

2 ASSESSMENT

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INTRODUCTION

2.1 The assessment of the site and context is vital in establishing the parameters for the new development. Developing a full understanding of the area allows the site's potential and sensitivities to be appreciated. The site and surrounding area display a number of varying assets and characters that can be used to inform the design process, developing a unique sense of place that will enhance the locally distinctive qualities of the neighbourhood. This will ensure that the new development will knit into the existing fabric and context of the area.



REGIONAL CONTEXT

- 2.2 Reading is one of the most vibrant urban centres in the UK and is the largest economic and commercial centre in the South East, outside of London.
- 2.3 Reading is located approximately 40 miles west of Central London and 27 miles west of Heathrow International Airport
- 2.4 Caversham is a large suburb of Reading that lies on the north bank of the River Thames. It is directly linked to the town via Caversham Bridge, Reading Bridge and Christchurch Bridge (pedestrians and cycles only).
- 2.5 Reading is located adjacent to the M4 Motorway (Junctions 10, 11 & 12) providing excellent transport links to Central London and to the West of England. The M4 Motorway also links directly to the M25 Motorway (Junction 15) which provides access to the wider motorway network.
- 2.6 Reading Mainline Railway Station, which is to form the western terminal for Crossrail in 2019, is one of the busiest rail hubs in Britain with over 20 million passengers a year. Reading connects to London Paddington to the east, Birmingham to the north and Cardiff to the west. At peak times direct services run to London Paddington every few minutes, with around 294 services on an average weekday, and a fastest journey time of 25 minutes.



Local Context

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LOCAL CHARACTER SUMMARY

Wider Setting

- 2.7 Primarily residential, both Caversham and Emmer Green have a number of local amenities including doctors, pharmacies nurseries, salons, and shops.
- 2.8 The housing development to the immediate North and East of the surrounding date from the 1970 / 80's. The Housing on Peppard Road are more traditional in their forms and detailing.

Key Character Features:

- Moderate density, plot size,
- Typical frontage setback: 3-6m,
- Regular, informal layout,
- Boundary treatments: hedges, planting, brick walls, timber fences,
- 1-2.5 storeys with some examples of room-in-roof with dormers,
- 20th Century town setting.

Key Materials & Distinguishing Design Features

- Yellow and Red brick
- Some Render
- Painted timber windows
- Clay tiles
- Slates
- Tile hanging
- Dormers
- Chimneys
- Porches
- Gables



Local Character to Peppard Road and the wider area



Housing to the North / East of Caversham Park

Caversham Park

- 2.9 The existing buildings on the site comprise the main Grade II Listed stately home, a small collection of post-war out buildings that have been added around the western wings of the main house, and former gatekeeper and staff houses beside the historic gatehouse.
- 2.10 The three-storey ashlar house was built in 1850 by architect Horace Jones who was inspired by Italian baroque palaces. The house was constructed in a Neo-Georgian style, illustrating the continued trend for Classical design during the mid-19th century and of the houses located at Caversham Park.
- 2.11 In major building works in the 1980s, the BBC Architectural & Civil Engineering Department restored the old interior, removed utilitarian brick buildings put up alongside the east side of the mansion during the war, converted the existing orangery for use as a canteen and editorial offices, and built a large new two storey west wing housing the listening room. This included a new glazed atrium facing the original stable block.

LOCAL CONTEXT: DESIGN INFLUENCES SUMMARY

- 2.12 The analysis of the local context for the Site has established a number of characteristics that should inform the design process. These can be summarised as principles for the development as follows:
- Respond to the existing character, density and forms of surrounding development, while meeting the planning policy requirements.
 - Respond to the requirements of Reading Borough Council's Local Plan and Design Guides for the provision of dwellings and facilities to complement and balance the existing community.
 - Develop a landscape strategy that will link with the surrounding landscape and amenity assets.
 - Develop an architectural language that uses the traditional form and layout of proposed buildings to relate to the vernacular.

3 EVALUATION

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CONSTRAINTS:

- Protection and enhancement of the character of the area and existing Listed Building.
- Sustainable reuse of the Listed Building and areas within the parkland in a way that preserves the amenities of the surrounding residential area.
- Provision of high quality landscaping and amenity space whilst providing an appropriate level of car parking for both the proposed use and the location of the site within Caversham.
- Scale, massing and design of new buildings to respect context of neighbouring properties and the existing buildings on site.
- The topography of the locality.

OPPORTUNITIES:

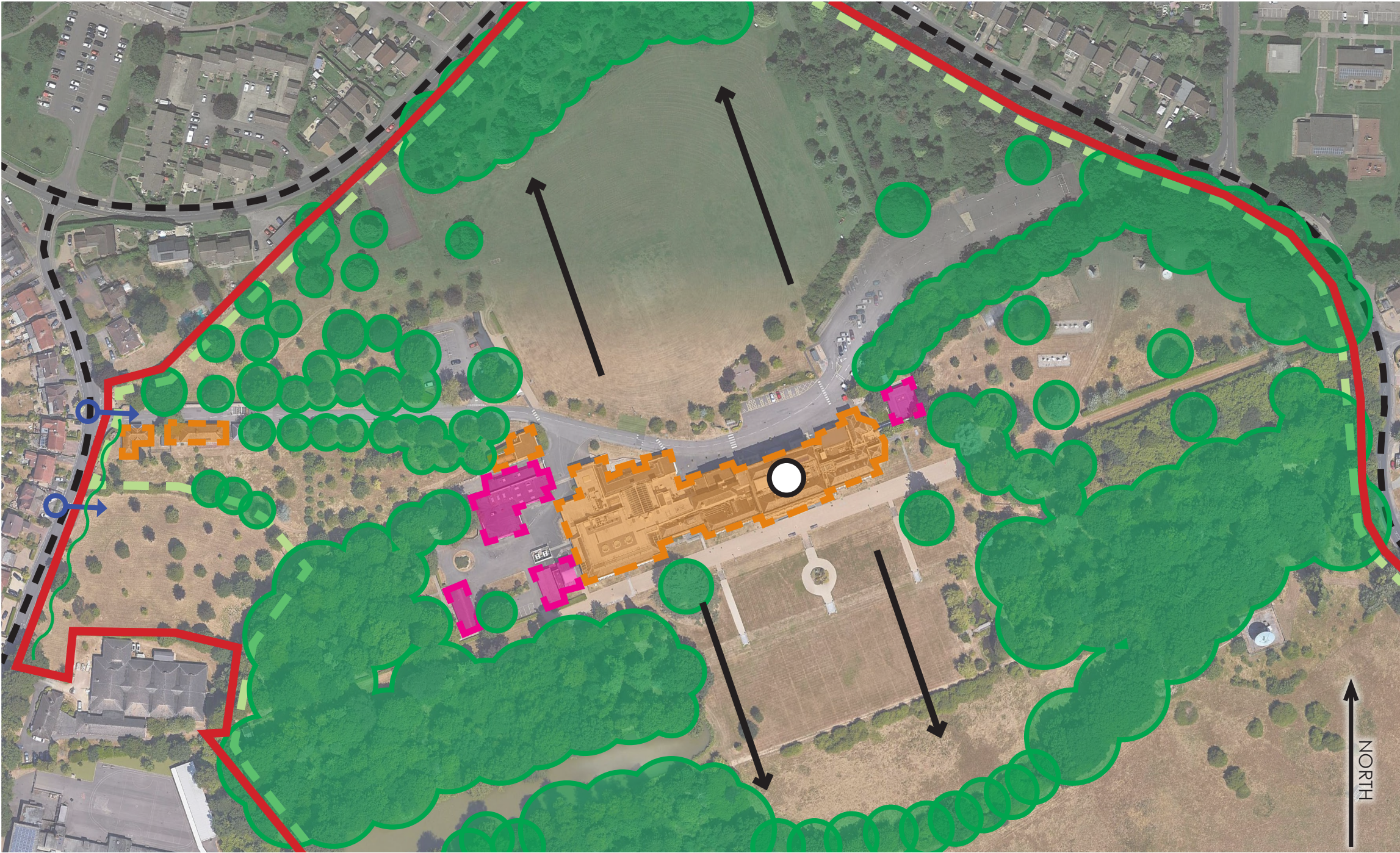
- Create an attractive development sympathetic to the local character.
- Enhance existing green spaces set within the grounds of Caversham Park.
- Provide recreational facilities for the use of residents and locals.
- Sustainable re-use of constrained brownfield site.
- Provide older person housing, more appropriate to the location.
- The site lies within cycling distance of the centre of Caversham, with it's shops and facilities, and within walking distance of Emmer Green which provides local amenities.

3.1

DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS:

Points considered in developing the design proposals:

- Create self-contained parcels of developments, safeguarding the amenity and setting of the Listed building.
- High quality landscaping to be incorporated.
- Use of materials that are harmonious with the Listed building.



- KEY
- Site Boundary
 - Site Access
 - Main Road
 - Existing Building to be retained
 - Existing Building to be removed
 - Listed Building
 - Gradient
 - Existing Trees
 - Sensitive Edge
 - Registered Parks and Gardens Boundary

4 CONSULTATION

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PRE-APPLICATION PUBLIC EXHIBITION

- 4.1 A public exhibition was held in Caversham Park and was open to the public on Thursday 21st October 2021 from 2pm until 9pm.
- 4.2 The timings of the exhibition ensured that the opportunity was afforded for a wide cross-section of the local community to attend. Suitable disabled access was also provided.
- 4.3 The public exhibition included an extensive level of material detailing the draft development proposals including a series of display boards as shown on the following pages.
- 4.4 The primary focus of the public exhibition was to provide a welcoming and open environment for the local community to discuss the proposals with Beechcroft's team and provide an opportunity for them to express their views.
- 4.5 Representatives from both Beechcroft and their professional team were present throughout to assist and answer any questions relating to the proposals.
- 4.6 The exhibition was well attended and was generally well received by those who attended.
- 4.7 The process and feedback from the public exhibition is dealt with in more detail in the statement of community involvement, which has been prepared by Savills Planning.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

- 4.8 The proposed development has been subject to a formal pre application, with a site visit taking place on 18th October 2021 with officers from Reading Borough Council.
- 4.9 Initial feedback was received from the Case Officer on 5th November. A comprehensive breakdown of the pre application feedback has been detailed within the planning statement put together by Savills Planning.