This section discusses all relevant development plan policies and material considerations in respect of the application proposals, providing an assessment to demonstrate that the application accords with the provisions of the development plan.
- 5.107 The principle of development is justified in the context of development plan policies. Additionally, there are several material considerations weighing in favour of the application proposals.
- 5.108 The revised scheme proposes the retention of a significant proportion of the locally listed retail warehouse building alongside the demolition of the south-eastern element in order to facilitate the provision of new homes. The 1960s shop front will also be removed and replaced with a new, sympathetic intervention that responds sensitively to the existing building and provide enhanced active frontage.
- 5.109 The revised scheme has addressed the conclusions of the previous appeal decision and comments received during the pre-application meetings with Reading Borough Council.
- 5.110 The main aim of the proposal is to breathe new life into a locally listed asset and create a high-quality, mixed use development that contributes positively to the local neighbourhood.
- 5.111 The palette of materials, general design, layout and bulk and massing represent a strong response to the site's current and emerging context.
- 5.112 Overall, the proposal will deliver a significant improvement to this prominent, highly sustainable location, providing a new high-quality building of excellent design quality, which enhances the locally listed heritage asset.

## 6 Planning Obligations

6.1 This section considers the implication of Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

### CIL

6.2 The proposed development will be subject to Reading's CIL Charge. Reading CIL Charging Schedule was agreed by Council on 27<sup>th</sup> January 2015 and was implemented on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015. The Charging Schedule is index linked to the BCIS All-in Tender Price Index and elements relative to this proposal are set out as follows:

Table 6-1 CIL Charging Schedule

| Use                                                                                                        | Charging Zone Location | Charge £/m <sup>2</sup> |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Residential/Hotels/Sheltered Housing/Private Rented Hostel Accommodation (including student accommodation) | Borough Wide           | £120                    |
| A1 retail                                                                                                  | Central Reading        | £0                      |

6.3 The regulation 123 list sets out the project and types of infrastructure that will be funded in whole or in part by the CIL income. This includes:

- Transport Infrastructure;
- Education;
- Leisure, sport and open space infrastructure relating to 'green links' and Public Rights of Way;
- Community facilities infrastructure;
- Public Services Infrastructure;
- Flood Management Infrastructure;
- Strategic nature conservation Infrastructure

6.4 In accordance with Regulation 40 of the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations the following is calculated based upon the below assumptions:

- Proposed GIAm<sup>2</sup>
- Less qualifying affordable housing GIAm<sup>2</sup>
- Less existing floorspace (in lawful use for the prescribed period pursuant to the CIL Regulations 2010 (as amended) to be demolished) GIAm<sup>2</sup>

6.5 The CIL calculation is provided below, it should be noted that this is not index linked:

- RBC CIL = Proposed Residential @ 2,330.2m<sup>2</sup>
- RBC CIL = Proposed Retail @ 318 m<sup>2</sup>

- Less proposed affordable GIAm<sup>2</sup>: 0m<sup>2</sup>
- Less existing floorspace in lawful use: 0m<sup>2</sup> GIA
- **Total CIL = £279,625.20**

6.6 Based on the adopted Reading CIL charge set out above, the CIL charge liable for the application proposals (non-indexed) amounts to **£279,625.20**.

## Section 106 Contributions

6.7 Local Plan Policy CC9 (Securing Infrastructure) states:

*In determining appropriate provision or contribution, the highest priority will be given to the following:*

- *Transport infrastructure, including major cross boundary or sub-regional infrastructure projects;*
- *Open space, green infrastructure and other measures to improve or enhance biodiversity;*
- *Education, including cross-boundary facilities;*
- *Economic development services and infrastructure, including employment, skills and training development initiatives and childcare provision.*

*Where relevant a high priority will also be given to the appropriate provision of the following:*

- *Energy infrastructure, including decentralised energy projects;*
- *Health provision; and*
- *Police Service infrastructure.*

*Other measures, as follows, should also be considered where a specific need is identified and justified:*

- *Community facilities;*
- *Leisure and cultural infrastructure;*
- *Reading Central Area infrastructure and amenities, including public realm and street care enhancements;*
- *Environmental improvements outside the Central Area, such as within local centres, including off-site street tree and other tree planting;*
- *Measures to tackle poor air quality or for on-going air quality monitoring; and*

- *Flood mitigation and prevention measures.*

- 6.8 As identified by the enclosed Energy Statement the Draft Sustainable Construction Supplementary Planning Document for Reading Borough confirms that if achieving Zero Carbon is not possible on site, a Section 106 contribution can be provided. The rate of this S106 contribution is £1,800 per remaining tonne of carbon emissions.
- 6.9 The proposed development achieves an 89.4% improvement over a Part L compliant baseline emission of 31 TonnesCO<sub>2</sub>/year. The remaining 10.6% (3.3 tonnesCO<sub>2</sub>/year) could be offset via a S106 contribution approximately equal to £6,001.
- 6.10 Any further S106 contributions will be the subject of negotiation during the determination period.

## 7 Conclusion

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- 7.1 This Planning Statement addresses all relevant planning considerations relative to the development proposed at 71-73 Caversham Road, Reading, RG1 8JA. The Planning Statement comprises one of a collection of supporting documents which justify the proposed development, all of which should be read holistically.
- 7.2 To conclude, planning permission should be granted without delay as it would deliver the following benefits:
- Facilitate the delivery of 29 much needed homes that positively contribute to housing supply in Reading.
  - Breathe new life into a locally listed asset and create a high-quality, mixed use development that contributes positively to the local neighbourhood.
  - Provide dedicated private amenity space in the form of balconies and winter gardens in addition to communal roof terrace.
  - Provide a range of new homes ranging from 1 bed to 3 bed units, appropriate for the highly accessible location.
  - Provide enhanced retail space, with active frontage and increase the employment generating potential of the site.
  - Deliver a high quality, carefully designed solution which retains part of the locally listed building and has been refined throughout the pre-application process.
  - Deliver units with level threshold that follow the requirements set out in Part M of the Building Regulations.
- 7.3 The NPPF states that where the development plan is silent or absent on a particular matter, then planning permission should be granted unless “any adverse effect of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits” of the development. There are no “significant and demonstrable adverse effects” of this development that exist in the first instance. Secondly, even if there were, then they would not outweigh the “benefits” of the proposal.
- 7.4 This development proposal therefore accords with the up-to-date development plan. There are also significant material considerations which weigh in favour of the grant of planning permission.
- 7.5 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. This proposal is in accordance with the development plan, and in addition, there are other material considerations which strongly support the grant of planning permission, such as its compliance with the NPPF.



## Document 1

### STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

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# 71-73 Caversham Road

## Statement of Community Involvement

October 2019

KANDA

# Contents

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| <b>4.0</b> Conclusion             | p.15 |

This report has been prepared by Kanda Consulting on behalf of S2 Estates.

## Appendices

**Appendix I** - Exhibition Feedback Form p.17

**Appendix II** - Exhibition Flyer p.19

**Appendix III** - Exhibition Boards p.21

# 1.0 Executive Summary

## 01

## Executive Summary

**1.1** S2 Estates appointed Kanda, a specialist public affairs and consultation company to undertake resident, community and stakeholder consultation to support this planning application.

**1.2** The application seeks to redevelop the site at 71-73 Caversham Road, Reading, to provide new homes and commercial space. The application is to demolish the existing warehouse – the former Drews building – and redevelop it to provide a mixed-use building, with approximately 238.6 square metres of commercial space on the ground floor and 44 residential units across six floors above.

**1.3** There will also be in excess of policy compliant cycle parking provision. On the basis of the existing scheme the development will provide 54 cycle spaces (including 10 external spaces).

**1.4** Meetings were held with key stakeholders, representatives and local residents to facilitate dialogue and to respond to questions prior to submission of the application.

**1.5** An exhibition of the plans was held on 24th July where members of the project team were on-hand to answer questions from local residents and their representatives.

**1.6** Feedback from stakeholders has been broadly positive. There is broad agreement that the site is suitable for redevelopment and support for a mixed-use development including new housing.

**1.7** The Applicant is committed to maintaining a programme of engagement with the local community throughout the planning process, both pre and post submission.

**1.8** This report has been informed by Central Government Guidance within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2019 on community involvement in planning. It forms part of the supporting documentation informing the planning application.

## 2.0 Consultation

## 02

## Consultation

**2.1** The consultation process was carried out in parallel with pre-application discussions with Reading's Planning Department.

**2.2** As well as the exhibition on 24th July, the Applicant has met all three Abbey Ward Councillors to discuss the proposals.

**2.3** Community groups were formally invited to the public exhibition. These groups included:

- Bell Tower Community Association
- Caversham and District Residents Association
- Reading Civic Society
- Reading and Wokingham Chamber of Commerce

**2.4** Subsequent to the public exhibition, the Bell Tower Community Association was contacted and offered a detailed briefing on the proposals.

**2.5** Throughout the consultation process, a telephone number and email address were provided and managed by Kanda, supplying further information to residents and stakeholders on request.

**2.5.1** The key themes of discussion during consultation have included:

- The height of the proposals
- The heritage aspects of the site
- The mix of uses
- Parking provision
- The precedent set by the new scheme

**2.5.2** Some attendees expressed concerns about aspects of the proposals and these concerns were addressed by members of the project team at the exhibition.

### **2.6** Consultation Objective and Activities

**2.6.1** The objectives of the consultation process were to ensure that the various local stakeholders who have an interest in the proposed development were given the opportunity to view and provide feedback on the evolving proposals.

## 3.0 Stakeholder Engagement

## 3.0

# Stakeholder Engagement

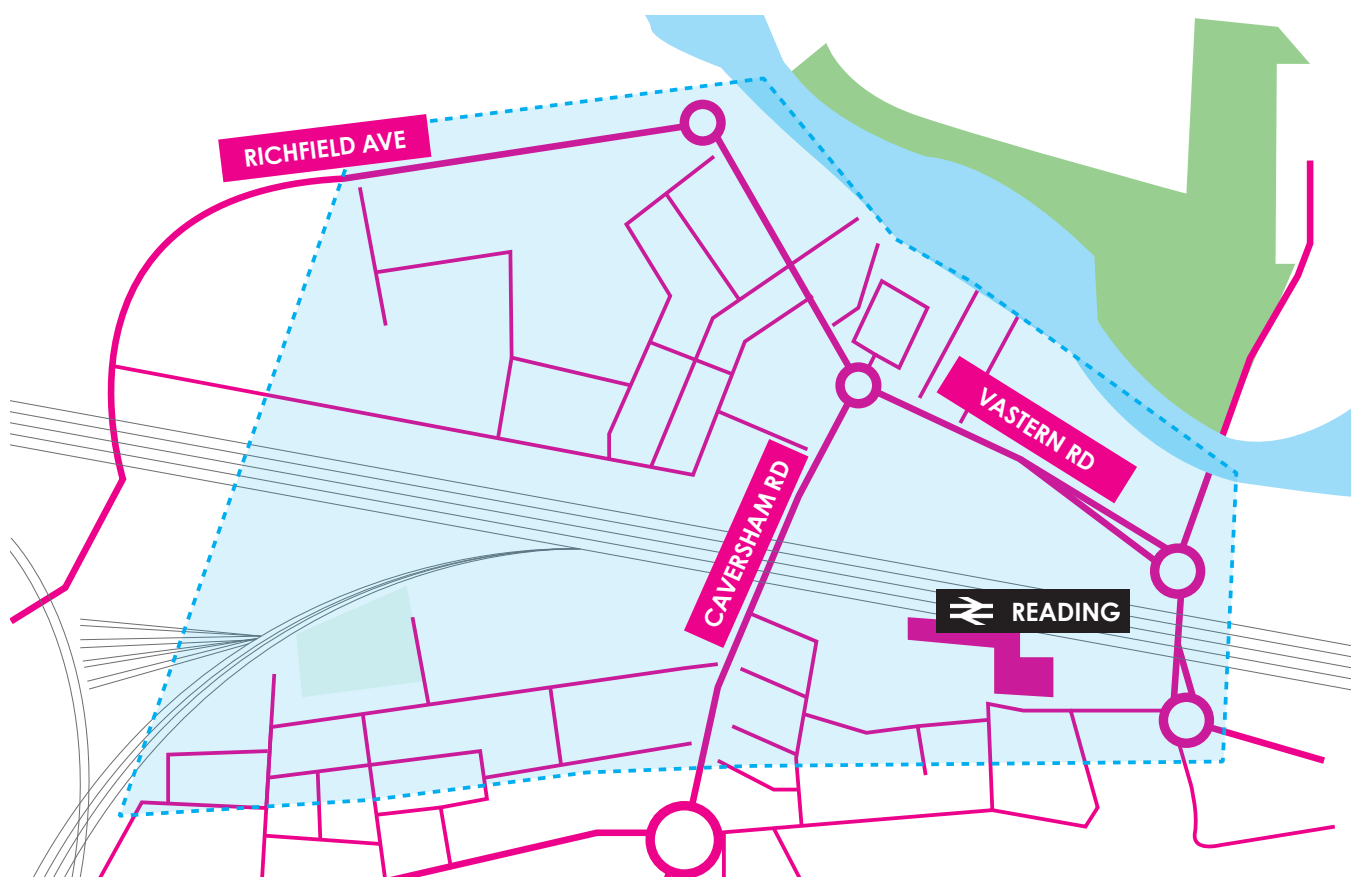
### Exhibition

**3.1** An exhibition of the plans was held at Greyfriars Church, a short walk from the site, on 24th July 2019 between 3pm and 7pm. Members of the project team were on hand to answer questions from local residents.

**3.2** Advertising for the exhibition included a flyer distributed to the area surrounding the

site, which was delivered to 2415 addresses. A map demonstrating the distribution area for the flyers is included below. See **Appendix II** for a copy of the flyer.

**3.3** The exhibition featured 15 boards presenting the redevelopment proposals for attendees to consider. See **Appendix III** for copies of the exhibition boards.



*Distribution area*

**3.4** The exhibition was attended by 29 residents.

**3.5** On arrival at the exhibition, a total of 26 attendees signed in. Of those, 11 completed a feedback form. During the public exhibition, feedback forms were utilised to gather the public's feedback on aspects of the proposed scheme.

**3.6** The feedback forms were designed to assess the public's perception on the major aspects of the scheme. Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed with the following statements:

- I welcome the opportunity to be consulted on these proposals.

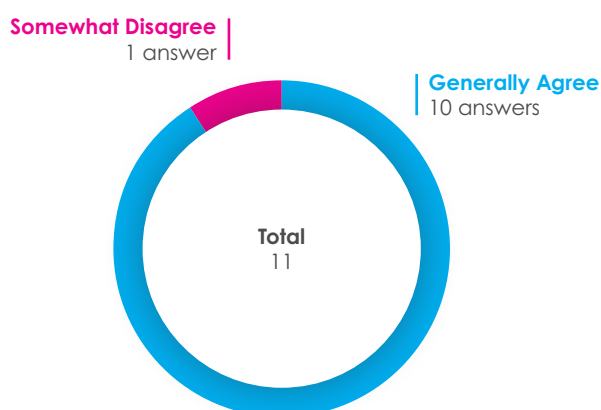
- The site is in need of redevelopment.
- A mixed-use scheme is appropriate for this site.
- I welcome the provision of new housing in these proposals.
- I support the design of the proposals.
- I support the parking provision contained within the proposals.

See **Appendix I** for a copy of the feedback form.

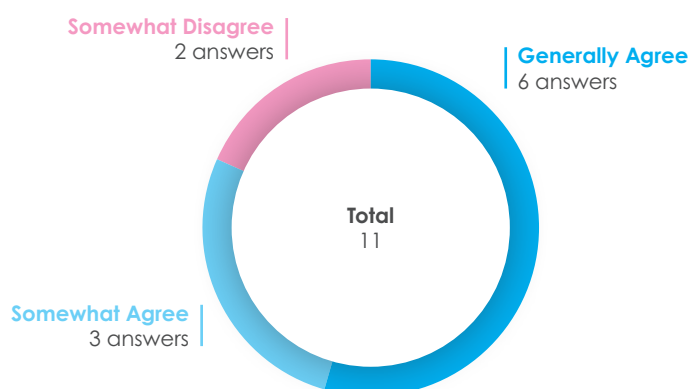
**3.7** Some attendees completed the feedback form on the day, with others returning them by post or email.

**3.8** Feedback received is shown in this report (overleaf), including all comments that were written on feedback forms.

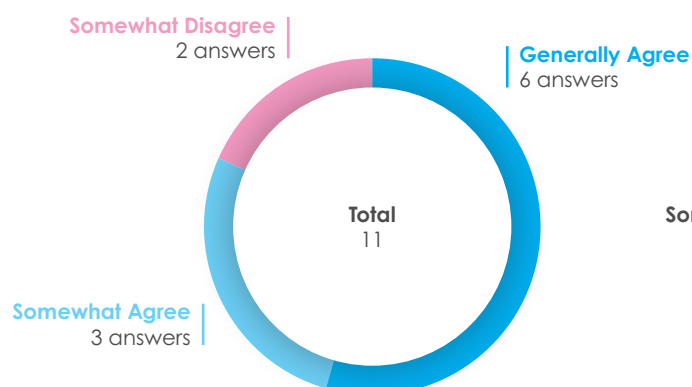
### 1. I have found it useful to be consulted on these proposals.



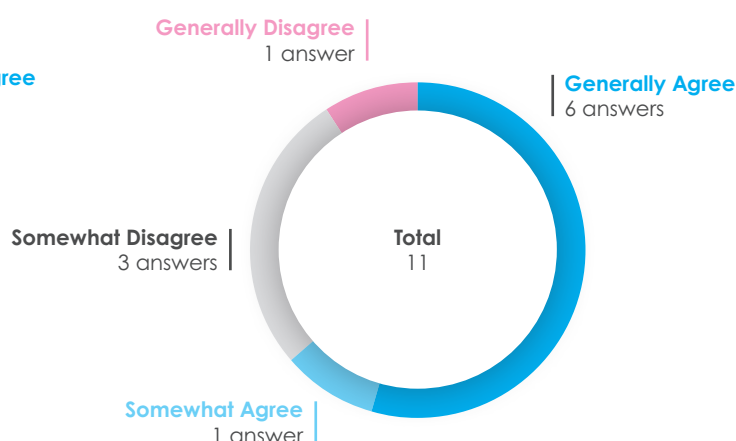
### 2. The site is in need of redevelopment.



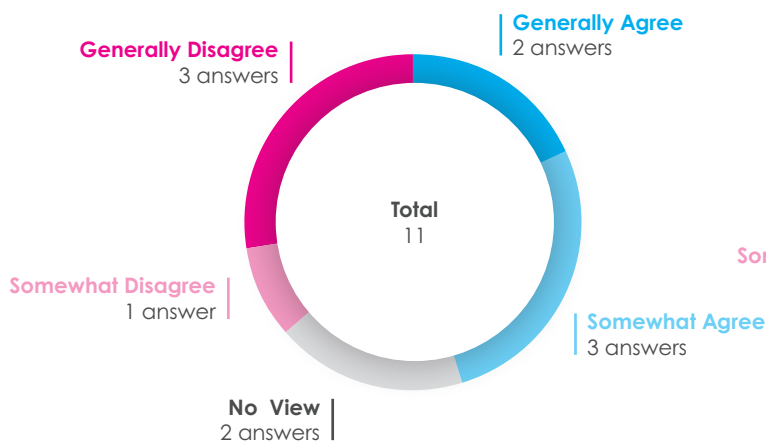
### 3. A mixed-use scheme is appropriate for this site.



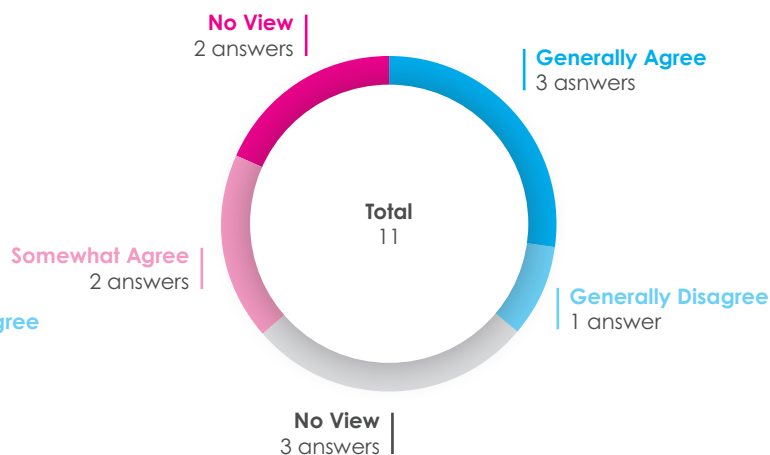
### 4. I welcome the provision of new housing in these proposals.



### 5. I support the design of the proposals.



### 6. I support the parking provision contained within the proposals.



**3.8.1** Question 7 of the feedback form stated: 'Please let us know if you have any additional views on the proposals.' All of the 11 feedback forms received contained written comments. The majority of comments received were positive about the redevelopment of the site. A table is included below with all responses received from feedback forms.

|   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|---|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | <p>"[Agree with parking provision] As long as people who do not have allocated parking spaces know they cannot bring a car to the area."</p> <p>"Would not like to see the development any higher. Like the provision of rooftop gardens!"</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| 2 | <p>"Think the proposals are correct for the site in that the adjacent lower buildings are highly likely to be redeveloped and as such, with the redevelopment of the Post Office Site, higher buildings such as this are acceptable. Like the "warehouse feel."</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| 3 | <p>"The height, scale and massing of the proposed building is out of keeping with its immediate surroundings, despite the proposed development of the former Royal Mail site opposite and the fact that the site is outside of the "Tall Buildings" SPD area. NO PROBLEM with the principle of redevelopment, mixed use proposal and the loss of the existing building. Although I understand the argument to retain the existing building on "heritage" lines, the proposals I have seen today respect the character by the use of materials, the design and the features incorporated. Just not with the height and scale."</p> |
| 4 | <p>"Review height - reduce by 2-3 floors - consider extending to back. Less modern in style - reflect the distinctiveness of historic buildings in the Bell Tower area. Design according to existing rather than proposed styles &amp; massing etc."</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| 5 | <p>"Current design is too tall. More should be done to reflect the historic character of the site in terms of windows, brick detailing. It would be good if some of the current detailing could be reproduced."</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| 6 | <p>"I would prefer a slightly lower development but much depends on the HERMES development opposite. The brick walls and overall design look reasonable for the local area."</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| 7 | <p>"I would prefer to see the existing building retained and maybe extended. This building is too tall on a dominant corner plot. Local housing will be overshadowed. Consultation should have been held closer to development site for local residents to easily attend. Gardens are good."</p> <p>"Heritage:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Brewery?</li> <li>2. I think the name is SMALLBONE but cannot back this up with research.</li> <li>3. Bijou offices in heritage buildings are overshadowed and diminished."</li> </ol>                                                                               |

|    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 8  | <p>"I agree that the Drew's site needs to be generally improved, but I would be sad to lose the historic building as it is - if it could instead be sympathetically restored and connected to housing that would be far preferable to use. It seems a shame to knock it down to build higher-rise flats which are a lot taller than the surrounding houses."</p> <p>"Parking in new proposals seems generally to be inadequate! Even living as close to the station as I do, we still have a car. I think it's unrealistic to expect that the new residents will not have cars!"</p> |
| 9  | <p>"One retail space is too big - already many closed large shops in the town centre.</p> <p>Enough parking should be planned for all flats as big parking issue in town.</p> <p>More 3 bed flats and less one beds.</p> <p>Would be better to retain more of Drews building - Reading history getting destroyed -again.</p> <p>The shop on ground floor could be better used as a surgery - the Broad Street Mall walk-in centre is totally outdated and overcrowded."</p>                                                                                                          |
| 10 | <p>"No parking required. Private 'cubicle gardens not necessary, residential communal space preferred. Would like a commitment to solar-panelled roof + water capture + reuse."</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| 11 | <p>"The proposal would involve the demolition of the oldest building in the area. It will tower over Northfield Road and be completely out of keeping with the old brewery building and the houses on Northfield Road. The development should largely focus on alternative uses of the existing building."</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |