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Design, Heritage & Access Statement



2 Howard Street
Reading

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21015GRA - Howard St, Reading\
Planning\DHAS2

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of Document

This Design and Access Statement has been prepared on behalf of Gravitass Property Group Ltd and forms part of a package of information submitted for a Planning Application to Reading Borough Council (RBC) for the conversion of an existing single occupancy residence into a multiple occupancy house with alterations to existing single storey rear extensions.

2 Howard Street is within Russell Street / Castle Hill Conservation Area and this statement examines the site, the building, and surroundings within this context. It highlights the opportunities and constraints of the site, illustrates the design principles

that underpin the application proposals, and the approach to space and amenity standards, fire safety and access.

A variety of sources have been used whilst undertaking research for the site and have been represented within this document. Sources include Google Maps, RBC Local Plan and Framework Policies and Housing Department; National Planning Policy Legislations, Reading Civic Society, National Described Space Standards, LACORS Housing Fire Safety Guide, The Building Regulations Approved Documents B, 2019, K and M; and Wikipedia.

1.2 Site Location

The area that is the subject of this Planning Application falls within the administration boundary of Reading Borough Council (RBC).

The Site lies on the western edge of Reading Town Centre.

Reading is a large historic market town on the Thames and Kennet rivers in southern England, around 40 miles due west of London. It is now a major commercial centre serving a large area of the Thames Valley.

The town is on the Great Western Main Line railway and the M4 motorway and in the last few years has become an important transport hub with the development of Cross Rail giving direct access through London and further links to the north with Birmingham, Swindon and Bristol.

Heathrow Airport lies 20 miles to the east and is served both by rail and direct bus routes.

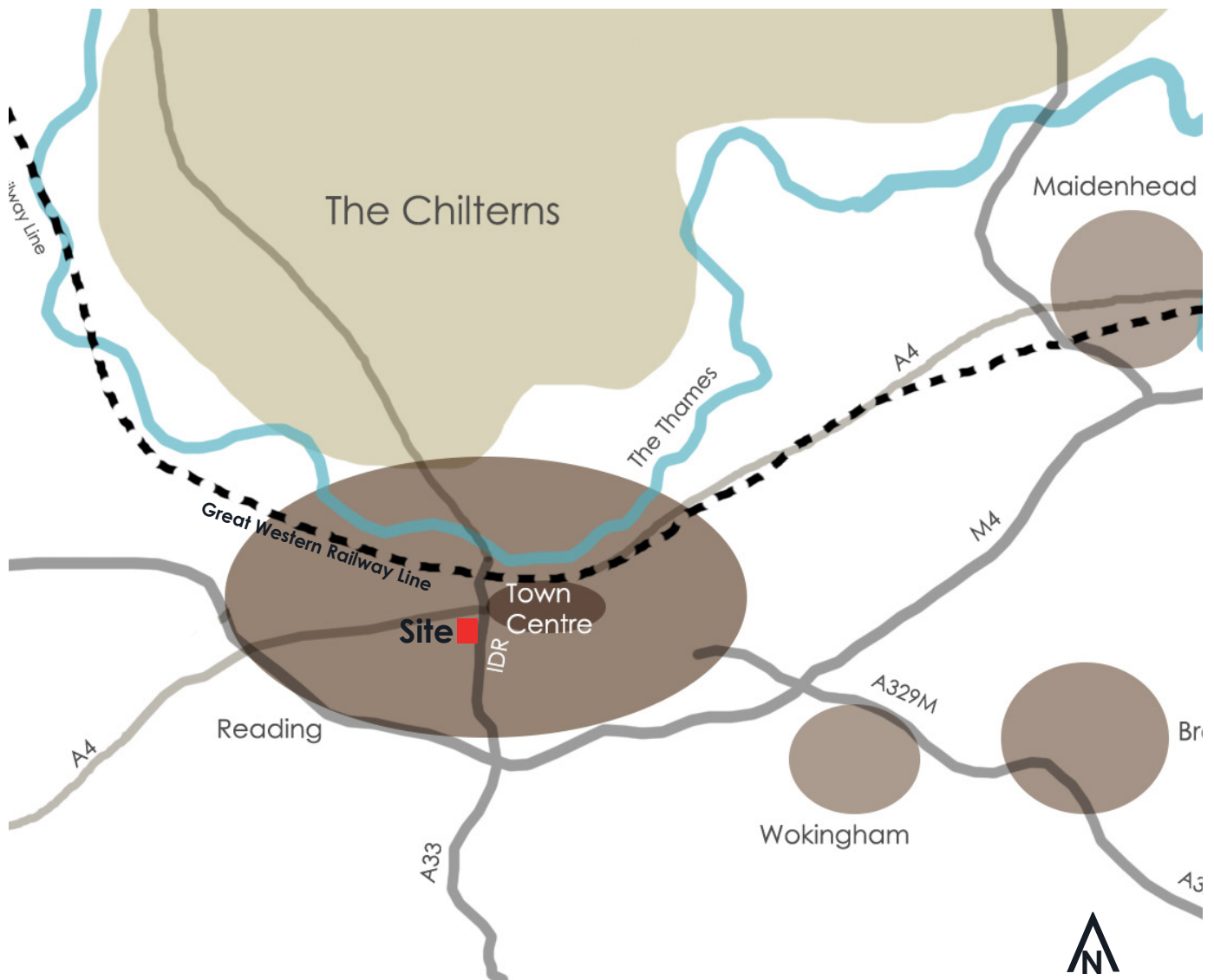


Figure 1 Site Location

2.0 Site Description

2.1 Local Heritage Context

The Site, 2 Howard Street, lies on the western edge of the Inner Relief Road (IDR). It sits at the top end of Howard Street close to Oxford Road and is set within the Russell Street / Castle Hill Conservation Area.

Reading has 15 Conservation areas; each supported by a Conservation Area Character Appraisal which identifies the attributes of each area in order to aid the protection of an area's character or appearance. The Council considers it desirable to preserve or enhance a conservation Area.

The Russell Street / Castle Hill Conservation Area describes Russell Street and streets east of the area as:-

The creation of the IDR in the 1960s saw the original properties on the western side of Howard Street retained whilst the houses along the eastern half were demolished. 4-4A Howard Street is a listed Georgian semi-detached house and the original rustication on the ground floor of 4A has been retained. 2 Howard Street dates from c.1850-70s, and is an attractive single family home of substantial size with a well-tended front garden that lends itself positively to the street scene.

The character of Howard Street is set by the avenue of trees which provide a vital barrier between the street and the IDR, important boundary treatments comprising decorative cast iron railings, and interesting vistas over the town centre and beyond.

Oxford Road lies only 50m north of the property with easy access to shops, leisure, health and transport typical of a main artery town centre road.



Conservation Area Appraisal: SS5 The 2019 Boundary adjustment

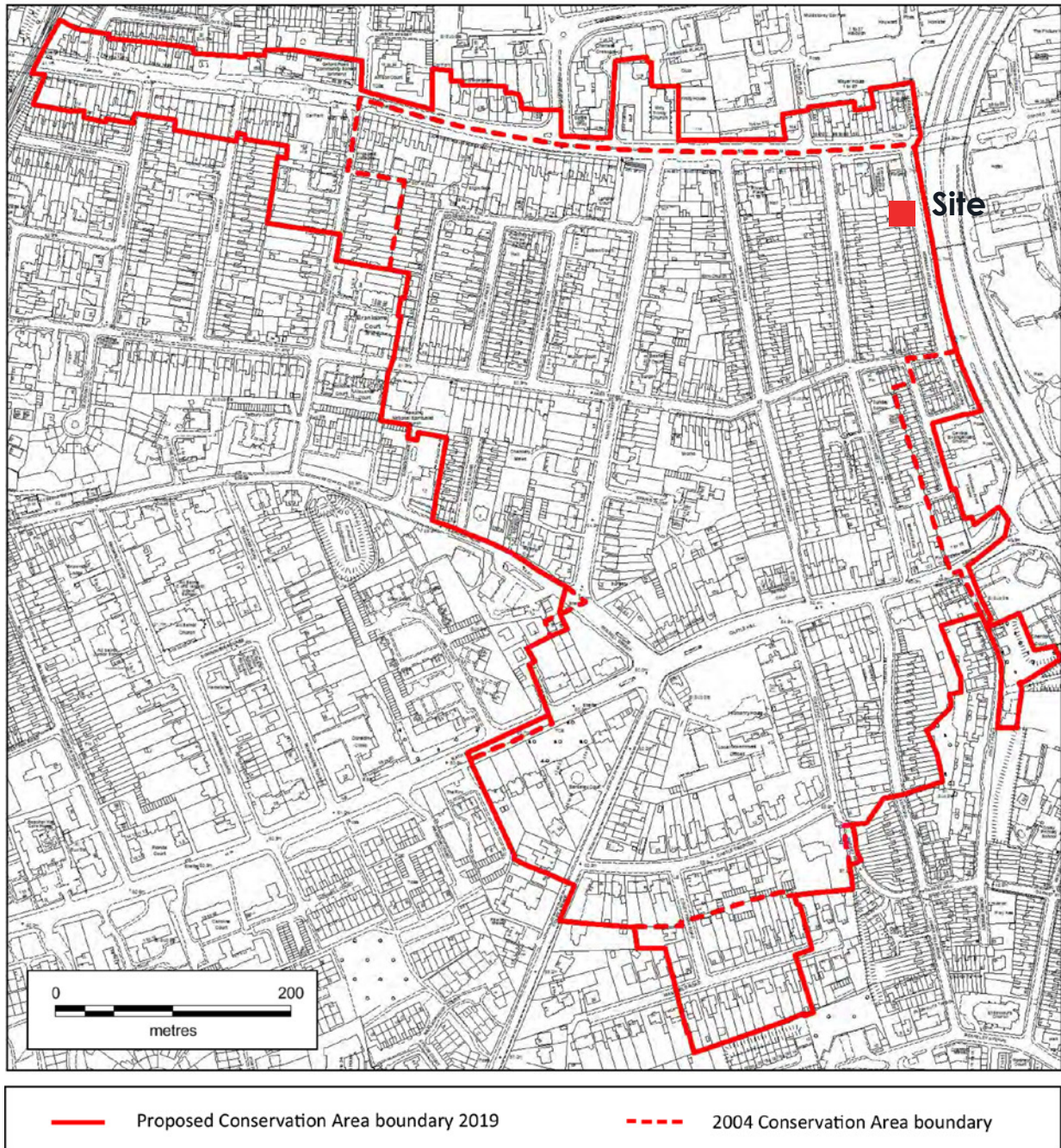


Figure 2 Site within Russell Street/ Castle Hill Conservation Area

2.2 Site Heritage Context

2 Howard Street is on the end of the terrace and adjacent to two Grade II Listed Georgian terrace houses. The adjacent Listed Georgian properties, No 4 and 4a form a pair and are both designated under the same Listing. The properties, first listed in 1978, have the following Listing Description: -

Early C19. The best in a terrace of pleasant late Georgian houses. 3 storeys. Red brick. Ground floor rendered (No 4 channelled). String over ground floor. Cornice and blocking course. Concealed roof. 2 bays each, glazing bar sash windows except for modern casements on 1st floor of No 4A. Ground floor windows off centre, arched in recesses. Round headed entrances with recessed doors.

No 4a was granted planning approval for conversion into a HMO in 2016 and No 4 has recently applied for HMO conversion.

Unfortunately, the creation of the IDR has destroyed the street scene of the remaining east facing terrace. 2 Howard Street looks out across the width of the IDR, though set at a considerably lower level, to the large 10 storey Penta Hotel opposite.

To the north side of 2 Howard Street is a car parking behind a substantial gated brick wall serving a Grade II Listed building facing onto Oxford Road.

2 Howard Street is a mid-nineteenth century large end of terrace property with fine window dressing and feature gable. It has been built with a slate roof, red brick and stone cornices, plinth and window surrounds which are currently painted black.

The property has been set back from the street and has a small lawned front garden protected by a privet hedge and palisade fencing. There is wide gated access down the side to the rear garden.

The Site occupies 0.037Ha and the 17m depth rear is laid out with a single storey return, abutting conservatory, garden shed, and large garage with workshop. There are two separate small lawned areas and a glasshouse built up against the side and rear brick boundary walls.

The existing rear single storey buildings forms the southern boundary with 4 Howard Road and part of the rear boundary with properties facing onto Zinzan Street, no3 and no5. These properties are large 4 storey Victorian terraces with long 18m rear gardens giving a total back-to-back distance of around 35m.

The northern side boundary consists of a high brick wall and the backs of properties facing onto Oxford Road, the principle one being the Providence Evangelical Church.

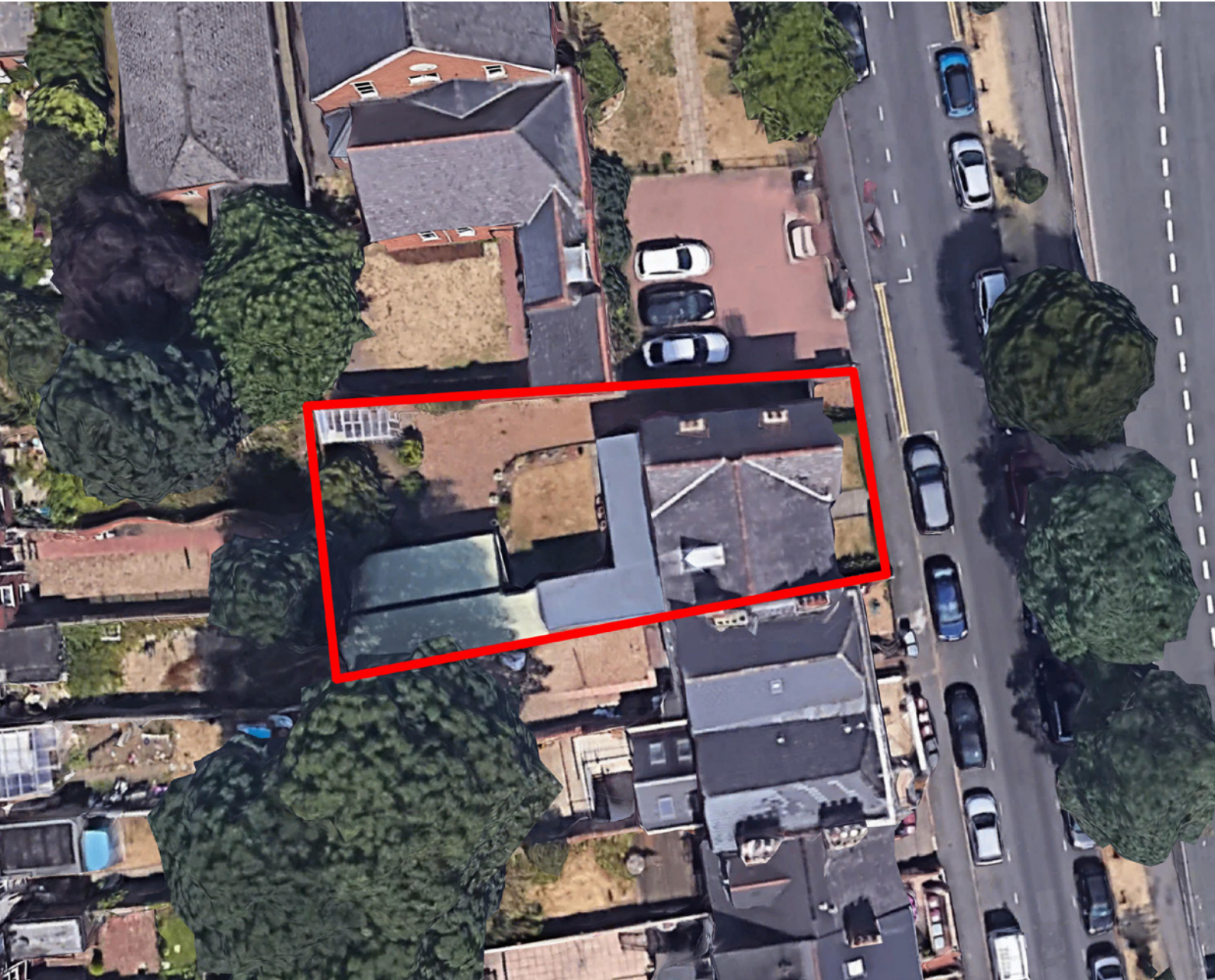


Figure 3 Aerial view of 2 Howard Street

2.3 Site Photographs

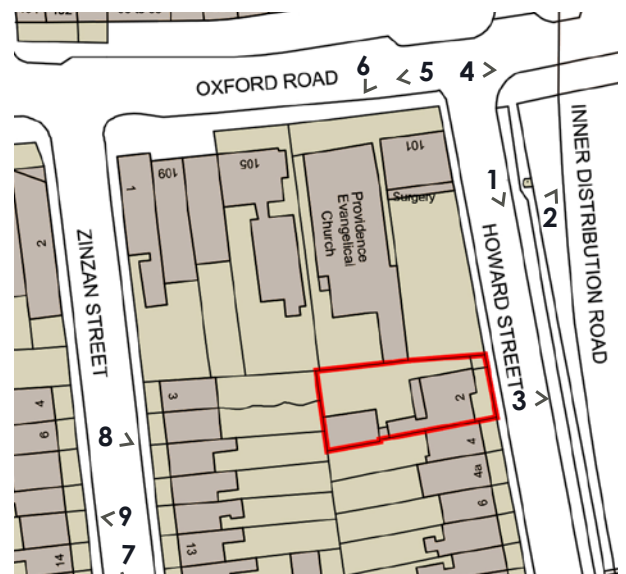


Figure 4 View Area Location

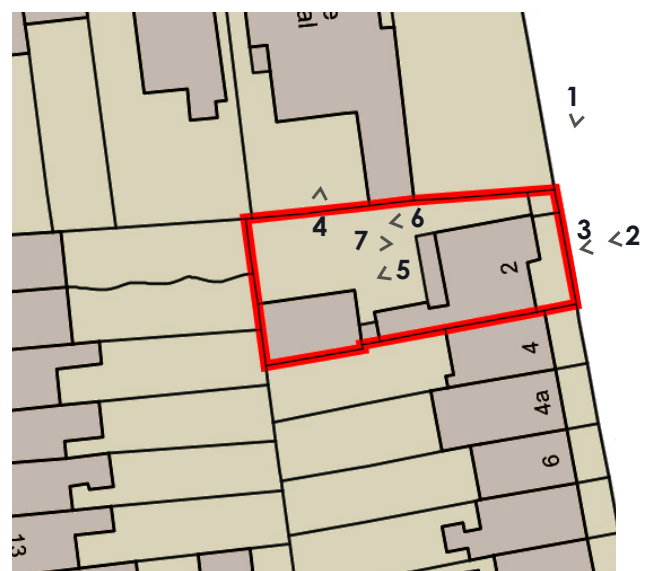


Figure 5 View Site Location

3.0 Design Rationale

3.1 Site Constraints

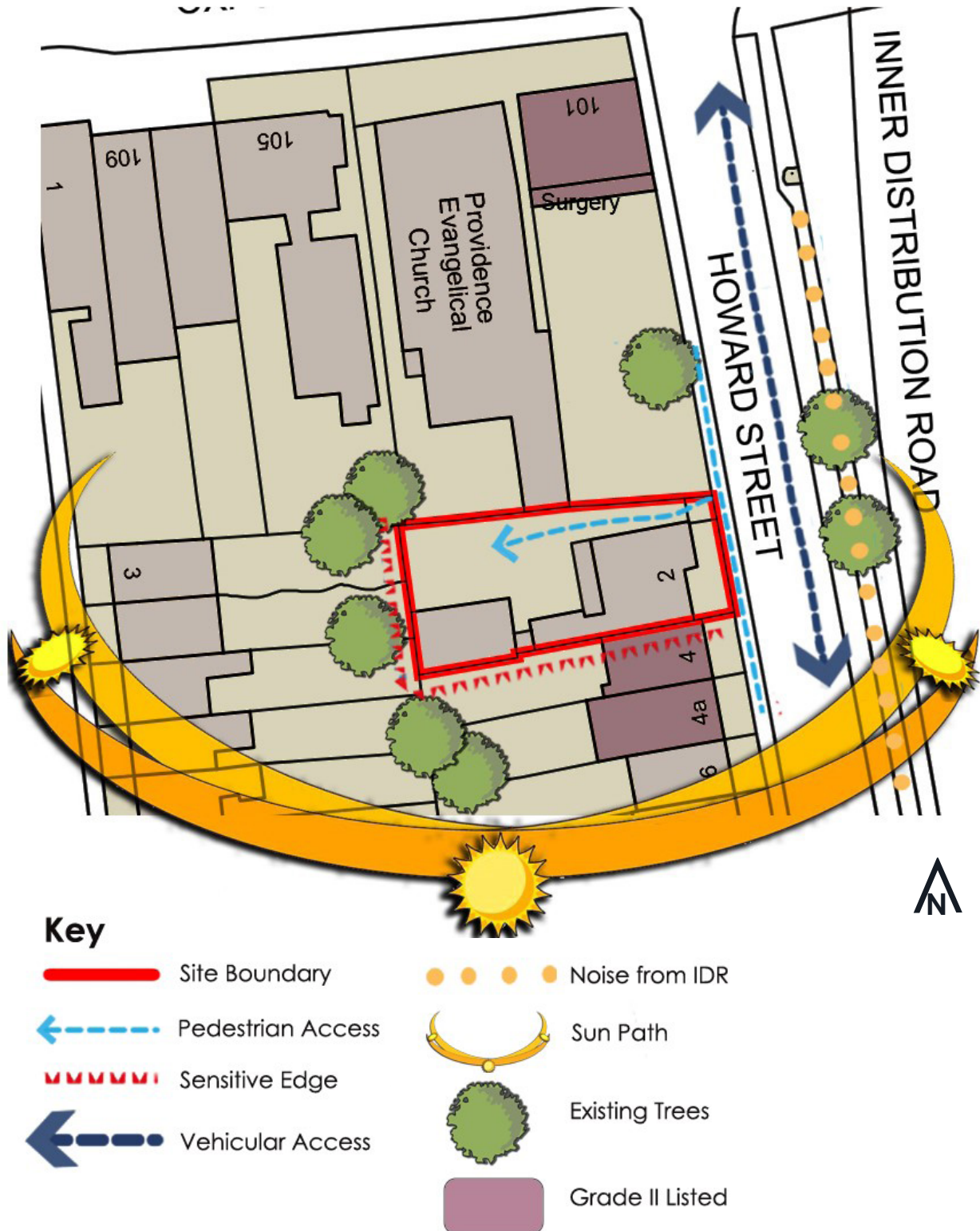


Figure 6 Constraints Plan

3.2 Development Opportunities

- Large existing floor area set within one residential property on edge of town centre.
- Introduce an extended use for the building which would safeguard its assets for the future as a single property and make the most of a near town centre site.
- Maintain as much of the original layout to preserve the building fabric.
- Upgrade and reuse existing built form to rear.
- Address the levels around the building to enable level access currently not possible.
- Improve the buildings carbon footprint with better thermally performing elements retrofitted.
- Preserve and enhance the external amenity space.
- Maintain and respect the street character with minimal fenestration change.

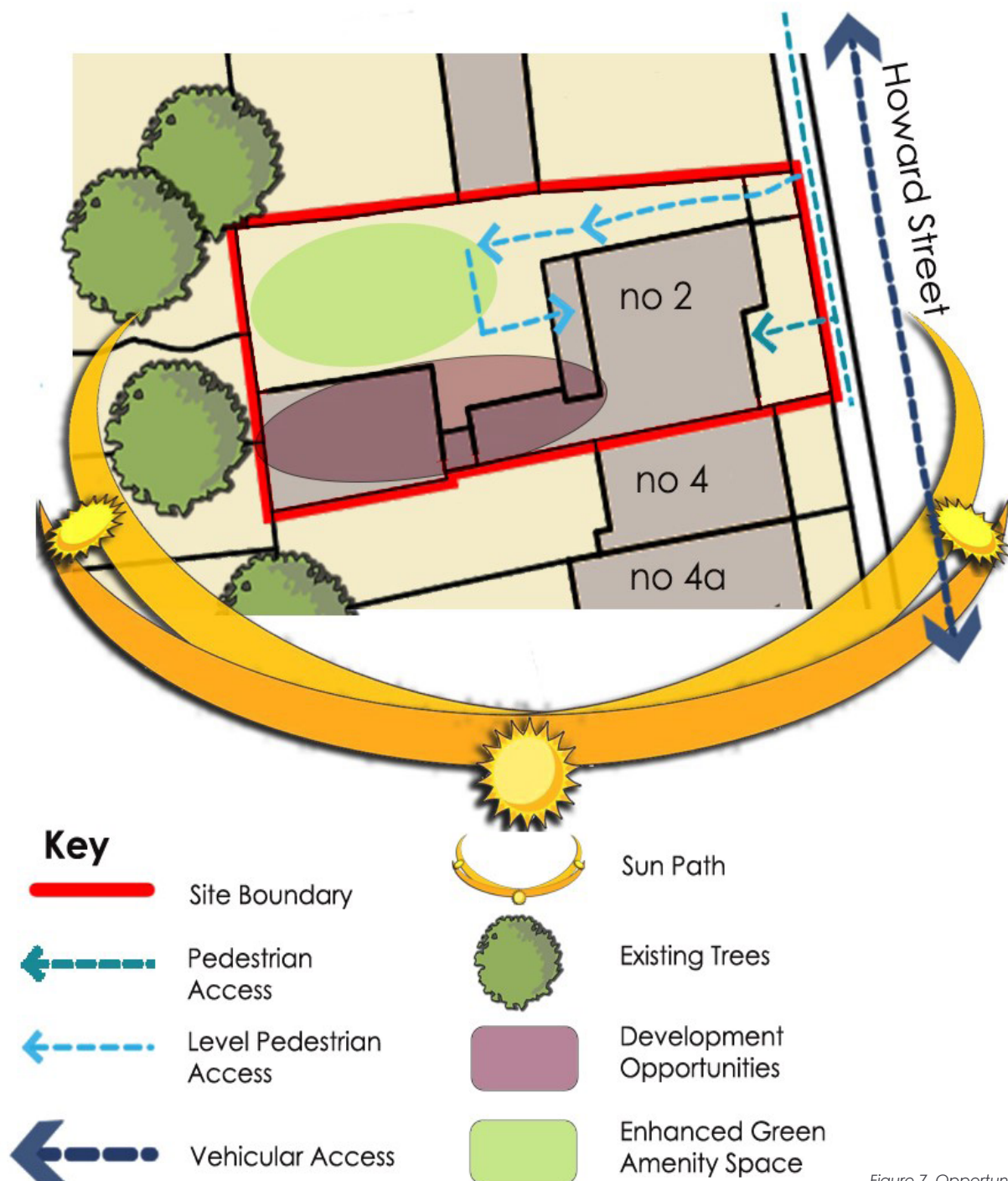


Figure 7 Opportunities Plan

4.0 Design Development

4.1 Planning History

A full planning application was made in August 2021 (LPA Ref 211420/FUL) for the conversion of this large single family house into a multi-occupancy house. The planning description accompanying the application as follows: -

'Conversion of single dwelling (class C3) to Sui-Generis House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) for 9 persons, and conversion of the existing garage to bike and bin store, plus erection of two dormer windows and associated enabling internal works and minor external works (amended description)'

The planning application was called up for determination at the 12th January 2022 Committee and although the Case Planning Officer, recommended approval, members of the committee concluded that there was potential harm to the occupiers of the rooms in the basement and that the proposals did not comply with relevant criteria in adopted local plan policies H8 and CC8.

The application was refused on the following bases:-

The proposed layout of the HMO would locate the communal ground floor lounge, kitchen and dining room over two of the HMO bedrooms. This is considered to be an inappropriate 'stacking' arrangement which, through noise and disturbance caused by other occupiers using the communal areas, will result in an unacceptable level of harm to residential amenity for occupants in these basement bedrooms. This would be contrary to policies H8 (Residential Conversions) and CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity) of the Reading Borough Local Plan. (2019) and the Council's 'Residential Conversions Supplementary Planning Document' (2013).

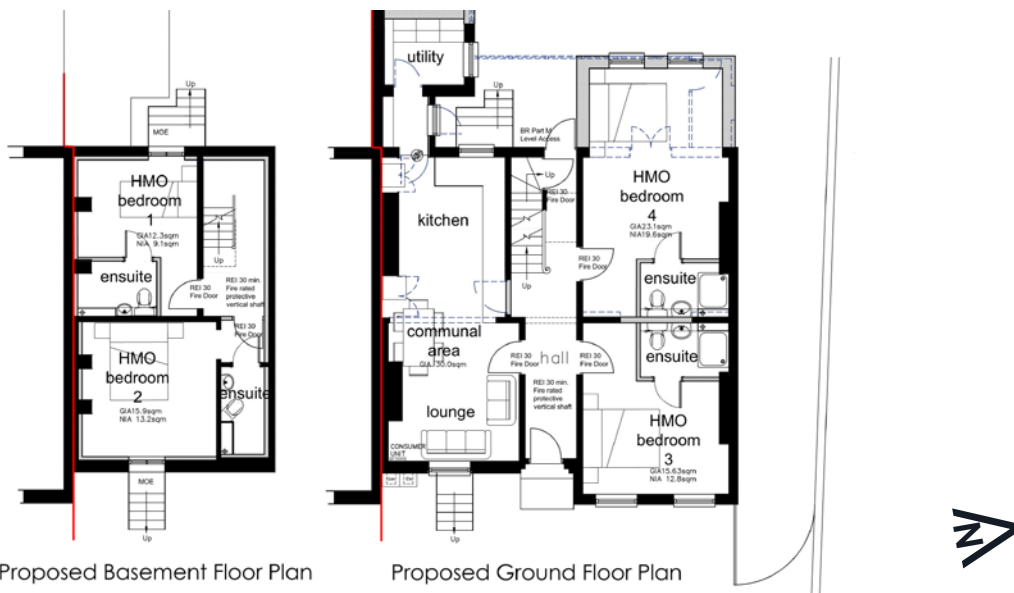
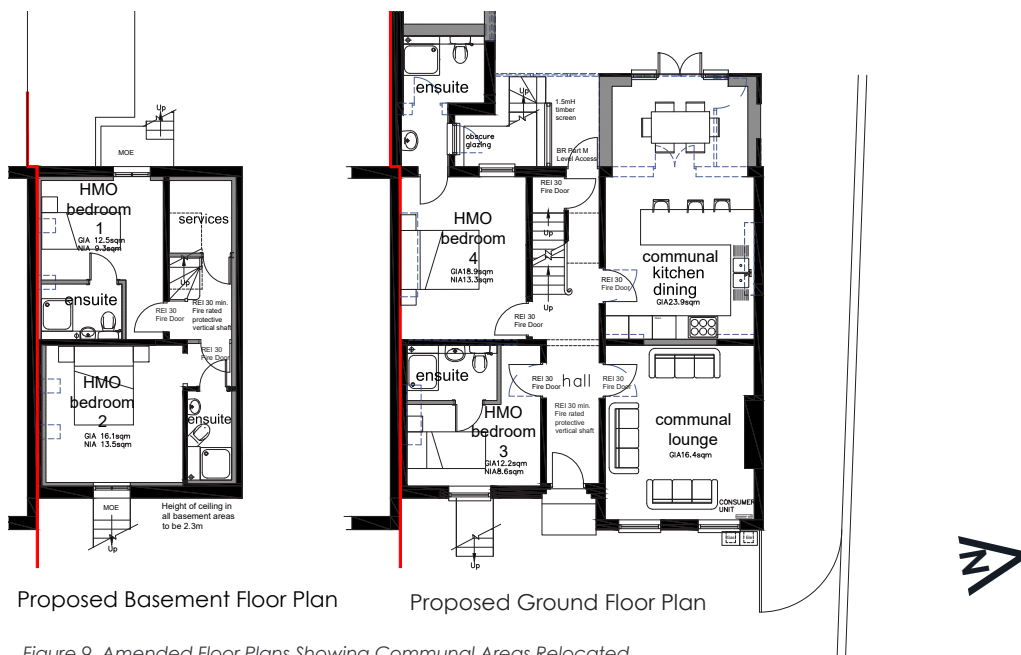


Figure 8 Proposed Floor Plans (LPA 211420/FUL) Showing Communal Areas Over Bedrooms

4.2 Design Response

The properties floor plan is typical of a modest sized house of this period with a central hall with staircase and two room depth on either side. The basement rooms only occur on the southern side of the house above two of the ground floor rooms and entrance hall. It is proposed to relocate the communal areas on the adjacent side where there is no basement accommodation. This will ensure that there is no possible risk of disturbance caused by other occupiers using the communal areas transmitting downwards.

Further environmental and design considerations on quality of space, natural daylight, natural ventilation and acoustic insulation have been applied to the proposals. The basement window to the rear has been enlarged allowing more natural daylight into the room. Layouts have been reconfigured to provide more net space within the proposed bedrooms and additional insulation and isolation of elements provided within floor zones to improve sound insulation between levels.



5.0 Proposed Design

5.1 Use and Amount

The application site currently comprises of a large two storey terrace with basement and attic accommodation with ground floor single storey rear extensions. There are also a number of associated ancillary outbuildings to the rear garden which include a large garage and workshop, garden store and glasshouse.

The house occupies a total gross internal area of 256sqm over 14 rooms. The ancillary accommodation has a gross internal area of 53.7sqm.

The current application proposes a change of use from Class C3 housing to a house in multiple occupancy (HMO), Sui Generis.

Due to the existing large floor area available over four levels, the proposed use of HMO is considered to be appropriate on the edge of town centre site. The architectural merit of the building and quality of space available would be retained to provide a very high quality of accommodation for the future occupiers, and much superior to the current availability of poor quality bedsit accommodation in the area.

In accordance with RBC 'Guide to Amenity Standards Applicable to HMO's Requiring a Licence' prepared by the Private Sector Housing Team, all 9 proposed HMO units would exceed the minimum floor area of 6.51 (minimum for a single person room). All HMO units are designed to National prescribed Space Standards. The gross and net internal areas of each proposed HMO unit are set out in the table below.

HMO	NIA (m ²)	GIA(m ²)
1	9.3	12.5
2	13.2	16.1
3	8.6	12.2
4	15.1	25.4
5	12.1	15.1
6	12.9	16.4
7	11.7	15.2
8	9.3	12.6
9	18.7	29.4
TOTAL	115.6	150.2

Each HMO unit has an ensuite and the table opposite gives a gross internal area including the ensuite floor area as well as the net internal area. All ensuites are fitted with, and as a minimum, a 800x800mm shower unit, wash hand basin and toilet. All ensuites are to be mechanically vented to Building Legislation requirement.

The proposals provide a large well appointed shared kitchen/ dining and separate lounge area of 23.9sqm and 16.4sqm respectively. These facilities are located on the ground floor to ensure that no occupier's living accommodation is more than 2 floors distant from the shared facilities. The new purpose built kitchen shall be designed for use by nine separate co-living occupiers with direct access to the communal garden and terrace. It shall be designed accordance with The Licensing and Management of Houses in Multi Occupation and Other Houses Regulations 2006, Reg. 8, Schedule 3(3) and mechanically ventilated in accordance with the relative Building Legislation.

The existing ancillary accommodation which consists of a garage, workshop and storage shall be converted into separate bin, bike and garden stores. It is proposed to provide Sheffield stands within the bike store for secure parking.

The existing garden is to be landscaped to provide an enhanced communal amenity area of 202sqm which is to be shared by all the HMO occupiers.

Existing Floor Plans

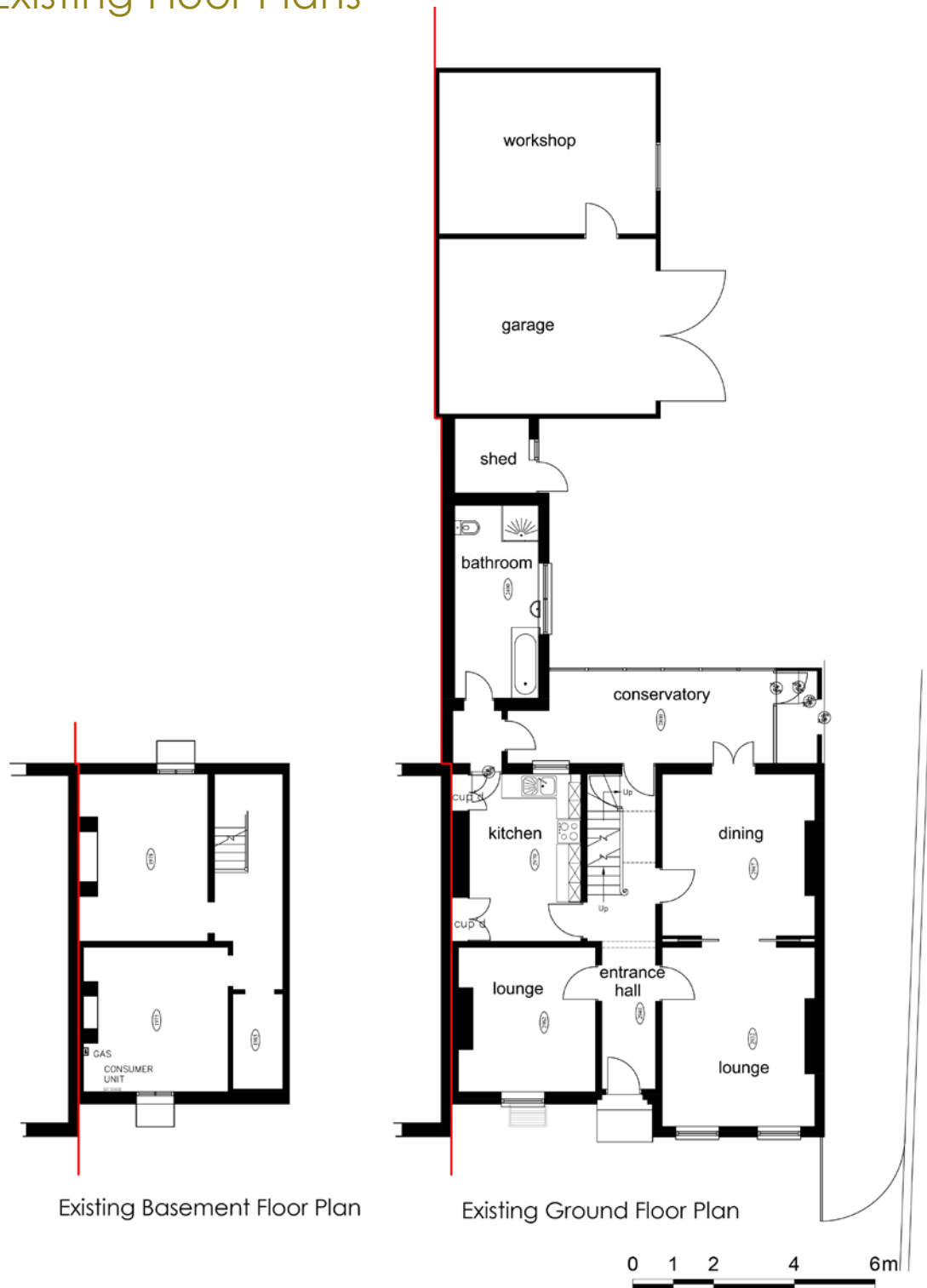
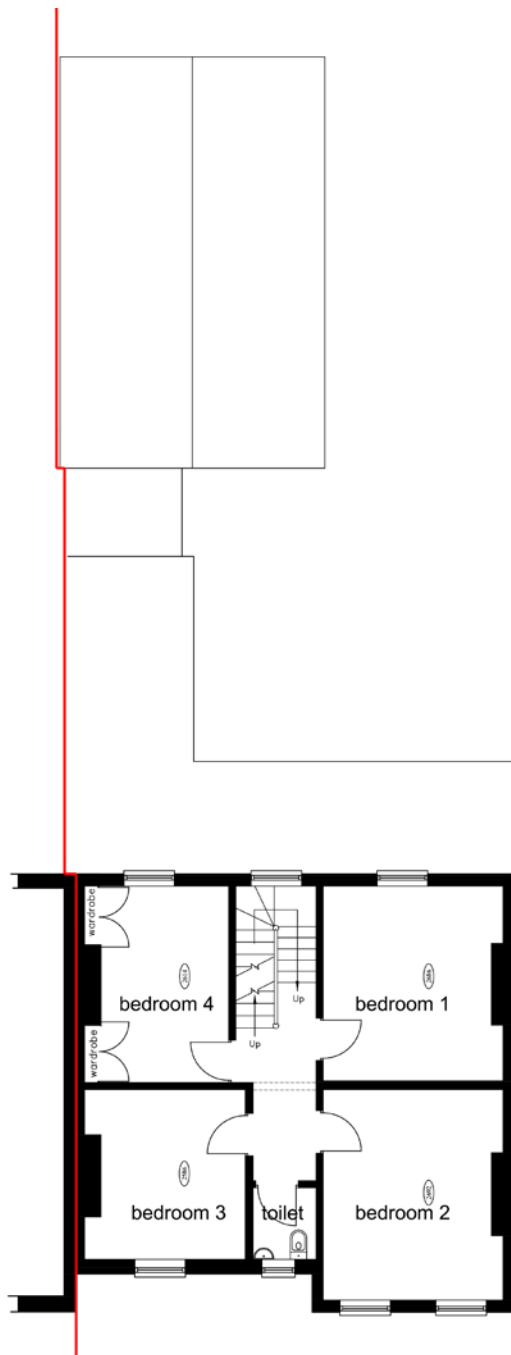
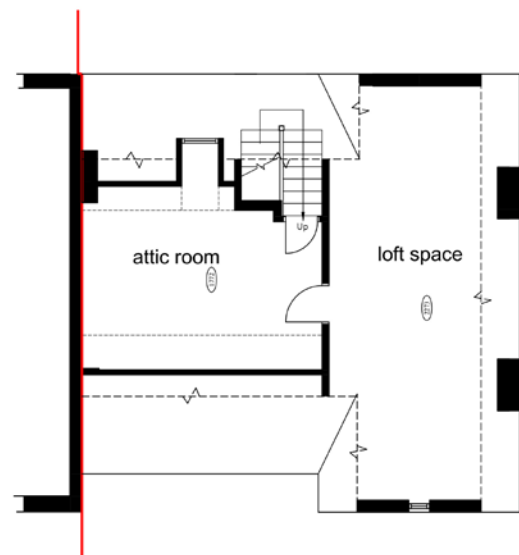


Figure 10 Existing Floor Plans

Existing Floor Plans



Existing First Floor Plan



Existing Second Floor Plan

0 1 2 4 6m



Figure 11 Existing Floor Plans

Proposed Floor Plans

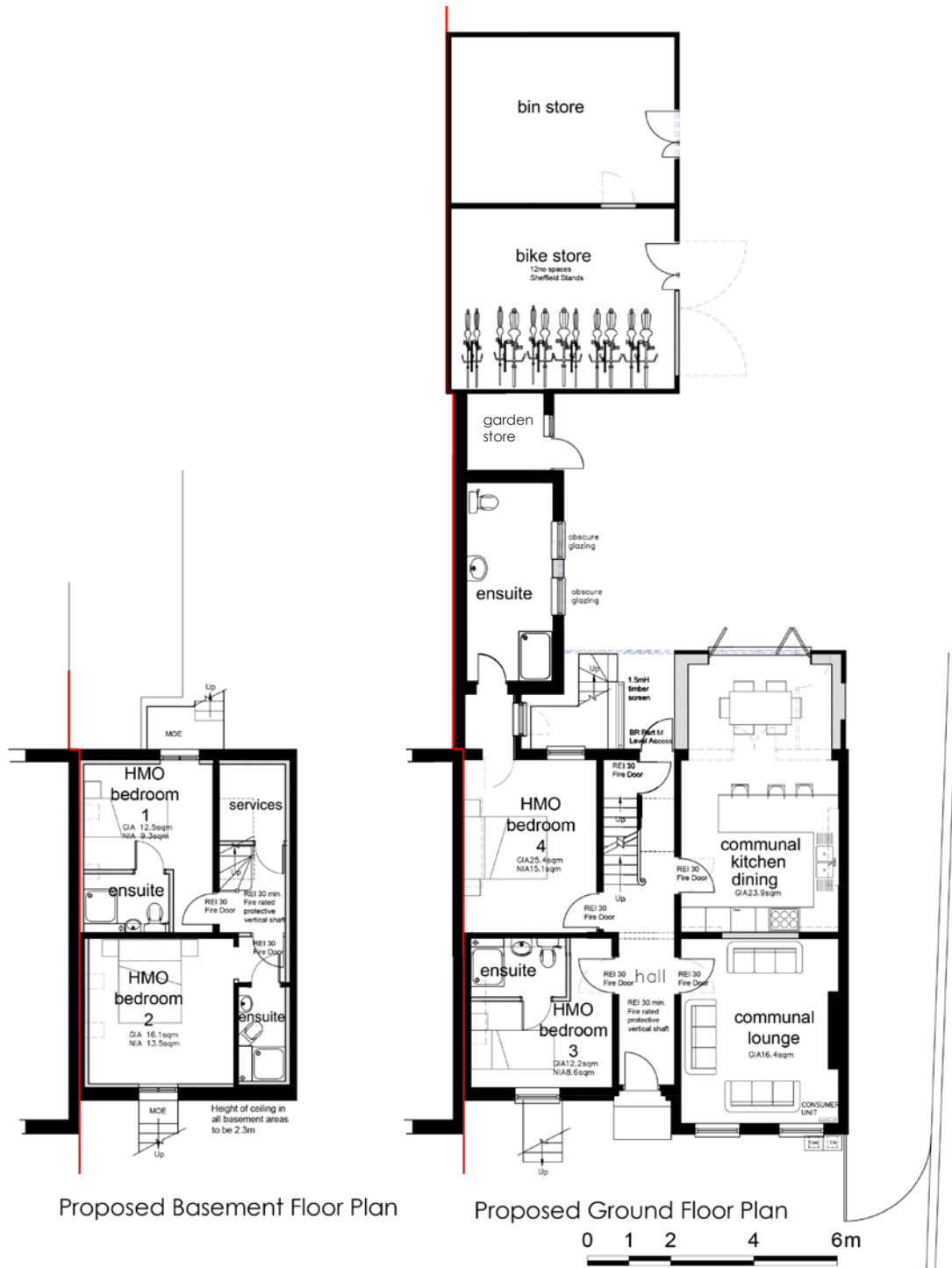
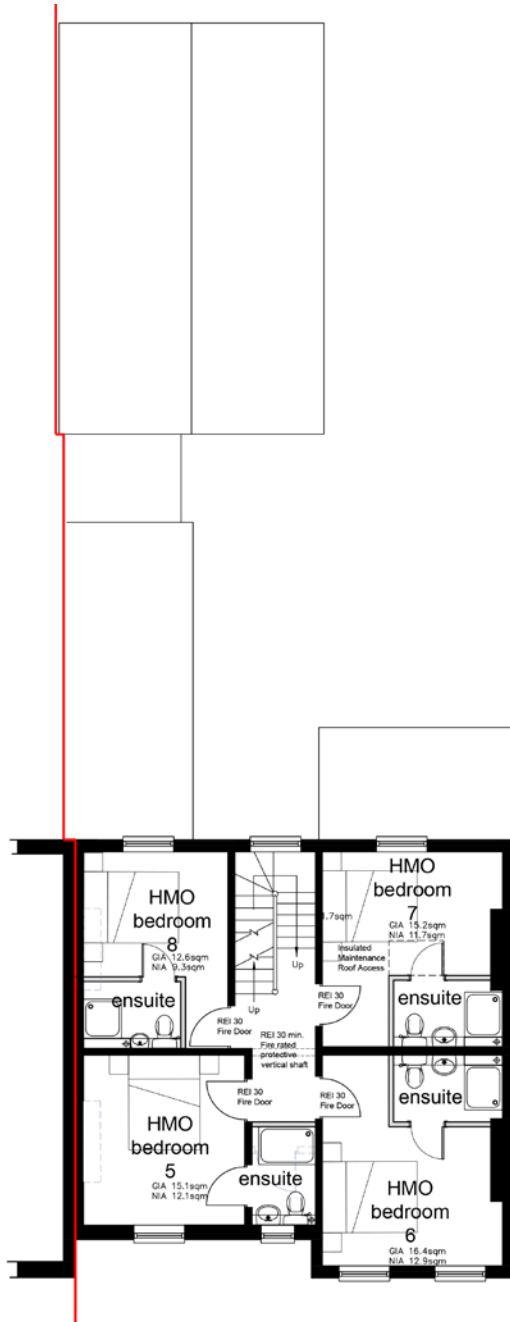
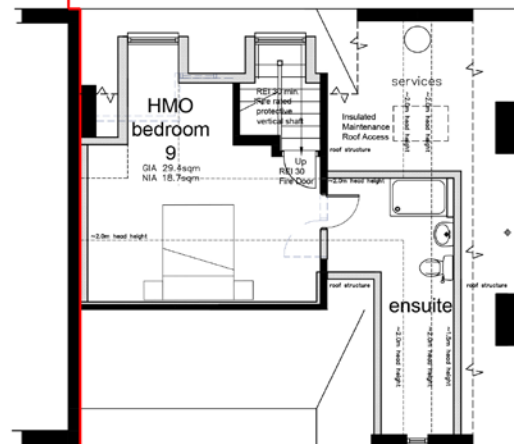


Figure 12 Proposed Floor Plans

Proposed Floor Plans



Proposed First Floor Plan



Proposed Second Floor Plan



Figure 13 Proposed Floor Plans

5.2 Layout

As the residential accommodation is arranged over 4 floor levels providing 9 separate en-suite rooms, the proposed development will be a licensable HMO. It has been designed and laid out in accordance with RBC 'Guide to Amenity Standards Applicable to HMO's Requiring a Licence'.

One of the key design principles is to maintain the existing layout of the property and to not subdivide the main rooms. The large rooms across the 2 key floors have very high ceiling levels which results in an appealing scale and volume of space.

It is proposed to locate the communal kitchen/dining and lounge areas on the ground floor where there is no basement accommodation under. These ground floor rooms are the original main reception rooms in the house. They are spacious with a ceiling height of nearly 3m and retained original period features. In addition to this, the existing single storey rear extensions, including the conservatory, are to be partly demolished and modified to provide additional space for the communal kitchen/dining room. Direct access shall be provided from the kitchen/ dining room to a garden terrace to the rear.

The quality and size of these communal facilities, along with level access to the large shared garden to the rear and the remaining rooms all renovated to a high standard; it is believed that the development will attract occupiers conscientious and appreciative of

their accommodation and surroundings.

The development proposals are for a shared house of three to four storeys and has been designed to ensure it is safe to live in and to escape from in the event of, for example, a fire. Reference and compliance have been made to LACORS Fire Safety of Housing Guide and BR Approved Document B.

The following fire safety measures would be fully integrated into the building, including:

- a. Provision of a REI 30 minute fire rated protective vertical shaft providing a protected escape route;
- b. Self-closing 30 minute fire resistant doors;
- c. Installation of heat and smoke detectors;
- d. Installation of smoke vent activated by smoke detectors;
- e. 30 minute fire resistant walls;
- f. Dormer window opening size for means of escape; and
- g. Basement window emergency access modifications

It is proposed to utilise the ancillary accommodation to the rear of the property, converting it into secure bike storage along with bin and garden stores.

Proposed Site Plan



Figure 14 Proposed Site Plan

5.3 Scale

The proposed alterations to the property consist mainly of internal works, with some minor external alterations to the rear. It is proposed to replace the existing dormer with two dormers of similar proportion. The additional dormer will provide more headroom to the staircase to satisfy Building Regulations Approved Document B, Fire Safety, and K, Protection from Falling.

Other external works involve the existing single storey extension elements to the rear which are to have openings modified and roof covering changed. Existing roof profiles are to remain unaltered.

As such, the proposals will have no harmful impact on the amenity of neighbouring properties and are in accordance with Local Plan Policy.



Figure 15 Existing Elevations

Elevations

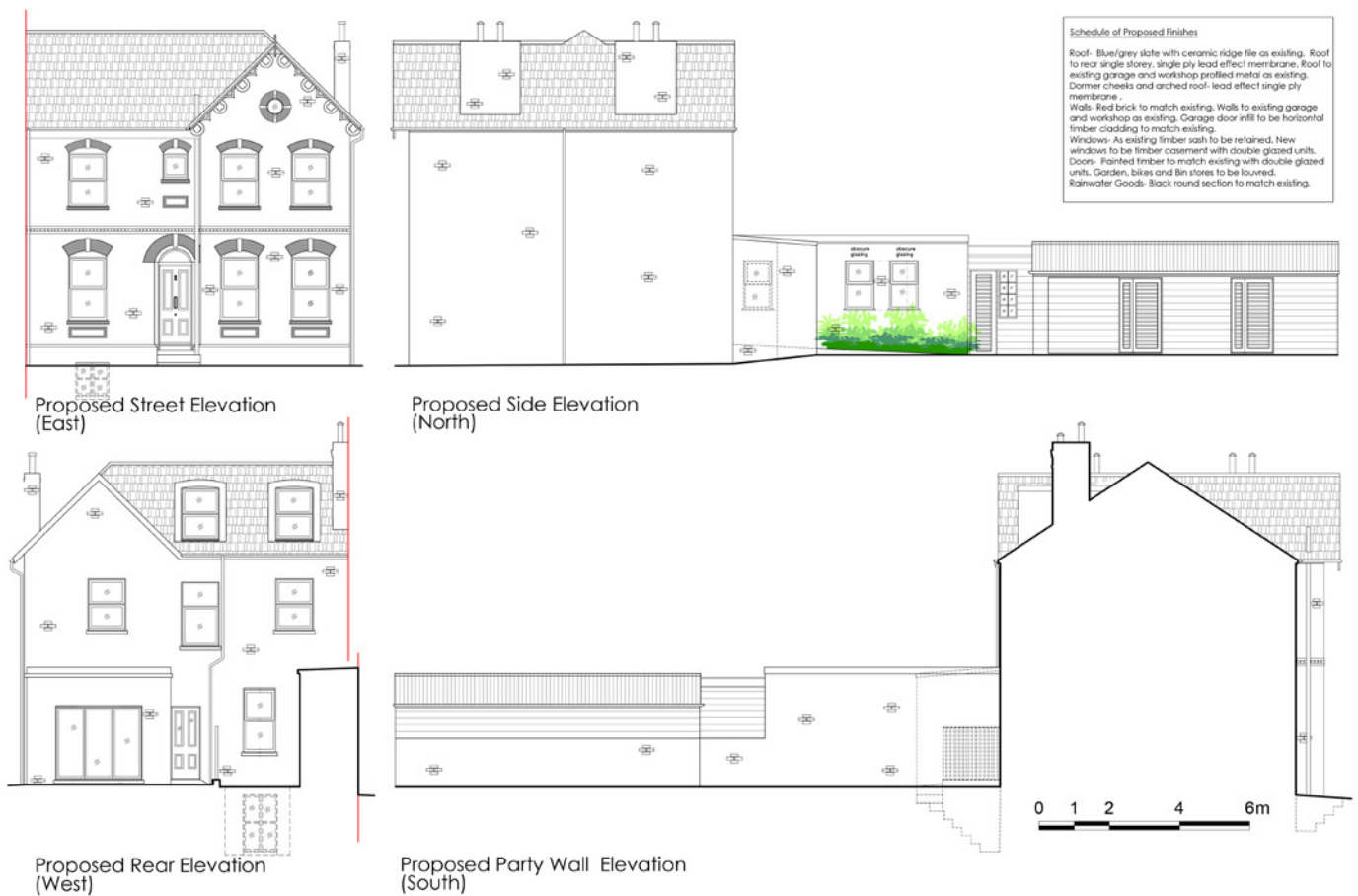


Figure 16 Proposed Elevations

5.4 Appearance and Landscaping

It is intended that the quality of the living accommodation will be of a very high specification designed to attract higher earning professionals who will take pride in their living space, keep it in an orderly fashion, and be respectful of their neighbours.

The application proposals have been designed with regard to the site's location and any potential impact on the character and appearance of the area and to the adjacent Listed properties 4 and 4a Howard Street, and 101 Oxford Road.

The proposed change of use of 2 Howard Street would require only minor external alterations to the building, confined to the rear elevations and existing single storey extensions and ancillary accommodation to the rear. As such it is considered that the minor alterations would not have a harmful impact on the character and appearance of the area.

The two dormer windows to the rear roof would replace an existing one and would provide additional head height to the stairs and HMO 9 within the attic space. They are hidden from the side view by the existing return roof and their height is below the existing ridge lines. It would be finished in lead effect material.

The alterations to the ancillary accommodation involves changes to the elevational fenestration. The existing garage doors and workshop window are to be changed to timber louvred doors for the bin and bike stores.

Generally, the existing property has been well maintained and the existing fenestration is to remain as existing. The existing rear conservatory is to be altered and partially demolished; and the remaining section rebuilt in matching brickwork, roof finish and window fenestration.

The landscaping scheme has been integral into the design process and to provide level access into the property from the communal garden.

The landscape design proposes to reduce the extent of hard standing previously provided for garage access to paved footpaths for level access to the rear of the property, a terrace directly off the communal kitchen/ dining room, and the bin, bike and garden stores. The remaining areas are to be a mix of communal amenity lawn sown with native wildflower seed and defensible native planting adjacent to HMO windows for privacy.

Existing brick boundary walls and adjacent planting is to be retained.

The proposals are to make no material change to the street elevation to preserve the character of the streetscene in a conservation area. Minimal changes are proposed to the rear of the property with any alterations reflecting the character of the area and providing an enhancement within the locality of the Listed Buildings.

Proposed Materials



Figure 17 Existing brick and detail of window fenestration



Figure 18 Lead Effect Proposed Dormer Window

6.0 Access

6.1 Access Principles

The general principle underpinning inclusive access needs and complying with Part M of the Building Regulations Approved Document is the provision of a level threshold into a property. As level access is not possible through the existing principal door, it is proposed to provide this by way of alternations to the rear of the property. This will be by partly removing the existing conservatory extension and changing the level to the new rear door.

Hallways and doors will also be of a size to enable wheelchair access and movement through to the communal lounge and kitchen. HMO no4, which is on the ground floor and adjacent to the communal facilities has a gross internal area of 25.4sqm and large ensuite which will give the flexibility of being adaptable for disabled use.

Finished ground levels around the house will be modified and ramped to give easy access from the street to the rear entrance. Hard landscape finishes will be level and of a finish to not cause a slipping or trip hazard.

6.2 Transport

The proposal is located in a highly sustainable location, being located on the edge of Reading Town Centre and having an excellent level of public transport links.

There is also a residents car parking permit scheme and there are 2 number associated with this property.



Figure 19 Reading Buses Serving Oxford Road

7.0 Environmental Sustainability

7.1 Design Principles

Climate change mitigation and adaptation measures have been considered in the design of the proposals. This section identifies a number of design principles which have been considered.

Flood Risk and Drainage

The Site is located within Flood Zone 1 (low probability of flooding from rivers) and is currently well drained through the natural topography and ground conditions. Surface water drainage remains unchanged and in some areas has reduced with the proposed roof area being less than before.

Water Management

Potable water efficient sanitary fittings will be specified with the aim of reducing the potable water use, from the average of 120 litres per person per day, by more than 20%.

Native Fauna and Flora

The landscape design seeks to promote environmental sustainability. Existing vegetation removal is limited to the minimum required to incorporate the proposals and the effect is mitigated through replacement planting with native species to encourage wildlife.

Materials, Waste and Pollution

Demolition and construction on waste will be managed and reduced through good on-site construction and management practice so that a significant amount of waste requiring off-site processing or disposal is not generated.

As the design progresses, materials will be selected that take account of their recycled and reused content, their source and the certification that accompanies them. Best practice measures will be employed during the construction process to minimise the risk of pollution. The Site is not located within an Air Quality Management Area. Measures are proposed to reduce the impacts of noise on existing residents. Insulation materials with a global warming potential of less than 5 could also be procured, and the proposed new boiler will have low NO² emissions.

Energy Efficiency

Energy efficiency and mitigation measures, and changes to national policy which changes the weight of local policy, is a dynamic and rapidly evolving field due to regular advances in technology, emerging heat networks, changes in energy prices, changes to feed in tariffs and changes to the understanding of best practice.

A best practice approach of reducing the energy use and carbon footprint by:-

- incorporating the appropriate opportunities that are available within the site and design;
- taking advantage of thermal massing;
- reducing heat movement through the building fabric;
- taking advantage of materials with high thermal mass;
- reducing undesirable air/temperature movement;
- specifying efficient equipment; and
- enabling the owners to operate the building efficiently.

7.2 Sustainability in Future-proofing

The essence of sustainability in buildings is their capability to adapt to changing lifestyles over time. When buildings do not adapt, they are disposed of, since it is only active use that confers value. It is only value that provides investment for renewal.

With housing shortages, building inefficiencies and finite resources, it is essential that housing stock is reinvented through retrofit, renovation, refurbishment, restoration and repair. Part of retrofit is the reference to improving and upgrading energy efficiency towards the legislation objective of becoming carbon zero.

An important aspect for the owners of 2 Howard Street is to find a new use for the property as it is no longer viable or desirable to remain as a single-family home. In its conversion into an HMO, this allows the retention of building's structural fabric with little alteration to the existing layout, hence preserving its historic assets for the future; and in doing so, echoes NPPF Chapter 16 Conserving and Enhancing, paragraph 131.....

"In determining planning applications, local planning authorities should take account of; the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation; the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness."

