



DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT (DAS) INCLUDING HERITAGE AND OPEN SPACE STATEMENTS

**PROPOSED DEMOLITION OF EXISTING BUILDINGS AND ERECTION OF 22 APARTMENTS
TRINITY HALL, SOUTH STREET, READING, RG1 4QU**

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STATUS: PLANNING**

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Photograph 1: looking eastwards across Sidmouth Street towards Trinity Hall.

Executive Summary



Photograph 2: the existing buildings and access onto South Street.

- This DAS provides explains how the proposed development is a suitable response to the site and its setting, and demonstrates that it can be adequately accessed by prospective users.
- The existing, rather undistinguished buildings on this corner site of South Street and Sidmouth Street will be demolished.
- The scheme will provide 22 new apartments (including 6 affordable apartments) and 2 wheelchair user apartments on the ground floor in line with M4(3) of the Building Regulations) with secure cycle parking for 22 cycles and 11 allocated car parking spaces, including disabled car parking spaces.
- The existing access off of South Street will be altered to provide access to a new refuse store, the cycle store and car parking spaces on the ground floor, which would be provided slightly below the level of South Street.
- The scale of the new building has been designed with similar buildings in the local area in mind, and includes a significant set back of the upper 2 apartments away from the shoulders of the building.
- The architectural details and materials to be used in the new building are intended to compliment those found in the local area at this junction of South Street and Sidmouth Street.
- Two new tree planting species (*Ligustrum japonicum* and *Photinia fraseri* Red Robin) in tree pits in locations that avoid underground services, together with other landscaping, particularly to the frontages along South Street and Sidmouth Street are proposed and are intended to include native or biodiversity friendly species.

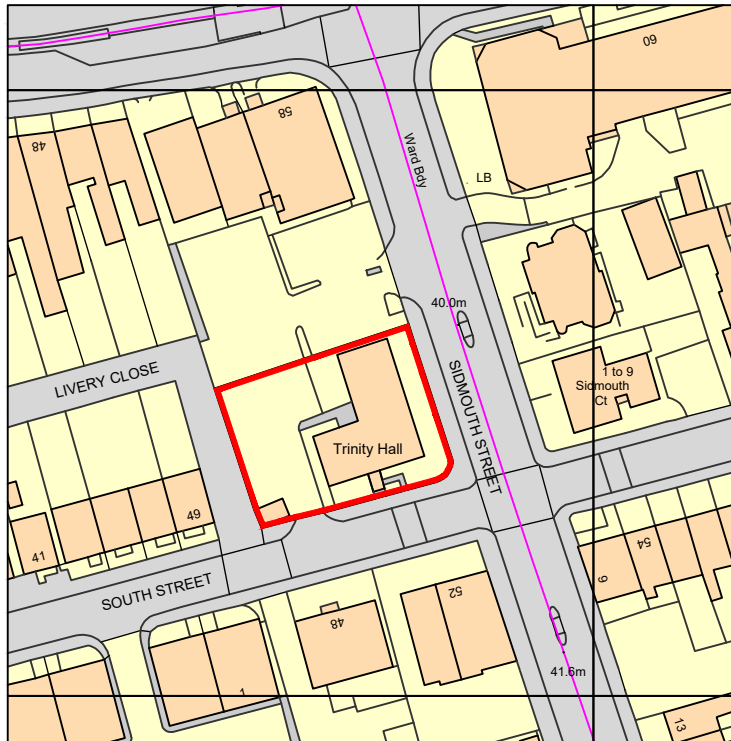
Site Location

The site comprises an existing three storey brick building containing 24 bedspaces of student accommodation (including a wardens flat and office) that has remained unused since August 2014. The building was constructed in the 1980s and is undistinguished in character. It is located on the north side of South Street, at the junction with Sidmouth Street which lies to the east, and fronts both roads. There is an existing vehicular access from South Street to an open off-street car park providing for 11 cars, and a detached garage. Livery Close lies to the west. There is also some existing landscaping the existing building at the site. Internally the facilities are basic when compared with more recent student accommodation, including only shared toilets (no en-suites) and cooking facilities (no individual cooking facilities).

The site is located within the Reading Central Area but not within a designated shopping or office core, nor is it within a conservation area. The site lies within an air quality management area and South Street is a designated cycle route. The ability to walk to public open space nearby in the central area, Kennet Riverside and also Eldon Square public open space is also notable.

The surrounding area comprises a mix of commercial and residential uses, and the buildings themselves encompass a variety of styles and ages. To the north are three commercial-storied office buildings, located on the junction of Sidmouth Street and Queens Road, with off-street parking immediately adjacent to the application site. To the east is the Grade II listed 3&5 Sidmouth Street, a 1880s 3 storey pair in the Butterfield Vicarage style. Also to the east are the modern 3 storey Sidmouth Court flats. To the south-east is the Grade II listed 9 Sidmouth Street, a 2 storey end of terrace grey brick building from the 1850s. Nos. 50-52 South Street, to the south of the site, is a slightly elevated, blue/red brick 3 storey building occupied by the Reading Islamic Centre. To the west at 48 South Street is the 4 storey Shepton House flats with a pitched roof. To the west of the application site is Livery Close beyond which are no's 43-49 South Street that are Grade II listed. This is a mid-19th century 2 – 2 1/2 storey residential terrace with Bath ashlar front, and flint with brick dressings and quoins to the side and rear.

There are three Grade II Listed Buildings at 43-49 South Street to the west of Livery Close, 3 and 5 Sidmouth Street to the east, and 9 Sidmouth Street diagonally to the south-east opposite the junction of South Street and Sidmouth Street.



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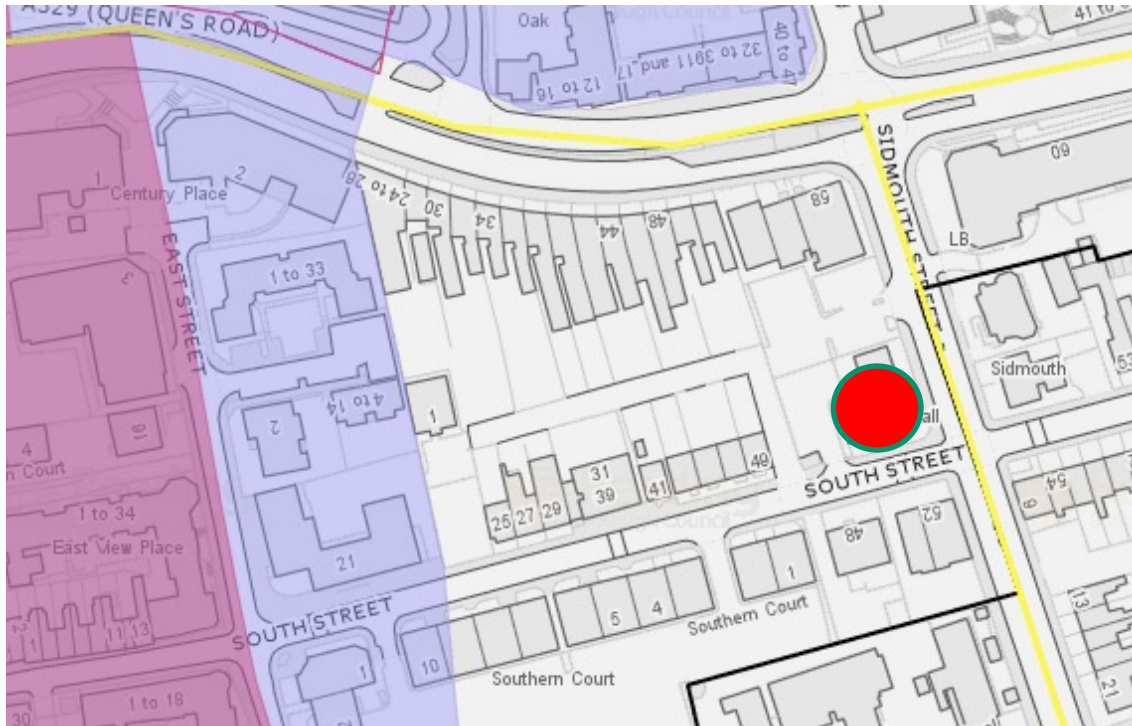
Site location plan.

Planning Context 1

The site lies in the Reading Central Area (RCA) which lies at the heart of Reading Borough.

In terms of parking provision, the site is located in Zone 2 and is well served by public transport. As detailed in Reading Borough Council's 'Revised Parking Standards and Design' for 1-2 bed flats in Zone 2, parking is generally required at a rate of 1 space per flat. However, the standards also state that *"Should a developer require fewer spaces than are set out here then there would need to be demonstration, to the Highway Authority's satisfaction, that there would be no detriment to highway safety as a result."*

Given that the site lies within the RCA, the close proximity of the site to Reading town centre, the nearby parking restrictions and the number of nearby alternative sustainable travel opportunities, the provision of 11 allocated car parking spaces is considered to be appropriate would not result in a detrimental impact on highway safety in the context of the Council's parking standards. Car-free sites are fairly common in Reading, but generally on a smaller scale than the development proposed here. However, even the lowest parking Zone in Reading (Zone 1) generally requires 0.5 spaces per dwelling. The application provides for 11 allocated car parking spaces for the 22 apartments, including parking spaces for people with limited mobility for which some support is provided in Local Plan Policy H6 'Accommodation for vulnerable people'.



Extract from the Policies Map identifying the site.

Planning Context 2



For cycle parking provision, 1-2 bed flats require a minimum of 0.5 cycle parking spaces per flat, so a minimum of 11 cycle parking spaces should be provided for this site. However, 22 cycle parking spaces are provided for in a secure store and this ought to be more than sufficient to comply with the above standards.

The cycle stands within the secure store are based on the West London Cycle Parking Guidance (one of the leading industry cycle guidance documents) which advises that 1.0m should be provided between Sheffield stands, with 0.6m between a stand and the wall. The West London Cycle Parking Guidance also advises that a minimum of 1.2m should be provided to allow a person to walk alongside their bike through a gap or corridor (in this case between the cycle store doors and car parking space no. 1), and this is also designed for in the application.



Reading Borough Council's 'Waste Management Guidelines for Property Developers, Architects, Planners and Contractors' advises that 1 x 1,100 litre bin is required per 5 flats, if refuse is collected on a fortnightly basis, or 1 x 1,100 litre bin per 10 flats, if refuse is to be collected on a weekly basis. Provision is made in the application for 6 x 1,100 litre bins and which provides flexibility for either a fortnightly or weekly collection.

Refuse collectors would not have to pull the bins more than 10m from the refuse store, and sufficient clearance has been provided around each of the bins to allow residents and refuse collectors to access the bins. The doorway width is to the standard width of 2.0m to allow the bins to be manoeuvred out of the refuse store.

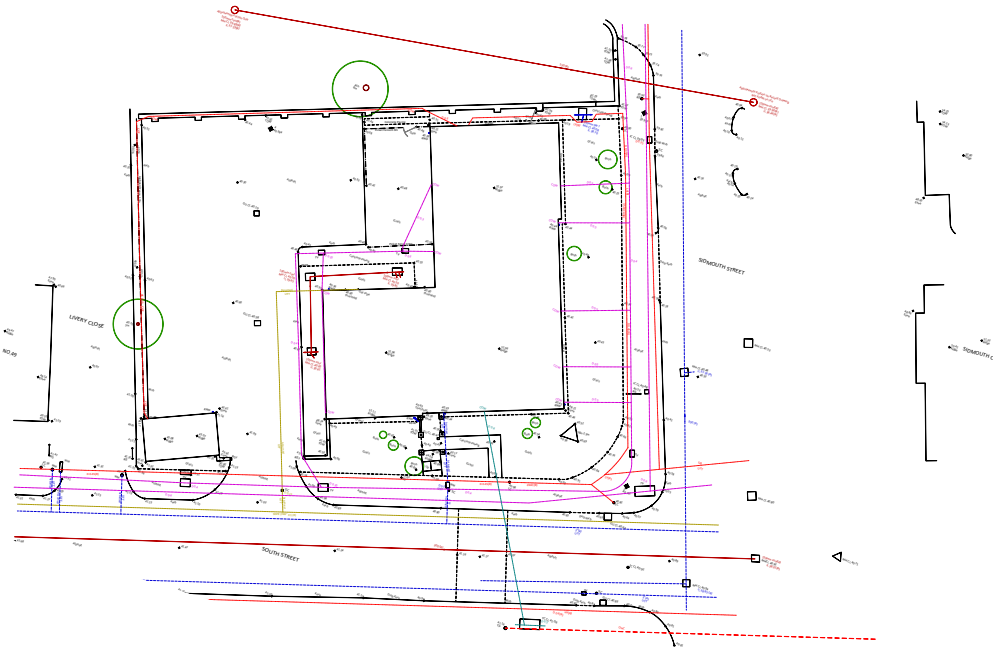
Site Context 1: Topography, utilities and the scale of the proposed building

The application is accompanied by a topographical survey of the site, the existing building and of nearby buildings. The existing building has a ridge at 51.96mAOD and the top of the parapet around the new building would be at 52.915mAOD.

The site slopes downwards from the south (South Street) to the north (towards the three commercial-storied office buildings) which has a ridge height at 51.96mAOD. In South Street the level of the highway is between 40.89mAOD and 41.17mAOD. Adjacent to the existing wall along the northern boundary the site drops to between 39.94mAOD in Sidmouth Street, to 40.52mAOD in Livery Close. There is a fall in the site away from South Street of between 0.5 and 1m.

The level of the new building takes advantage of this fall in providing the 11 undercroft car parking spaces, two of the proposed 1-bed apartments, and the cycle and refuse stores.

The location of the utilities are included on the topographical survey and the proposed tree planting and other landscaping shown on the submitted ground floor plan and elevations has taken the location of the utilities into account.



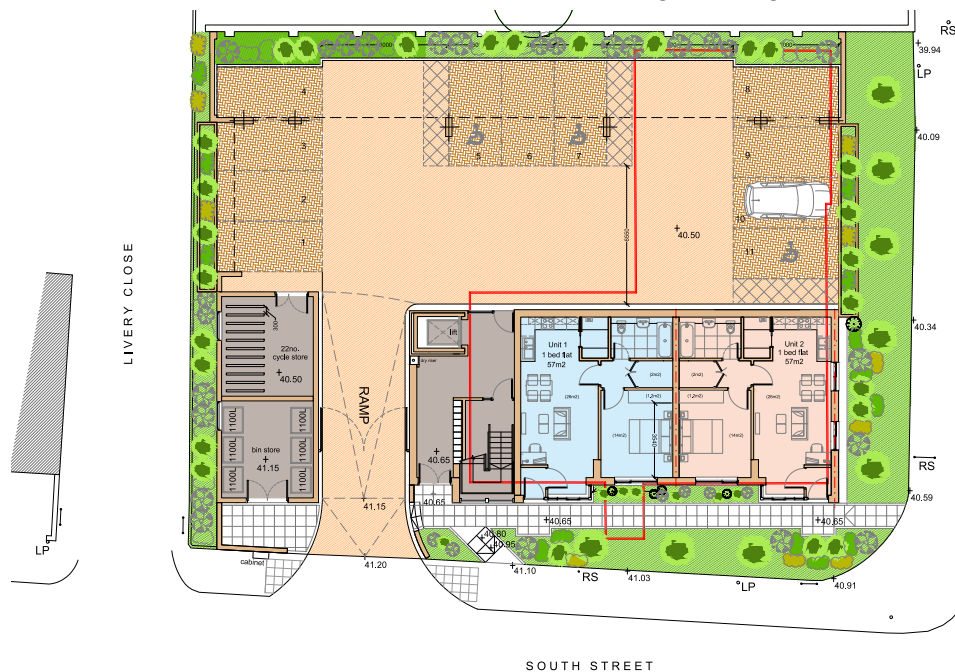
Topographical survey of the site..



proposed section through the ramp



Aerial view of the site and the surrounding buildings.



The site was the subject of a planning permission for the 'Erection of part 3, part 4 storey building to provide 25 student units(42 bedspaces) (Sui Generis) and associated works, following demolition of existing 3 storey building (Sui Generis)' on the 3 December 2015 under application ref. 151356. This planning permission has expired.

The scale of the proposed building takes into account the slope of the site (to 'hide' the undercroft car parking in the lowest part of the site), the expired planning permission for a part 3, part 4 storey building, the scale of the buildings in the nearby area as shown in the photograph (right and including commercial-storey office buildings), and other part 4 , part 5 storey buildings and recent planning permissions for apartments in the local area.

There are a number of 4 storey and part 4, part 5 storey buildings close to the site, including the majority of buildings on the south side of South Street. Others have the appearance of greater height because of their commercial storeys, high parapets, large roof forms and steep roof pitches.

Site Context 2: Photographs of 4 storey and part 4, part 5 storey buildings close to the site





Site Context 3:

Photographs showing the height of the proposed building in relation to the buildings on the opposite side of South Street





Photographs of the site from Livery Close (top), South Street (bottom left) and Sidmouth Street (bottom right).

Heritage Statement:

The statutory requirements set out in Sections 66(1) and Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 have been considered as well as the requirements in the Reading Local Plan policies and the guidance in the NPPF (including para. 194) and the PPG.

The relevant historic environment records have been consulted. There are no heritage assets on the site and there are no locally listed buildings nearby. The closest listed buildings that may be affected by the proposed development as part of their setting are:

- to the east of the site, the Grade II listed 3&5 Sidmouth Street, a 1880s 3 storey pair in the Butterfield Vicarage style.;
- to the south-east is the Grade II listed 9 Sidmouth Street, a 2 storey end of terrace grey brick building from the 1850s; and
- to the west of the application site is Livery Close beyond which are no's 43-49 South Street that are Grade II listed. This is a mid-19th century 2 – 2 1/2 storey residential terrace with Bath ashlar front, and flint with brick dressings and quoins to the side and rear.

Consulting the Historic Environment Record reveals no archaeological features on the site.

Although time expired, the next page compares the planning permission for the 'Erection of part 3, part 4 storey building to provide 25 student units(42 bedspaces) (Sui Generis) and associated works, following demolition of existing 3 storey building (Sui Generis)' on the 3 December 2015 under application ref. 151356 (see comparison on page 13).

The proposal in the current application adds a floor to the permitted building and would be separated from no's 43-49 South Street by Livery Close. The scale of the proposed building takes into account the slope of the site (to 'hide' the undercroft car parking in the lowest part of the site), the expired planning permission for the part 3, part 4 storey building, the scale of the buildings in the nearby area including commercial-storey office buildings, and other part 4 , part 5 storey buildings and recent planning permissions for apartments in the local area.

There are a number of 4 storey and part 4, part 5 storey buildings close to the site, including the majority of buildings on the south side of South Street. Others have the appearance of greater height because of their commercial storeys, high parapets, large roof forms and steep roof pitches. The relationship between the height of the proposal and of no's 43-49 South Street and the other nearby listed buildings has been carefully considered. A difference in height is can reinforce the setting of a building as shown in the photograph shown on page 14 below. From the topographical survey, whilst no. 49 South Street has a ridge of 49.47m AOD, the nearest corner of the building is set at 41.90m AOD to the top of the wall. The third floor of the proposed building, on the opposite side of Livery Close and separated by a landscape strip, would be set at 49.855m AOD. Very roughly the difference to the top of the proposed parapet would be about 4m.

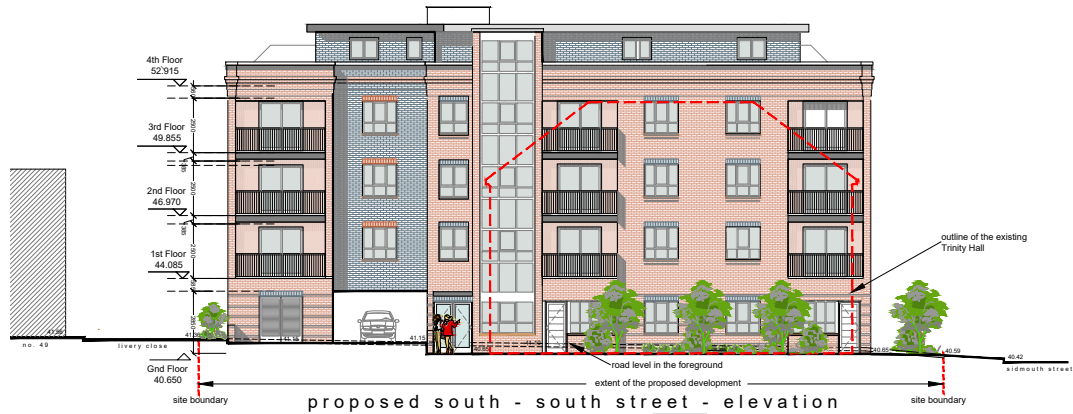
The effect on the listed buildings is considered to be at worse at a very low degree of 'less than substantial' harm being caused by the proposed development.

In the planning balance any harmful impacts of the proposed development need to be weighed with the benefits of the proposal, such as the on-site provision of affordable housing (and in the context of a challenging viability climate), the suitably high standard and energy efficiency of the the proposed residential accommodation (compared for example to the existing student accommodation and warden's flat that has remained unused since August 2014), the reduction in the amount of car parking (adding two disabled car parking spaces)¹² and the provision of cycle storage facilities, and the potential for Biodiversity Net Gain are all tangible planning benefits of the proposal. In this case it is considered that in a suitable planning balance the public benefits of the proposal outweigh any heritage harm that may be identified.

Planning permission for the 'Erection of part 3, part 4 storey building to provide 25 student units(42 bedspaces) (Sui Generis) and associated works, following demolition of existing 3 storey building (Sui Generis)' on the 3 December 2015 under application ref. 151356.



Photograph of Livery Close, and the proposed street scene elevation showing the proposed building.





Open Space Statement:

There is no public open space on the existing site and none is proposed, given the constraints of the site and the size and density of the proposed development.

The proposed development does not form part of any local green space or public open space identified in Local Plan Policy EN7 and shown on the Proposals Map (the nearest being Eldon Square which is in a comfortable walking distance being about 0.5km away), nor does the site lie adjacent to, nor would jeopardise, their use or enjoyment by the public. Eldon Square will therefore not be harmed by the proposed development. There is public open space in and around the town centre that is also within a comfortable walking distance and will not be harmed by the proposed development. Overall the proposed development would have reasonable access to open space, without severance lines, and would be in accordance with Local Plan Policy EN10.

Local Plan Policy EN9 advises that: *"All new development should make provision for appropriate open space based on the needs of the development. This can be achieved through on or off-site provision, contributions toward provision or improvement of existing leisure or recreational facilities"* and that: *"On sites of less than 50 dwellings, or in areas not identified as deficient in the provision of open space, new open space provision, improvements or enhancements will be sought, including through appropriate contributions."*

The proposed Landscape Principles, including on site tree planting, will in any event provide value to the public realm for both residents and passers-by alike.

Evaluation:

Design opportunities and constraints

The replacement building is part 4, part 5 storey in height, with the 5 storey element being confined to two apartments set back well away from the 'shoulder' of the new building.. However, given the steeply pitched nature of the existing roof space of the existing building, the increase in overall height is limited. An increase in height is considered to be appropriate in design terms, bearing in mind the varied heights of buildings in the area and that this corner is considered the most appropriate in design terms to introduce additional height.

There is an opportunity to improve the design quality of the building at the junction of South Street and Sidmouth Street on this corner site.

The slope of the site helps to 'hide' the undercroft car parking in the lowest part of the site to the north and next to the existing car parking area to the adjoining offices in Sidmouth Street.

The proposed scale of the building is considered to be suitable in itself, and moreover, appropriate within the context of the prevailing local character including listed buildings.

There is existing landscaping around the site which is of a relatively low height. Enhancement of the existing landscape strips, in particular those along South Street and Sidmouth Street, is proposed and in which there are no quality trees growing. Tree planting is incorporated into the proposal along both frontages, with the ground floor plan showing 8 trees in all and intended to be planted as a mix of 'Ligustrum japonicum' and 'Photinia fraseri Red Robin' trees.. The details of the hard and soft landscaping scheme, including specifications of the tree pits and for the maintenance of all the landscaping can be secured by condition.



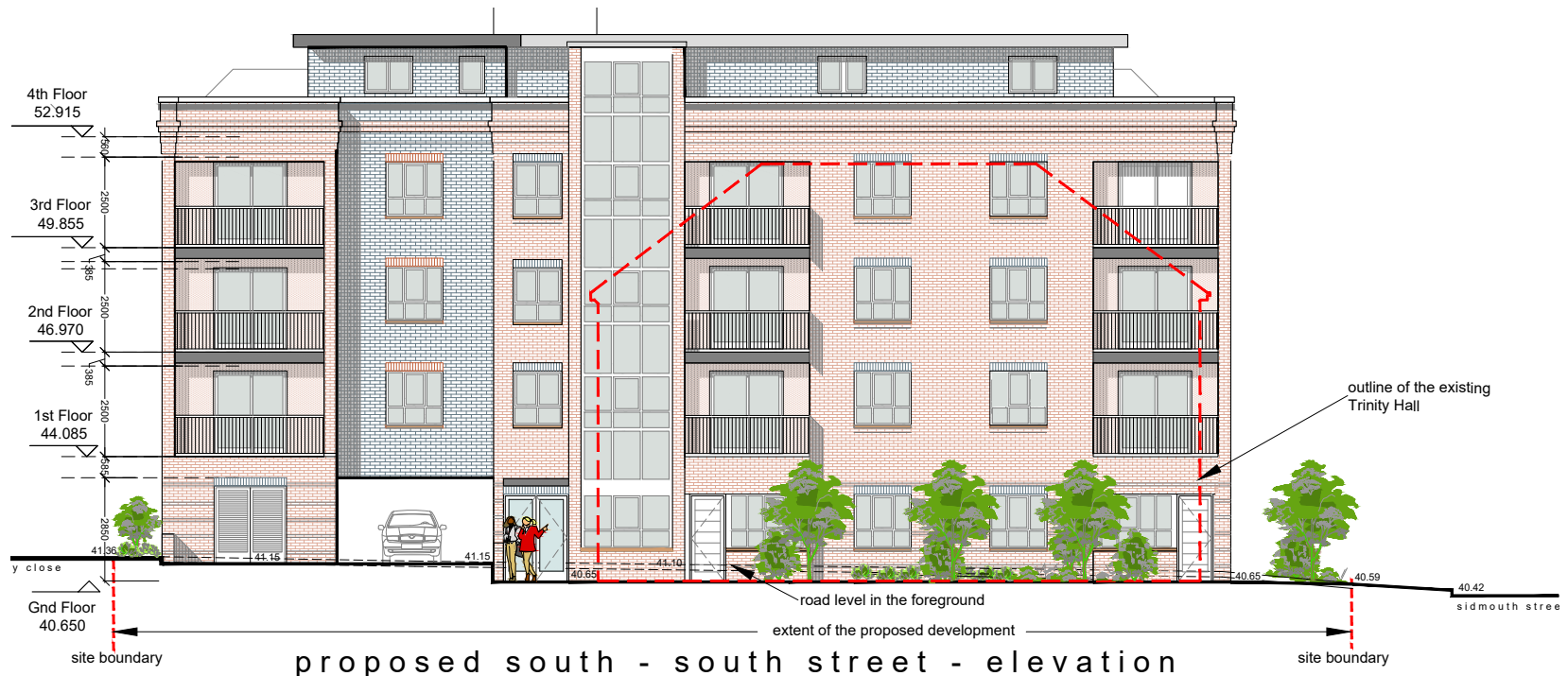
Proposal 1:

The amount of development comprises 22 apartments (8 x 2-bed and 14 x 1-bed), 11 allocated car parking spaces (including 2 car parking spaces for people with limited mobility), 22 cycle stands in a secure store, refuse store able to accommodate 6 x 1100L refuse bins. These can all be adequately accessed by prospective users. A C3 residential use would align with the broad objectives of Policy H1 of the Reading Borough Local Plan November 2019, in assisting meeting the annual housing targets.

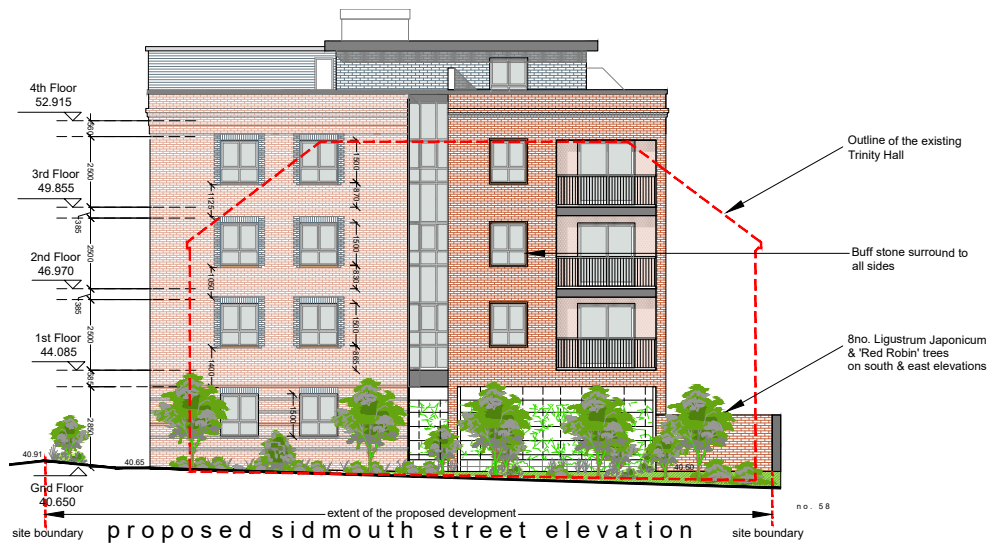
The scale, form and materials of the building are a suitable response to its setting and takes visual cues from the local area. The scale of the development aligns with Policy CC6 of the Reading Borough Local Plan November 2019 which advises that *"the scale and density of development will be related to its level of accessibility by walking, cycling and public transport to a range of services and facilities, with the densest and largest scale development taking place in the most accessible locations"*.

The environmental objectives expressed in Policies CC2 'Sustainable Design and Construction', CC3 'Adaption to Climate Change', CC4 'Decentralised Energy', CC5 'Waste Minimisation and Storage', EN18 'Flooding and Drainage' and H5 'Housing Standards' of the Reading Borough Local Plan November 2019 have all been considered in the proposal.

CC2: The proposal uses energy, water, minerals, materials and other natural resources appropriately, efficiently and with care and take account of the effects of climate change.



Proposal 2:



CC3: The proposal has been designed to incorporate measures to adapt to climate change. Where possible, the new building has been orientated to maximise the opportunities for both natural heating and ventilation and reducing exposure to wind and other elements. It has been designed to maximise resistance and resilience to climate change. The proposal incorporates the use of trees and other planting as part of a landscape scheme to provide shading to the building and the street, and with trees that have been carefully selected that will be managed and are adaptable to meet the predicted changed climatic conditions. The proposal will minimise the impact of surface water runoff from the development in the design of the drainage system and does not need to incorporate mitigation and resilience measures for any increase in river flooding levels as a result of climate change as it is in an area at lowest risk of flooding.

CC4: There is no decentralised energy network in the area. Consideration has been given to the inclusion of decentralised energy infrastructure within the development, but it is not considered to be suitable, feasible or viable for this form of energy provision.

CC5: The proposal has been designed to minimise the generation of waste in the construction, use and life of the building and promote more sustainable approaches to waste management, including the reuse and recycling of construction waste and a layout and design that provides adequate, well-designed space to facilitate waste storage, reuse and recycling.

EN18: In addition to being in an area at lowest risk of fluvial flooding, taking into account the effects of climate change, the proposal has considered flooding from all sources, including surface water, groundwater and sewer flooding.

H5: The apartments comply with the nationally-described space standards.

The development has been designed so that where possible it can meet the required standards in the Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Design Guide December 2019..



Neighbouring tree in the adjoining car park to the commercial building.

Summary

- Planning permission for the proposal would meet the encouragement given in the National Planning Policy Framework to making the effective use of land by using as much as possible land that has been previously developed (brownfield land). This is particularly the case as the building is vacant and has remained unused since August 2014.
- The accessibility of the site, which is within the Reading Central Area, is considered acceptable for the proposal (Policy CC6 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)) and the principle of a Class C3 residential use would align with the broad objectives of Policy H1 in assisting to meet the annual housing targets.
- The provision of on-site affordable housing and the two wheelchair accessible units in the proposal further help in providing a good mix of dwelling sizes, types and tenures appropriate to the location of the site.
- An increase in height is considered to be appropriate in design terms, bearing in mind the steeply pitched nature of the existing roof space of the existing building, the increase in overall height being limited, the varied heights of buildings in the area, and that this corner is considered the most appropriate in design terms to introduce additional height. The setting of nearby listed buildings would be preserved.
- Moreover, planning permission for the proposal would enhance the character and appearance of the area, and the public realm.