



Town Planning Bureau

The Barn · 43 Oakdene Road · Redhill · Surrey · RH1 6BT
tel: 01737 390169 email: info@tpbureau.co.uk

PLANNING STATEMENT

Site: 1-15 Queen Victoria Street / 147-148 Friar Street, Reading RG1 1SY

Application by: Thackery Estates

Lead Consultant: Mr Paul S Bottomley

Date: 8th February 2021

Our Ref: URB-482b-ST2

Copyright Notice.

This document and its content are the property of Town Planning Bureau © Urbanistica Ltd 2009. All right reserved. Any redistribution or reproduction of part or all of the contents in any form is prohibited other than the following:

- You may print for your personnel use only.

You may not, except with our permission, distribute or commercially exploit the content. Nor may you transmit or store in any other form.

1. Introduction	2
2. Site Location and Description	4
3. Relevant Planning History	7
4. Proposals	11
5. Relevant Planning Policy and Legislation	16
6. Planning Considerations	18
1. Principle of development and proposed uses	18
2. Design Considerations.	27
3. Heritage Impacts.	33
4. Impact on Amenity	38
5. Open Space Provision	40
6. Air and Noise Impacts.....	42
7. Archaeology.	45
8. Transport and Parking.	45
9. Flood Risk.....	49
10. Sustainability.	50
11. Servicing and Waste.	54
7. Summary & Conclusions	55

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This planning statement is prepared by Mr Paul S Bottomley BA (Hons), MA, MRTPI of Town Planning Bureau and comprises supporting information in respect of a planning application and listed building consent for the development as described at para 1.2 below.

- Applicant: The Thackery Estate (“the Applicant”).
- Site: 1-15 Queen Victoria Street / 147-148 Friar Street, Reading RG1 1SY (“the site”).
- LPA: Reading Borough Council (“the Council”).

Proposal

1.2 Planning permission and listed building consent is sought for the following development:

“Part demolition of rear of site; repair and refurbishment of listed buildings; change of use of upper floors from office (Use Class E(g)) to apart hotel (Use Class C1); erection of a three-storey rear extension with mansard; erection of a part-single, part-two storey rear addition (Use Class E(a) or (b)); alterations to ground floor principle façade; creation of public square; and associated works.”

1.3 This Planning Statement should be read in conjunction with the following supporting documents submitted with this application. This material will show that the proposals accord with national and local planning policy and guidance, represent sustainable development and there are no material considerations that indicate that planning permission and listed building consent should not be granted for this conservation led scheme.

Report	Prepared by:
Location Plan	Frost Architects
Drawings	Frost Architects
Levels Survey	Frost Architects
Schedule of Works	Frost Architects
DAS	Frost Architects
- Landscape principles	Frost Architects
- Ecological survey and reports	Frost Architects
- Materials Details	Frost Architects
- Waste Collection	Frost Architects
- External Lighting	Frost Architects
- Cycle parking	MODE / Frost
- SUDs	Frost Architects
Heritage Impact Assessment	Heritage Collective
Archaeological Assessment	Oxford Archology
Air quality assessment	GEM
Energy / Sustainability Statement	XCO2
M&E (Ventilation / Extraction Details)	XCO2
Utilities Surveys & Proposals	XCO2
Noise & Vibration Impact Assessment	KPA
Transport Assessment	MODE
Servicing Details (including Waste)	MODE
Travel Plan	MODE
CTMP	MODE
Planning Statement	TPBureau
- Viability Assessments & Reports	TPBureau
- Open Space Statement	TPBureau

- Town Centre Impact Assessment / Market Assessment	TPBureau
Heads of Terms	TPBureau
CIL	TPBureau
Statement of Community Involvement	TPBureau
Management Report	Thackeray

The Applicant

- 1.4 This application is submitted on behalf of The Thackeray Estates, a property development and investment company with nearly 60 years' experience and a nationwide portfolio. The Thackeray Estate has several key land holdings within Reading representing significant investment in the future growth of the Borough. This includes 149 Friar Street and nos. 2-4 Queen Victoria Street, directly opposite the application Site. This combination of properties represents a key part of the town centre.
- 1.5 The Applicant has a track record of delivering sensitive, iconic sustainable development across the United Kingdom, with particular experience in the successful reuse and regeneration of listed buildings and town/ city centre site. The Applicant has brought this relevant knowledge and wealth of experience to the development proposals presented herewith, which represents a unique opportunity to secure the future of a beloved building at the heart of the town centre and to deliver an enhanced retail, cultural and living experience to an underutilised site in central Reading.

Background

- 1.6 This application is sought for the conservation, enhancement and regeneration of this important town centre site that lays at the gateway to the primary shopping area of Reading when accessing from the main line railway station.
- 1.7 The proposal is for a mixed-use scheme comprising a market square, retail and apart-hotel that represents a unique opportunity to enhance and utilise this highly accessible location within the town centre, bringing a largely vacant and dilapidated site back into viable use, including the restoration and secured longevity of the Listed Buildings.
- 1.8 The proposal follows extensive research and review of successful precedent schemes across the country, consultation and engagement with key stakeholders who together have shaped the proposal the Applicant presents. This engagement has included extensive pre-application discussions and a comprehensive review of the existing heritage asset to present the scheme before you.
- 1.9 We have consulted Planning officers, Councillors, Reading BID, Reading Civic, Reading CAAC, amenity societies, business, local residents and social media. The feedback to date has been overwhelming positive and level of support has been beyond the Applicant's expectations. The feedback is encouraging the speedy delivery of the scheme.
- 1.10 In summary, the engagement found that the scheme presented is a positive benefit that on the feedback received, is supported by the local community and key stakeholders.

2.0 Site Location & Description

The Site

2.1 The site is a prominent plot located on the corner of Queen Victoria Street (“QVS”) and Friar Street, with significant frontage to both. QVS is the principle pedestrianised access point to the town centre from Reading Railway Station and Friar Street is traffic controlled with access to busses and taxis only.

2.2 The Site comprises a number of premises with retail uses at ground floor level with other secondary uses (although vacant) at first floor level and above. Both QVS and Friar Street are key primary retail streets within the town centre and are in a highly accessible location, approximately 200m from Reading Railway Station to the north.

2.3 The site comprises the following distinct buildings:

- 1-15 QVS - Part of a larger terrace built in the early 1900s, the QVS properties comprise retail accommodation arranged over the ground and basement floors. The remaining 1st, 2nd and 3rd floors being office accommodation, albeit there are many vacant units. The properties are Grade II listed.
- 148 Friar Street - This unit comprises retail floorspace at ground (Café Nero) with vacant office floors above. The building is located on the corner of Friar Street and forms the corner of 1-15 QVS. This property is also Grade II listed.
- 147 Friar Street - Dating from the early 1880s, this unit comprises retail/ nail salon at ground floor with three vacant floors above, which are understood to be former offices. The building is also Grade II listed - the main interest of the building is the 2-storey shop front.
- To the rear of the properties are a mix of more modern extensions and additions (late 19th and 20th centuries) that are incoherent with each other and represent crowded built form - all the buildings are vacant, deteriorating and suffer from anti-social behaviour and accessing by rough sleepers.

2.4 Internal alterations to the uppers also reflect the more recent uses of the upper floors and have created a collection of inconsistent space that is inefficient and not suitable for modern office accommodation. The majority of the uppers are vacant.

2.5 The buildings are in a poor state of repair, with the listed elements particularly in decay and in urgent need of restoration. Interim measures have been taken to make the buildings safe with scaffolding erected along QVS and retention netting installed in certain areas of the historic façade.



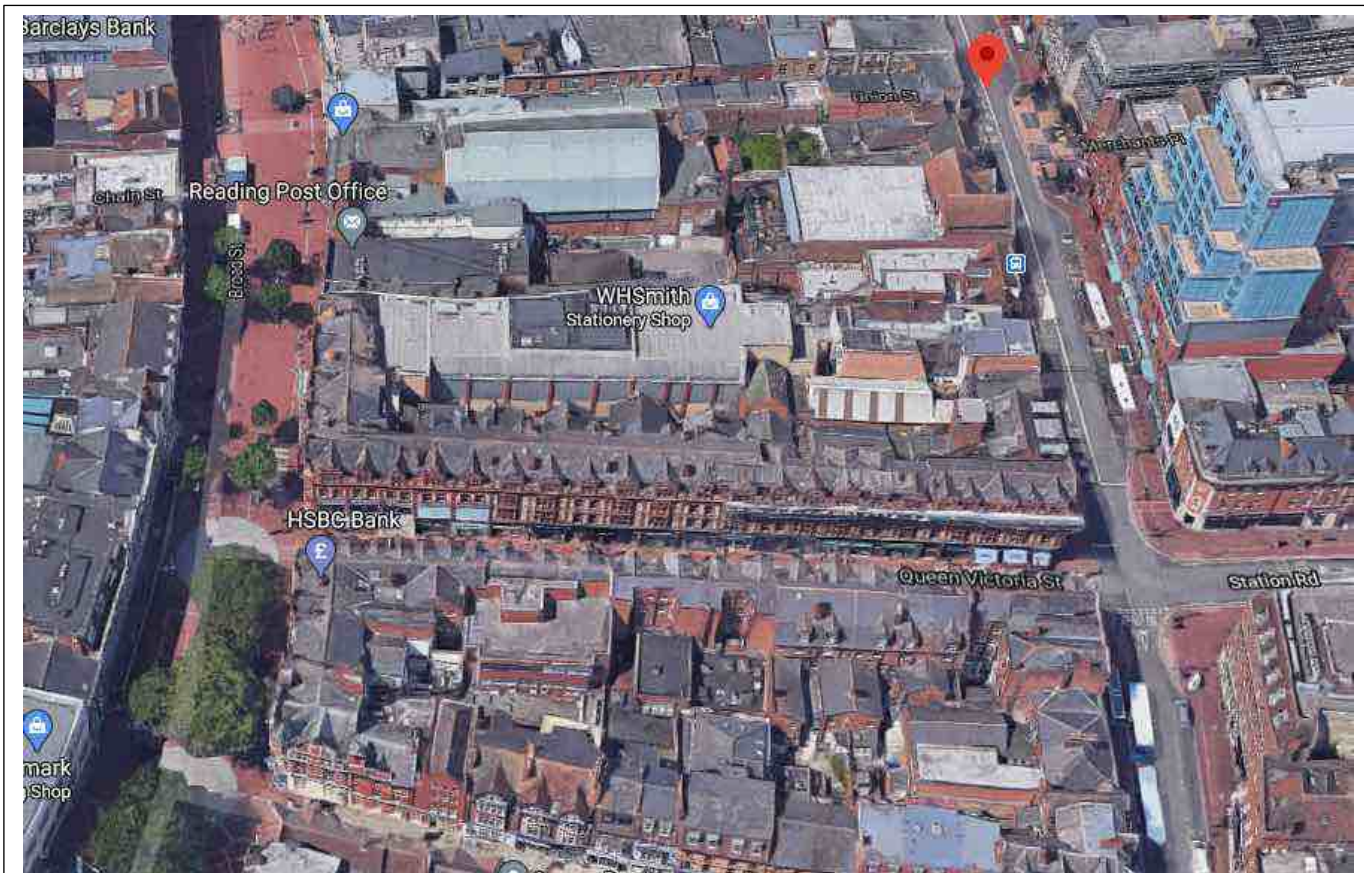


- 2.6 The Applicant also holds other sites in the town centre including 149 Friar Street and Nos. 2 to 4 QVS, which is directly opposite and forms the corner building of QVS - therefore the Applicant owns both corners when entering QVS.
- 2.7 The Site is highly accessible by public transport, walking and cycling with Reading Railway Station located approximately 250m to the north, with regular services into London and acting as an interchange hub for services to the rest of the country. The Site is within the heart of the town centre with immediate access to associated shops, facilities and services, including a key bus route on Friar Street. Friar Street and QVS are also designated cycle routes and the this part of the town centre offers pedestrianised streets and bus/taxi/cycle only restricted roads.
- 2.8 A full detailed description of the Site and existing buildings is included within the DAS submitted with this application and the full historic description of the Site is contained within the supporting Heritage Statement. A photographic assessment of the existing site is contained within the Schedule of Works (“SOW”) and general condition of the site within the accompanying Method Statements of repair.

Surrounding Area

- 2.9 The remainder of the adjoining shopping parade along QVS comprises a wider listed building of 1-31 and 2-32 QVS. These buildings are all of a uniform design as per the application Site with tiled and terracotta principal facades and continuous ground floor retail frontages. QVS is a

key pedestrianised shopping street within Reading town centre, connecting with the pedestrianised Broad Street of the south and providing a key north-south link to the Railway Station.



- 2.10 Central Reading is a thriving town centre with a wide range of town centre uses and services, including shopping high-streets, retail arcades, hotels, offices and residential uses. The town centre is undergoing significant regeneration and redevelopment with key projects underway or proposed.
- 2.11 The existing buildings at the Site reflect the predominant building heights within the town centre. However, there are some larger plots and building heights punctuating the skyline, such as the Novotel Hotel on the north side of Friar Street, Thames Tower by the railway station and the Heelas department store.
- 2.12 To the north of the Site is the Station/River Major Opportunity Area (“MOA”), as designated within the Reading Local Plan 2019. This area is designated for regeneration and redevelopment that will bring about significant change and enhancement to central Reading over the plan period. Immediately north of Friar Street is the Friar Street and Station Road sub-area of the MOA, which will assist in facilitating greater cycle and pedestrian permeability through central Reading with connectivity to the railway station.

3.0 Relevant Planning History

- 3.1 This section summarises relevant planning applications for the Site and other relevant developments in the surrounding area. A summary is provided of proposals previously presented for pre-application advice and the responses received from the Council.

Planning Applications

- 3.2 **1-15 QVS:** The below table summarises planning applications for the part of the Site with addresses along QVS. This does not include minor works such as shop front alterations or signage, and also omits duplicate Listed Building applications.

App Ref	Description	Decision/Date
1-15 QVS and 148 Friar Street		
181737	Repair and maintenance, and where necessary replacement of the roof, windows and brickwork including repair and maintenance of 12 roof gables	Recommendation made (unknown)
5 QVS, RG1 1SY		
930720	Change of use from financial and professional services (A2) to offices(B1).	Approved 16/09/1993
901065	Change of use of first and second floor to A2 (employment agency)	Approved 23/08/1990
891119	Change of use of ground floor from retail shop (A1) to employment agency (A2).	Refused 02/11/1989
7 QVS		
020616	(Amended description) Change of use from class A3 (tea shop, bakery) to class A2 (job shop.)	Approved 17/09/2002
940142	Change of use from estate agents to bakery/tea rooms.	Approved 17/11/1994
11 QVS, RG1 1SY		
960303	Conversion to form a single unit at ground floor level by removal of part of internal wall.	Approved 14/11/1996
960869	Change of use of ground floor and basement to A2 use forming extension to existing premises at 13 Queen Victoria Street.	Approved 28/08/1996
13-15 QVS		
890382	Change of use from Class A1 (retail-hairdressers) to Class A2 (employment bureau).	Approved 14/06/1989

- 3.3 **147-148 Friar Street:** There are numerous applications related to external shopfront alterations and signage that have not been included within the below table.

App Ref	Description	Decision/Date
147 Friar Street, RG1 1EX		
880153	Conversion of first floor into restaurant with 120 seats, formation of staircase and disabled WC to ground floor.	Unknown 23/11/1988
148 Friar Street,		
130576	Change of use of the public highway to a street café area.	Approved 19/09/2013

Surrounding Area

There are numerous planning applications of note in the surrounding area, which share similar attributes. Examples are given below.

- 3.4 **17-27 QVS:** Planning and listed building consent was granted in January 2019 (app refs: 181296 and 181297) for, “change of use of first, second and third floor from office use (B1a) to serviced apartment use (use class C1) comprising 15 x 1 bed units and 4 x 2 bed units”. These proposals and the site are very similar to that of this Application, being in close proximity, sharing the same planning policy designations and issues and being of the same configuration of uses. This consent has also been referenced in pre-application advice discussions with the Council (see below) as a good example to follow for the Site and an example of some technical requirements and mitigation that may be relevant for the application proposals.
- 3.5 **2-4 QVS:** Planning and listed building consent was granted in 2017 (app refs: 170210 and 170211) for, “conversion of vacant office accommodation at first, second and third floor levels to create 7 x 2 bed residential units with part of ground floor and basement for ancillary storage space”. These proposals demonstrate the acceptability of loss of office floorspace in this part of Reading town centre and the introduction of accommodation.

Pre-Application Advice

- 3.6 In developing the proposals herewith, pre-application advice was obtained in October 2020 (ref: 201372/PREAPP) on this proposal, which have since modestly evolved in response to the advice received, with the process detailed in the DAS. Initial advice was followed up with additional clarification and subsequent advice we received in December 2020. The proposals at the time comprised the following:
- Partial demolition of existing listed buildings at the rear of the site;
 - Restoration and alteration of the original listed buildings to be retained (internal and external) including restoration of shopfronts and facades, gables and roof;
 - A proposed three storey rear extension (with accommodation in the roof space) to nos. 1-15 Queen Victoria Street;
 - Creation of a new public square to the rear with access from Queen Victoria Street and Friar Street 3;
 - Part-one, part-two storey extension to side and rear of public square;
 - Retention of retail units to Queen Victoria Street and Friar Street and additional retail units at ground floor (and part first floor within the public and 147 Friar Street) to the rear of the site; and
 - Change of use of the remaining upper floors to a C1 apart-hotel use.
- 3.7 The pre-application advice request was accompanied by a detailed description of the scheme and analysis of relevant planning policy, a visual design document, floor plans and elevations and a Heritage Statement. A series of questions relating to the proposals were set out in the supporting material to focus the pre-application discussions. Overall the proposals were positively received and supported as an appropriate and positive refurbishment and redevelopment solution for the site. The pre-application advice received is summarised below under each question topic.

The acceptability of the proposals in principle

- Overall, the proposed development and mix of uses would enhance the viability and vitality of the town centre.

- Loss of employment use:
 - Further detail and evidence on loss of employment uses should be provided with a planning application in accordance with Local Plan Policy EM3.
 - Reference was made to planning permission 181269FUL at 17-27 QVS where a change of use from office (B1a) to serviced apartments (C1) was granted in 2019. The layout of upper floors was found not to be compatible with modern office environment and relevant evidence and marketing reports were provided.
- Retail provision:
 - The proposed retail provision and retention of existing shopfronts was welcomed and is in accordance with policy. The provision of small shop units aligns with specific policy requirements.
- Apart-hotel use:
 - The proposed apart-hotel use is compatible in central Reading and a section 106 legal agreement would be sought to limit the maximum continuous occupation to 2 months, as per the consent at 17-27 QVS.

Impact of the proposed works and design on heritage assets

- Further information was required to fully assess the potential impacts on heritage assets, which was helpfully listed within the pre-application response. However, an initial was provided based on the material submitted at the time.
- Shopfronts:
 - Refurbishment and reinstatement of a continuous row of shopfronts and the larger corner unit would be a positive benefit - detailed shopfront design will be required.
 - Shopfronts to nos.147 and 148 Friar Street should differ from those on QVS and the colonnade columns and existing shopfront should be retained. It was subsequently clarified that these were proposed to be retained, which was welcomed.
 - Entrance location to market square from QVS is appropriate and should be minimised to avoid disruption to shopfront pattern, as with the Friar Street entrance.
- Internal alterations:
 - Retention of existing ground floor staircases of nos.5 and 9 QVS is welcomed but should be incorporated into the redevelopment rather than concealed.
 - Further information on heritage significance and impact required on internal features.
 - Fire suppression systems should be incorporated in early design to avoid later disruption and impact.
- Rear extensions:
 - The massing of the three-storey rear extension and dormer projections is appropriate, albeit at the limit of acceptability in terms of scale. Off-setting of this from rear elevation of no.15 QVS is welcomed.
 - Redbrick and stone window surrounds is appropriate. Consideration should be given to terracotta within the rear elevation and windows should be timber framed.
 - The part-two, part-single storey extension is suitably subservient but a pitched slate roof, rather than flat, would be more in keeping. Awkward corner shape at northern end of roof terrace should be regularised.
 - Proposed glazed stair core to rear is considered a sensible approach to address this corner.
 - Proposed brick columns within the market square would benefit from different design/materials and round stone columns was suggested.

Impact of the proposals on amenity:

- The rear extensions are not considered to give rise to any adverse impacts with regard to loss of light or overbearing effects.

- Clarification required on potential uses of ground floor retail units and an appropriate assessment of proposed plant and potential odours.
- A management plan for the use of the market square will be required to safeguard the amenities of the apart-hotel users and residential occupiers.

Acceptability of provision of open space:

- The proposed market square is considered inventive and a benefit of the proposals with an undersupply of such spaces within the town centre.
- Landscaping details will be required and opportunities for planting within the square should be explored.

Acceptability of a car free development/transport implications:

- The site is highly accessible and a car free development would be acceptable and not uncommon for similar developments within the town centre.
- Cycle parking should be provided in accordance with the standards.
- Siting of refuse bins on the street will be unacceptable and collection would need to be secured via a private contractor. This would be secured as part of a section 106 legal agreement.

Required sustainability measures:

- The proposed development will be required to meet BREEAM Excellent standards.
- It was suggested that ground and air source heat pumps be investigated as potential sources of decentralised energy systems.

- 3.8 The pre-application advice has been beneficial to the evolution of the proposals and the relevant detailed worked up for this application. Following the issuing of the initial pre-app 1 letter (22.10.20), we held a pre-app meeting (02.11.20) and clarified points raised in pre-app letter and agreed minor updates required to the scheme. These changes were made, and were submitted. The Council issued a further pre-app response (02.12.20) and Officers concluded:

“As discussed at the pre-application meeting held on 4 November 2020 Officers consider that the pre- application scheme is well thought out and the heritage led approach is welcomed. Detailed matters, and in particular those relating to a full heritage assessment of the building and a management plan for the operation of all aspects of the development will be key in the consideration and assessment of any future planning and listed building consent applications. Officer’s look forward to receipt of the applications and accompanying detailed matters in the near future.”

- 3.9 This application therefore addresses the points raised in the pre-app and subsequent consultation, a detailed heritage assessment and management plan accompany. Therefore, this application is submitted for determination.

4.0 The Proposals

- 4.1 As advised, this application seeks planning permission and listed building consent for the following description of development:

“Part demolition of rear of site; repair and refurbishment of listed buildings; change of use of upper floors from office (Use Class E(g)) to apart hotel (Use Class C1); erection of a three-storey rear extension with mansard; erection of a part-single, part-two storey rear addition; alterations to ground floor principle façade; creation of public square; and associated works.”

- 4.2 Each key element of the proposals is summarised below in turn.

Demolition

- 4.3 Through Site assessments, heritage assessments, archaeological assessments and pre-application advice discussions with the Council, the poor quality and lower value elements of the Site to the rear have been identified as suitable for demolition. These represent more ad hoc additions that are incoherent with one another and the main original buildings, which have been extensively altered. They lack of merit contribute little to the heritage asset value of the listing, and in some cases detract from it. This will make way for a sympathetic, modern and inventive redevelopment to the rear of the Site and enable the creation of a public square, improved permeability and enhanced retail offering. The existing modern shopfronts to QVS and Friar Street will also be removed to enable the more sympathetic façade alterations and shopfront reinstatement.

- 4.4 Those elements of the Site proposed for removal are summarised as:

- Collection of buildings between the rear Site boundary to the rear of the original buildings along QVS and Friar Street, including connecting walkways and access stairs;
- Removal of the later addition stair and lift tower connected to the rear of 147 Friar Street;
- Removal of the modern shopfronts and signage to the ground floors of the QVS and Friar Street frontages; and
- Creation of two ground floor passages: one from QVS and one from Friar Street, to provide pedestrian access to the proposed public square.



- 4.5 No other demolition or removal is proposed, with the exception of elements of the historic façade that are in a poor state of repair, in order to make good and repair.

Change of Use

- 4.6 The upper floors of the existing buildings are in lawful use as offices (Use Class E(g)) and are currently vacant. This application proposes the change of use of the first, second and third floors of the existing buildings to create a 40-unit apart hotel (Use Class C1), incorporated partly within the proposed three-storey rear extension. The units will be a mix of studios, 1-bed and 2-bed apartments, which will be for short-term let. The below table shows the mix of unit sizes proposed.

Floor	Studio	1-bed	2-bed	
First	4	8	2*	
Second	5	9	1*	
Third	7	4	3*	TOTAL
TOTAL	16	21	4*	41

**One unit comprises a triplex across all three floors*

Internal Alterations

- 4.7 The application is accompanied by demolition plans and drawings showing the proposed demolition and alteration of the internal layout and features. The proposed plans show the new intended layout for each floor. Of the building elements to be retained, the internal alterations include:
- Removal of internal partitions and doors;
 - Removal of fixed furniture and fittings, such as built-in cabinets, counters and sanitaryware;
 - Removal of parts of the rear façade to accommodate the proposed extension;
 - Removal of some staircases (retention of those with heritage value);
 - Removal of some windows and doorways on the external rear façade;
 - New partitions and doorways to create apartments; and
 - Creation of new internal staircases.
- 4.8 The Heritage Statement submitted with this application details the heritage value of internal features and the justification for retention or removal of internal elements.

Repairs and Refurbishment

- 4.9 The existing buildings are in a poor state of repair and are there are elements and architectural detailing that are in danger of being lost without intervention. The proposals include the

identification and restoration of the key architectural features of the existing buildings, principally associated with the front elevations of the QVS and Friar Street façades.

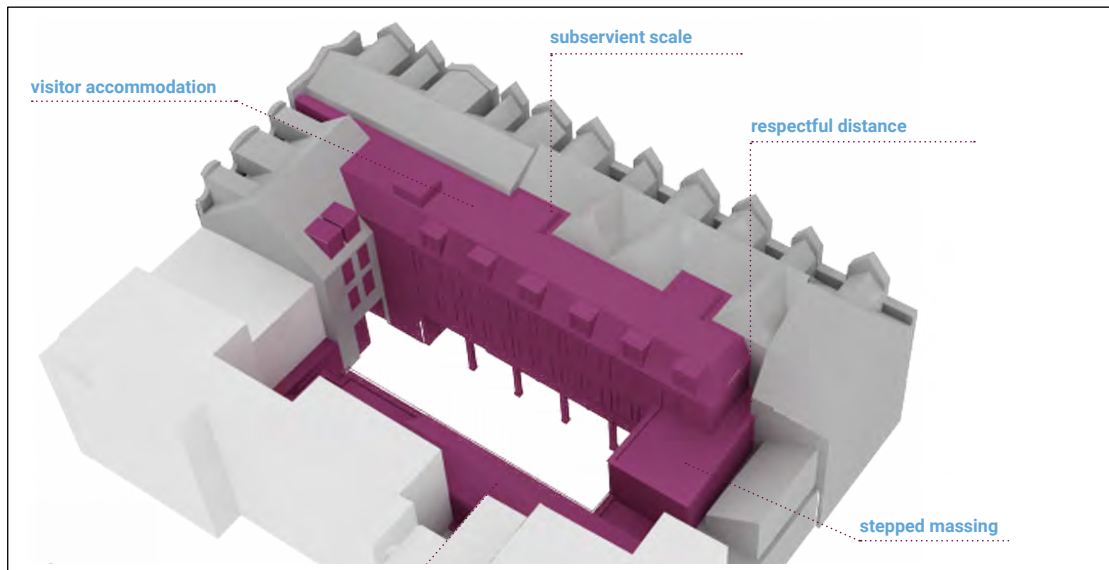
- 4.10 The Heritage Statement identifies those features of merit and their condition and Method Statements have been submitted for various proposed repairs. These include repairs to the roof, gable ends, deteriorating masonry, brickwork and terracotta detailing to restore it to its former glory, with replacement where necessary.



Rear Extensions

- 4.11 The proposals include a new three-storey extension with mansard to the rear of nos. 1-15 QVS to create additional retail floorspace at ground floor and to accommodate part of the proposed apart-hotel on upper floors. The extension will be of red brick construction to match materials used in the existing buildings and will include a mansard roof with dormer windows on the third floor. Windows on the first and second floors will be timber framed sash windows with stone surrounds and lintels.
- 4.12 The ground floor of the rear extension will host new retail shopfronts with double-height, metal framed glazing framed by stone-effect round columns, the latter being a direct response to pre-application advice received. There will form the rear entrances to the ground floor retail units fronting QVS.
- 4.13 An element of the rear extension will wrap around the southern end of the proposed public square and be stepped down to two-storeys in height with a flat, green roof. This will create additional ground floor retail space and first floor accommodation as part of the apart-hotel.
- 4.14 The proposals also include a part-single, part-two storey rear addition that will frame the western edge of the public square. This will accommodate additional retail units and will provide a first-floor terrace for outdoor seating. The roof to the rear addition will be pitched

with grey slate finish to reflect that of the rear of the existing buildings and is a direct response to pre-application advice received. The red brick finish and shopfronts will match that of the larger rear extension to provide continuity around the square.



Façade Alterations

- 4.15 The principal alterations to the front facades of the existing buildings will be at ground floor with the creation of new, uniform shopfronts. These will reinstate the original shopfront layouts and rhythm to the ground floor façade of QVS, utilising the existing shop frontage spacing, framed by pilasters, which will be retained. The shopfronts will have metal framed glazing and glass single entrance doors, uniform signage and street numbering and a black tiled plinth. This will continue round the corner to include 148 Friar Street, whilst retaining the larger prominent unit here. A new opening will be created between nos. 1 and 3 QVS to create a pedestrian access passage to the proposed public square behind.



- 4.16 The ground floor frontage of 147 Friar Street will be altered to create a flush shopfront and entrance to Friar Street. The frontage will incorporate a pedestrian passage from Friar Street to the new public square behind. The original features of the cast iron columns, colouring and shop front dimensions will be retained. Solid glazing on the first floor of 148 Friar St would not be appropriate to the proposed apart-hotel use and will be replaced by timber windows and brick and terracotta surrounds, matching the materials and detailing of the building.

Public Square

- 4.17 The demolition of structures to the rear of the Site will enable the creation of a new public square and public realm. This will provide approximately 184 sqm of open-air public space with additional covered space under the first-floor element of the new rear extension. This is in addition to the first-floor terrace provided as part of the new rear addition on the western side of the square.
- 4.18 The square will be a multi-functional public space that will operate as outdoor seating space associated with the retail units and for general public rest and relaxation. The space will be adaptable for multiple public events and uses, such as hosting outdoor markets, screening of sports events, music, entertainment and other cultural events.
- 4.19 Responding to the intended multi-functional use, landscaping and street furniture within the square will comprise timber-framed planters with fork-lift lifting points and informal picnic-style or bistro seating and tables to enable easy manoeuvrability. The square paving will be stone sets that are durable and hard wearing and will also complement the brick construction of the main building and reflect the stone detailing in the facades.
- 4.20 Pedestrian access to the square will be gained from new passages to be created from both QVS and Friar Street. This will also create permeability through the Site where this does not currently exist and will enhance the connectivity of Friar Street and QVS. These accesses will be gated and have restricted access during night-time hours to provide enhanced security to the public square, retail units when closed and the access to the apart-hotel.
- 4.21 This application is accompanied by a Management Plan for the proposed public square, setting out the proposed hours of public access, framework for hosting public events and other management and limitations to ensure safeguarded amenity of existing and future occupants.



5.0 Relevant Planning Policy and Legislation

Changes to the Use Classes Order

- 5.1 An amendment to the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 came into force on 1st September 2020. The effect of the amendment was to amalgamate existing Use Classes A1/2/3, B1, D1(a-b) and 'indoor sport' from D2(e), to a new Class E. The existing use of the Site was defined as a mix of shops (A1), cafes (A3) and offices (B1a) up until 31st August 2020. From the 1st September 2020, the existing use now falls within Use Class E(a) (retail sale of goods), E(b) (sale of food and drink) and E(g) (office use suitable within a residential area).

Planning Policy Framework

- 5.2 In preparing the application proposals, consideration has been given to the relevant development plan for the Site and proposed development, which comprises the key documents and sources set out below.

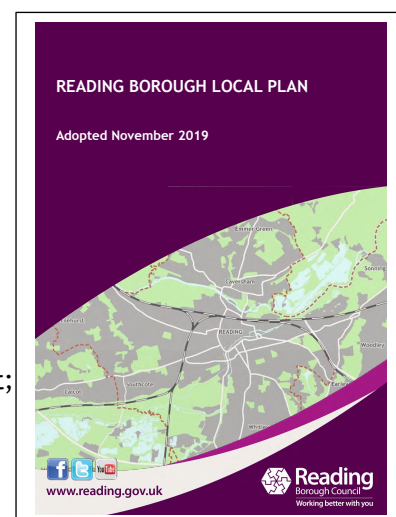
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2019)

- 5.3 The NPPF establishes overarching national policies for plan making and decision taking. At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development where permission should be granted for development that accords with an up-to-date development plan, or where material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 5.4 Whilst the NPPF as a whole has been considered, of particular note is chapter 16: conserving and enhancing the historic environment. This sets out the rigorous policy tests that should be adhered to in the assessment of the significance of a statutorily protected heritage asset and the impacts of proposed development.

Reading Borough Local Plan (RBLP) (2019)

- 5.5 The RBLP provides local policy and guidance, which accords with that set out at national level in the NPPF, providing a greater level of detail. The key policies of relevance to this application are listed below:

- Sustainability, Design and Amenity:
 - CC1: Presumption in favour of sustainable development;
 - CC2: Sustainable design and construction;
 - CC3: Adaptation to climate change;
 - CC4: Decentralised energy;
 - CC5: Waste minimisation and storage;
 - CC6: Accessibility and the intensity of development;
 - CC7: Design and the public realm;
 - CC8: Safeguarding amenity;
- Natural and Historic Environment:
 - EN1: Protection and enhancement of the historic environment;
 - EN2: Areas of archaeological significance;
 - EN6: New development in a historic context;
 - EN9: Provision of open space;
 - EN15: Air quality;



- EN17: Noise generating equipment;
- EN18: Flooding and drainage;
- EM3: Loss of employment land;
- Transport:
 - TR1: Achieving the transport strategy;
 - TR3: Access, traffic and highway related matters;
 - TR4: Cycle routes and facilities;
 - TR5: Car and cycle parking and electric vehicle charging;
- Retail and Leisure:
 - RL1: Network and hierarchy of centres;
 - RL2: Scale and location of retail, leisure and culture development;
- Central Reading:
 - CR1: Definition of Central Reading;
 - CR2: Design in Central Reading;
 - CR4: Leisure, culture and tourism in Central Reading;
 - CR6: Living in Central Reading;
 - CR7: Primary frontages in Central Reading; and
 - CR8: Small shop units in Central Reading.

Planning Guidance

- 5.6 Although not forming part of the development plan, the following Reading Borough Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) have been given consideration in the development of the proposals:
- Revised Parking Standards and Design (2011);
 - Sustainable Design and Construction (2019); and
 - Planning Obligations Under Section 106 (2015).

Other Documents

- 5.7 Some additional supporting evidence and monitoring documents have also been referenced in the preparation and assessment of the application proposals:
- Annual Monitoring Report 2019-20 (2020); and
 - Open Space Strategy (2007).

Planning Policy Designations

- 5.8 The site is subject to the following planning policy designations from the RBC Proposals Map 2019:
- Area of Archaeological Potential;
 - Air Quality Management Area;
 - Adjacent Classified Highway Network (Friar Street);
 - Adjacent identified Cycle Route (QVS and Friar Street);
 - Primary Shopping Area;
 - Office Core;
 - Central Core; and
 - Designated Primary Frontage in Central Reading (proposed).
- 5.9 The Site is located within Flood Zone 1, as identified on the Government Flood Map for Planning. In addition, the site has the following statutory heritage designations:
- 1-15 QVS and 148 Friar Street - Grade II Listed; and
 - 147 Friar Street - Grade II Listed.

6.0 Planning Considerations

6.1 This section of the Planning Statement summarises the relevant planning policy and guidance and assesses the proposals for compliance and other material considerations. The following key issues are considered to be the main points for consideration of this application, which are addressed in turn below:

1. Principle of development and proposed uses
2. Design Considerations.
3. Heritage Impacts.
4. Impact on Amenity.
5. Open Space Provision.
6. Air and Noise Impacts.
7. Archaeology.
8. Transport and Parking.
9. Flood Risk.
10. Sustainability.
11. Servicing and Waste.

1. Principle of Development and Proposed Uses

General Development Principles

Policy

- 6.2 Paragraph 11 of the NPPF establishes the presumption in favour of sustainable development, whereby proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan should be approved without delay. The up-to-date development plan in this case is the RBLP, which has been prepared with consideration to the NPPF and was adopted after the current NPPF.
- 6.3 **Policy CC1** Reiterates the presumption within the NPPF and will approve developments that are in accordance with policy. Proposals contrary to the development plan will be refused unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 6.4 The following key principles for the central Reading area are set out within the RBLP:
- The centre will contain a broad range of different but complementary uses within an area easily accessed by foot.
 - The centre will appeal to all sectors of Reading's population as a place to live in, work in, study in and visit.
 - New development will exhibit an excellent, safe and sustainable quality of design that contributes to the attraction of the centre.
 - Areas of designated open space within the centre will be protected and new opportunities will be sought.
 - Areas and features that positively contribute to the unique and historic character of central Reading will be protected and, where appropriate, enhanced.

- 6.5 In acknowledgement of the changing context of retail, the Central Reading strategy recognises that the town centre leisure offer will need to expand. This will include arts and cultural provision, sport and recreation facilities, additional restaurants and evening uses that appeal to a wide range of users and continue to provide an 18-hour welcome.
- 6.6 Reading 2050: A Vision for Reading 2050 is a collaboration between Reading UK (economic development company for Reading), University of Reading and Barton Willmore and is developed by businesses of Reading. This sets out the future vision and ambition for (inter alia) a 'City of Culture' and includes the following areas of focus, relevant to the Site and proposals:
- Build upon the success of the Reading Festival - all year-round cultural events through provision of vibrant public gathering spaces and street life and diverse venues - new 'Reading on Thames Festival';
 - Refurbishing existing heritage assets;
 - Greater diversification of retail offer;
 - Introduce more opportunities for independent retailers;
 - Strong, coordinated and well-marketed leisure offer; and
 - Further support growing night economy - capitalise on music heritage.

Assessment

- 6.7 The general thrust of the RBLP is to encourage and enable the growth and diversification of central Reading, enhancing its role as a Regional Centre. The proposals will play an important role in achieving those objectives, providing enhanced retail offering, a compatible mix of town centre uses, providing visitor accommodation, enhanced public realm with cultural offerings, bringing vacant buildings back into active use and protecting and enhancing key heritage assets.
- 6.8 The proposals will make efficient use of an iconic key Site within the town centre in a sustainable way that balances the development opportunities with the protection and enhancement of valuable historic buildings and setting. With the vacant use of floors, poor state of repair of the buildings and modern alterations that detract from their former grandeur, a unique opportunity exists for the Site to contribute to a positive future for this part of Central Reading. Therefore fulfilling and sharing the aspirations of the Reading 2050: A Vision for Reading 2050.
- 6.9 Consideration must also be given to the long-term potential impacts of the current Covid19 pandemic on the retail and leisure economy and behaviours of shoppers, tourists and workforces. A reinvigorated and enhanced retail and leisure town centre destination will play an important role in the post-Covid19 recovery of the Reading economy, encouraging a return to physical retailing and adaptable to a post-Covid19 environment. The proposals represent a unique opportunity to assist in this recovery and drive forward Reading's offer, drawing visitors from the wider region and being part of the much needed recovery.

Summary

- 6.10 This Planning Statement and other supporting material show that the development proposals presented herewith represent sustainable development, are in accordance with the up-to-date development plan and should be granted planning permission accordingly.

Loss of Employment Floorspace

Policy

- 6.11 Para.120 of the NPPF requires planning decisions to reflect changes in demand for land and uses. Para.121 states that a positive approach should be taken to applications for alternative uses of land that is currently developed but not allocated for a specific purpose in a development plan.
- 6.12 The Site is not allocated for an employment use and falls outside of an identified Core Employment Area.
- 6.13 **Policy EM3** of the RBLP states that outside of Core Employment Areas, the following matters will be considered for proposals where employment floorspace is to be lost:
- Is access by a choice of means of transport, including access to the strategic road network, poor, and likely to remain poor?
 - Is the continued use of the site for employment, including the potential for redevelopment for employment uses, viable?
 - Is there a surplus of a similar size and type of accommodation in Reading?
 - Would continued employment use of the site detrimentally affect the amenity and character of a residential area?
 - Is the need for alternative uses stronger than the need for the retention of employment land?
 - Would the proposal result in a piecemeal loss of employment land where there is potential for a more comprehensive scheme?

Assessment

- 6.14 The Site has been in the ownership of the Applicant for over 5 years, they also hold a comprehensive portfolio of properties in Reading Town Centre. The Site is currently under-utilised with high vacancies and it has proved no one has wanted to let in the proceeding years. The Applicant has marketed the uppers for office, offering competitive rates. However, the proliferation of modern, purpose-built accommodation, including accommodation with fully compliant DDA facilities, proves significantly more attractive and this modest office unit has proved undesirable and has begun to degrade as a result of the failure to find tenants or investment.
- 6.15 As noted in the Council's Development Plan and AMR, there is an over proliferation of office accommodation and this site represents an opportunity for the full restoration of this Site. In any event, the uses proposed are employment generating and it is envisaged that the apart-

hotel will create secondary and tertiary employment as a result of visitors making use of the town centre amenities, or visiting for business needs.

6.16 Policy EM3 sets out a number of criteria against which proposals are assessed against.

- *Is access by a choice of means of transport, including access to the strategic road network, poor, and likely to remain poor?*

6.17 The site has excellent public transport access, however, there is no on-site car parking and being located in the town centre, the site is some distance from strategic motorway distance that has to be negotiated at rush hour.

- *Is the continued use of the site for employment, including the potential for redevelopment for employment uses, viable?*

6.18 The Applicant has held the site for five years, after initial conversations with officers they have tried on numerous occasions to let the property. The principal reasons for the complete lack of take up has been:

- A substantial offering of more appropriate and better quality accommodation that is already over provided for.
- New office schemes being completed.
- Poor access (non DDA compliant).
- Convoluted and in-efficient layout for office occupation.
- Poor energy rating and lack of insulation.
- Significant costs of repair, restoration and upkeep having a direct impact on rental pricing.

6.19 For note, the marketing information and details is private and confidential, and therefore, not presented with the application pack.

- *Is there a surplus of a similar size and type of accommodation in Reading?*

6.20 The existing office is out-dated and not to modern standards, there was an over proliferation of accommodation in Reading town centre pre-pandemic. As a result of new working practise people have adopted, it is expected that there will be a further increase in vacant space across the town centre and both locally, regionally and nationally.

- *Would continued employment use of the site detrimentally affect the amenity and character of a residential area?*

6.21 The site is not in a residential area.

- *Is the need for alternative uses stronger than the need for the retention of employment land?*

6.22 We submit this is clearly the case, the site is outside the identified Core Employment Area and within the town centre. The existing employment floorspace is piecemeal in nature having been predominantly created through ad-hoc and poorly designed alterations, which is convoluted and not fit-for-purpose, especially in comparison to modern provision that Reading has a ready supply of. The majority of the floorspace is vacant and the loss of which will enable the comprehensive redevelopment of the site, including the provision of employment generating

uses, both via primary job creation and secondary associated servicing. The proposals will also enable the retention, restoration and enhancement of heritage assets, that secure their longevity.

- *Would the proposal result in a piecemeal loss of employment land where there is potential for a more comprehensive scheme?*

- 6.23 The site is a listed building and the scheme being put forward is for a comprehensive heritage led comprehensive redevelopment of the site.

Summary

- 6.24 The lack of desirability of the existing use, the demand for apart-hotel uses and the opportunity for preservation and enhancement of a heritage asset and the other benefits the scheme will deliver represent a strong justification for alternative uses. It is regretful that the office accommodation is lost, however, as it clearly been established, the current lack of occupation does not currently make a contribution to the areas office stock. Furthermore, it is not DDA compliant and the associated works to bring this up to a reasonable standard are unsustainable when there is clear lack of demand. There are strong material considerations when taken into account, the only conclusion we can reach is that the proposals are in compliance with the provision of the NPPF and RBLP Policy EM3, especially as they will generate jobs in their own right, as well as creating secondary and tertiary employment opportunities.

Retail Use

Policy

- 6.25 At paragraph 85, the NPPF requires planning decisions to support the role of town centres, taking a positive approach to their growth and adaptation. The focus of main town centre uses being located within town centres is highlighted at paragraph 86.
- 6.26 The Site is located within Reading Town Centre and is within an area designated as a Primary Shopping Area (including Primary Shopping Frontage), Office Core and Central Core.
- 6.27 **Policy CR1** states that for proposed main town centre uses, the following will apply:
- Retail development will take place in the Primary Shopping Area;
 - Major office development of over 1,000 sqm will take place in the Office Core; and
 - Other main town centre uses will take place in the Central Core.
- 6.28 Reading is identified as a Regional Centre under **Policy RL1**, where the greatest levels of development and change will be seen. The vitality and viability of centres should be maintained and enhanced. The following improvements will be acceptable:
- Accessibility and transport improvements;
 - Broadening range of facilities;
 - Residential use of upper floors; and
 - Environmental enhancements.
- 6.29 **Policy RL2** focuses retail and main town centre leisure and culture development of over 2,500 sqm to within town centres.

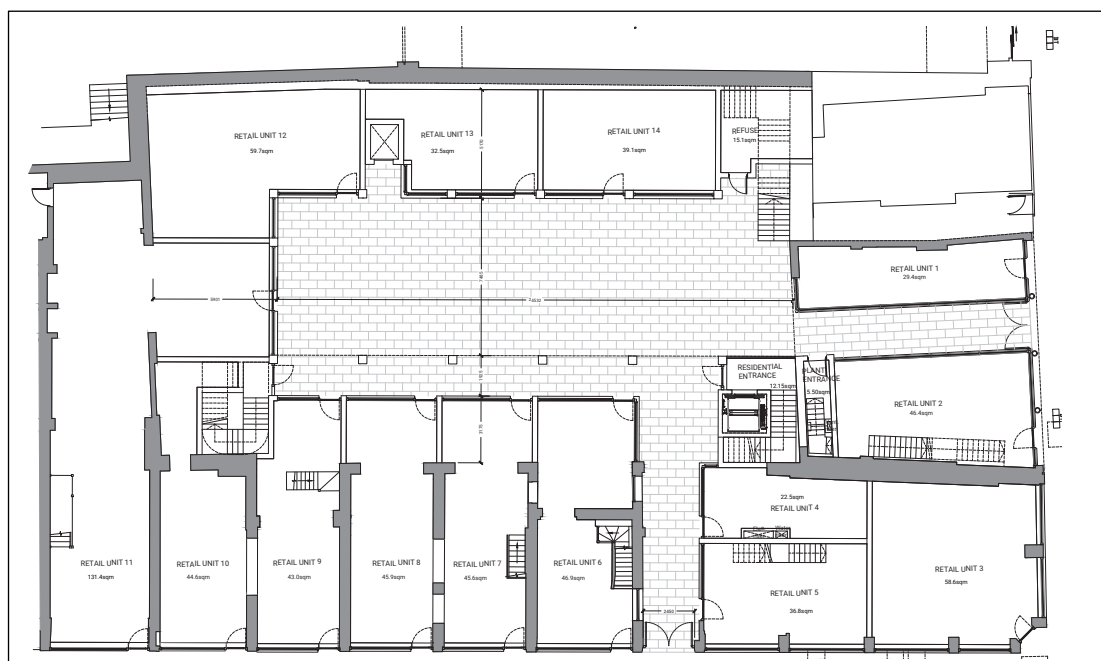
6.30 Under **Policy CR7**, ground floor uses in primary frontages in Central Reading should be in use classes A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, C1, D1, D2 or related sui generis uses (as per defined Use Classes prior to 1st September 2020). Development must provide an active frontage with a display window or glazed frontage at ground floor level.

6.31 QVS is identified under **Policy CR8** as a street that is characterised by small shop units, of less than 75 sqm, which make an important contribution to the diversity of the town centre. In these areas, the amalgamation of individual shop fronts will not be permitted and major new retail development in the Primary Shopping Area should include a range of small shops.

Assessment

6.32 The proposals will enhance existing, and create additional, retail floorspace, bringing a total of over 1,050 sqm of net internal enhanced and additional retail space in new functional and modern fit-for-purpose layouts of Use Class E(a) and E(b). Ten of the proposed retail units will be under the 75 sqm identified for small shop units, which will retain and enhance this existing provision and character to QVS, assisting small businesses and a community of independent retailers and groups such as 'Reading Indies'. The principle of retail uses and the provision of smaller shops was supported by the Council as part of pre-application advice discussions.

6.33 The creation of the public square will create a boutique market retail feel and accompanied by public and cultural uses and events within the square, will bring a new vibrancy and vitality to this part of the town centre, helping to halt the decline of QVS. The retail provision and public square will create a destination for shoppers, tourists and other visitors to Reading, enhancing the vitality and viability of QVS, Friar Street and the surrounding areas of the town centre.



6.34 The provision of an enhanced retail offering and open, functional public space and retail destination is seen as an important contributor to the post-Covid19 recovery of the town centre

and local retail and leisure economy. Recent experience has shown that some large footprint retailers and department stores are struggling to adapt to the competition of online retailing. This has increased the demand for smaller units with short leases, enabling businesses to be more flexible and adaptable. The proposals offer that smaller, boutique retail environment and opportunity for independent retailers to create a destination and community of businesses.

- 6.35 If regard is had to one public consultation comment¹, they stated, which we consider is very appropriate:

“I’ve frequently emphasised the need to drive Reading’s offer forward, to keep the visitors from neighbouring towns coming, and therefore to underpin the overall vitality of the town centre. Yet I reflect now that perhaps the biggest competition to those aims is not Oxford, Basingstoke and Newbury, but rather Amazon, Deliveroo and Netflix. Will the Covid lifestyle stick, or will there be a collective clamour to return to the physical, or the “in real life”? Thankfully, whilst lockdowns have shut us all indoors, that hasn’t stopped the investors and architects forming new plans to haul us off our sofas and back into town.”

Summary

- 6.36 The retail provision of the proposals is an appropriate use within the town centre and will enhance its vitality and viability. The proposals are therefore in accordance with the NPPF and policies CR1, CR7, CR8 and RL2 of the RBLP.

Apart-Hotel Use

Policy

- 6.37 As above, paragraph 85 of the NPPF supports the adaptation of town centres and promotes their long-term vitality and viability by allowing them to grow and diversify that can respond to industry changes and allow a suitable mix of uses.
- 6.38 **Policy RL1** emphasises this in encouraging a broader range of facilities and residential uses on upper floors and **Policy CR1** supports other main town centre uses in the Central Core.
- 6.39 **Policy CR4** states that the Central Core will be the prime focus for major leisure, culture and tourism development. Uses that would attract a wide range of people into the centre will be encouraged. Innovative solutions to leisure provision will be encouraged, particularly those that make the best use of available (often limited) site area.
- 6.40 **Policy CR6** requires apart-hotel development outside of Use Class C3 to be located within the Central Core. This policy stipulates a restriction to occupation to ensure this is kept to a short-stay basis with monitoring on the implementation of this being regularly supplied to the Council.

Assessment

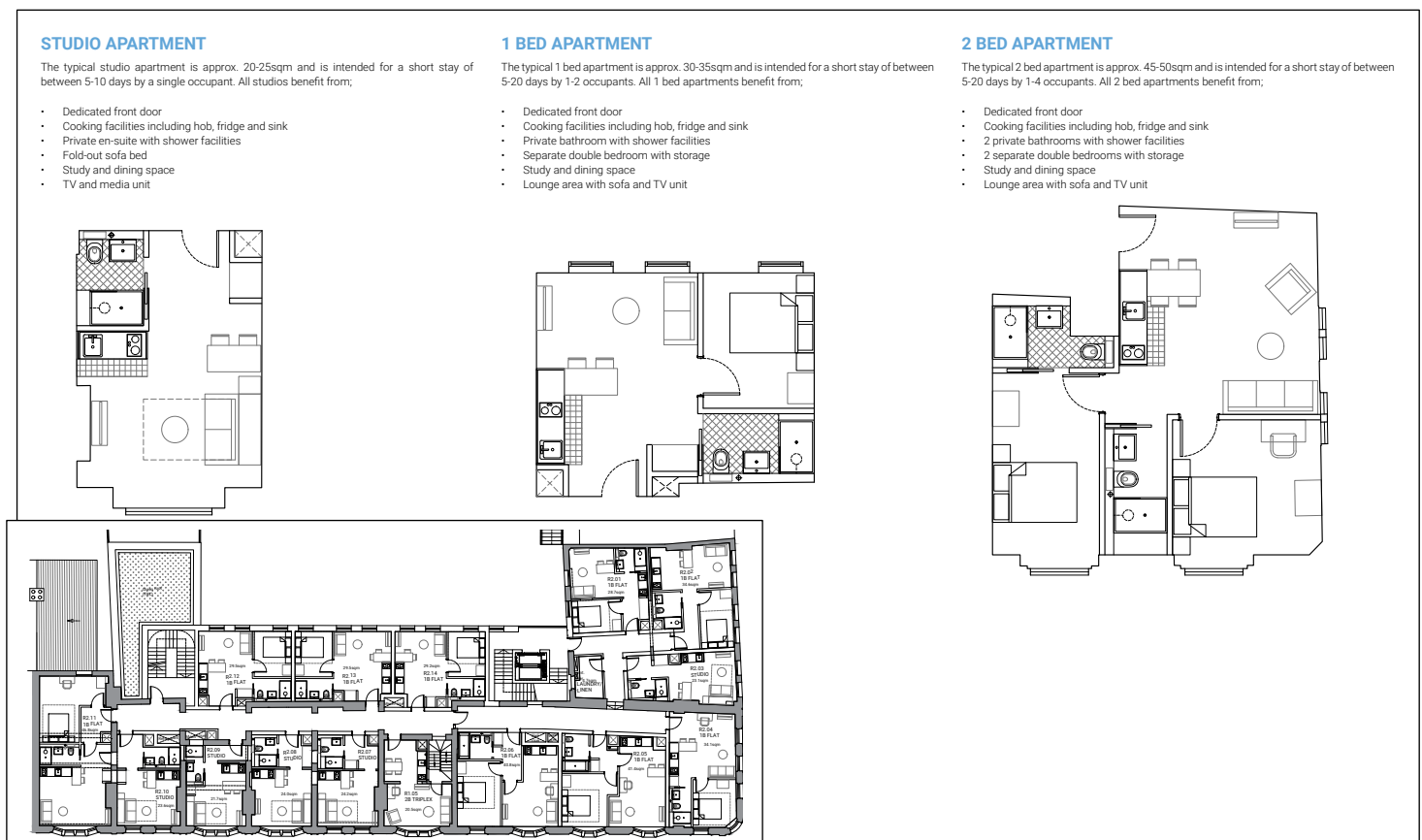
- 6.41 The introduction of the apart-hotel uses will add to the variety of uses and attractiveness of the town centre for visitors and workers. This represents an inventive diversification of town

¹ <https://readingonthames.com/2021/01/29/queen-victoria-courtyard-scheme-unveiled/>

centre uses, making effective use of vacant floorspace where previous uses have become unattractive and unviable.

6.42 The 2018-19 Reading Annual Monitoring Report (“AMR”) notes an exceptionally low provision of C1 floorspace within the monitoring year, with only 1,500 sqm permitted within Reading and none delivered. The 2019-20 AMR shows a dramatic increase in permitted C1 floorspace at 10,350 sqm but with only 848 sqm (8%) completed during the monitoring year. The proposals will provide a compatible town centre use that will assist in increasing the provision to meet demand for short-term letting accommodation within the town centre.

6.43 Serviced apartments are a relatively recent phenomenon. They are fully furnished flats that have similar amenities to hotel rooms and can be used for either short-term or longer-term stays, offering a more home-from-home type experience. Governments and local council have been cracking down on Airbnb rentals, which in part allows for success in the serviced apartment market. Serviced apartments differ in that they are not flats owned by individuals looking to achieve a supplementary income, but rather they are owned by a company with the sole purpose of renting them out on either a short-term or long-term basis to individuals who need somewhere to stay. Unlike Airbnb, the apartments are not someone permanent residence and the crackdown of Airbnb rentals in some locations is allowing serviced apartments the opportunity to accommodate those who would have used Airbnb, further boosting demand for the units.



6.44 The evidence of their popularity lies in occupancy rates. Serviced apartments in the UK averaged an 81% occupancy rate in 2019, and outperformed hotel rooms which stood at 77.2%.

Amongst businesses, their usage is also increasing. In Reading at Green Park Business Park there are many frequent users of Serviced Apartments, including life science companies and technology companies such as Huawei. In 2019 leasing agents, Saxbury, received eleven offers at the guide leasing price for the neighbouring serviced apartment scheme (17-27 Queen Victoria Street, Reading). The success of this campaign demonstrates not only the strength of the macro location, but that there is indeed robust operator demand for licensed Serviced apartments in Reading.

- 6.45 The principle of apart-hotel use on the Site was deemed acceptable as part of pre-application advice received from the Council. The Applicant is committed to appropriate restrictions on the occupation length of the apart-hotel units to ensure they are not occupied as standard residential accommodation and continue to meet the market need.
- 6.46 The fit out of the apart-hotel will be operators' task, however, the rooms will be constructed to a high standard that incorporate period feature. Further, the layout has been designed with input from a Fire Engineer. Of course, at detailed design stage there will be extensive work on this, however, the layout and necessary fire suppression needed has been designed to comply with all necessary legislation.
- 6.47 The recent planning permission for apart-hotel use at the adjacent 17-27 QVS (app refs: 181296 and 181297) has been drawn upon in the creation of the application proposals and was referenced as an acceptable approach to uses and design within the pre-application advice received from the Council. This consent was for a change of use from offices to 19 apart-hotel uses on the upper floors of this part of the QVS terrace, with similar considerations and constraints, such as statutory listing. This demonstrates the acceptability of an apart-hotel as a town centre use in this location with appropriate considerations and management controls.
- 6.48 The Applicant has received specific market intelligence and responses to enquiries which supports the demand for apart-hotel uses in this location. The layouts, sizes and mix of units has been devised in coordination with specific operators. Furthermore, there has been specific interest and demand for more bespoke and unique buildings, environments and fit-outs that distinguish a product from the conventional and 'bland' purpose-built apart-hotel / hotel buildings. The proposed use of the iconic Listed Buildings and the enhanced offering provided by the proposals with the complementary retail uses and public square, make the Site and proposals unique and attractive to the market, enabling a distinctive and distinguished product to be able to be offered.

Summary

- 6.49 The apart-hotel use is a compatible and supporting use for this location within central reading and will assist in enhancing the vitality and viability of the centre. The proposals comply with the provisions of the NPPF and RBLP Policies RL1, CR1, CR4 and CR6.

2. Design Considerations

6.50 There are several key separate elements to the design of the proposals that warrant individual focus as part of the policy assessment. The following elements of the proposed external works are addressed in turn below. The internal works are discussed below under heritage considerations, we also refer readers to the DAS, Heritage Statement, Schedule of Works and also the drawings presented.

- Repairs/works to the principle facades;
- Shop fronts;
- Three-storey rear extension with mansard;
- Part-single, part-two storey rear addition; and
- Public Square.

Policy

6.51 The NPPF identifies at paragraph 124 that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development.

6.52 Paragraph 127 requires developments to function well and be visually attractive, be sympathetic to local character, whilst not preventing appropriate innovation or change. Proposals should use street layouts, spaces, building types and materials to create distinctive places.

6.53 **Policy CC7** reflects the national position in seeking high quality design, maintaining and enhancing the character and appearance of the area within which it is located. Design will be assessed to ensure a positive contribution to the following objectives:

- Character - a place with its own identity and sense of place
- Continuity and enclosure
- Quality of the public realm and provision of green infrastructure and landscaping
- Ease of movement and permeability
- Legibility - clear image and easy to understand
- Adaptability - capable of adaptation over time
- Diversity - meets a wide range of needs

6.54 Under **Policy CC7**, developments will also be assessed to ensure that they:

- Respond positively to their local context and create or reinforce local character and distinctiveness, including protecting and enhancing the historic environment of the Borough and providing value to the public realm;
- Create safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder or fear of crime does not undermine quality of life or community cohesion;
- Address the needs of all in society and are accessible, usable and easy to understand by them, including providing suitable access to, into and within, its facilities, for all potential users, including disabled people, so that they can use them safely and easily;
- Are visually attractive as a result of good high-quality built forms and spaces, the inclusion of public art and appropriate materials and landscaping.

6.55 Building upon these principles and with a focus on Central Reading, **Policy CR2** requires proposals to demonstrate the following attributes:

- Respect the existing grid layout, provide continuity and enclosure and frontages that engage with the street at lower levels. Enhance ease of movement through and around the central area;
- Provide well designed public spaces and other public realm, hard and soft landscaped areas, public art, sense of place and linkages to adjoining areas;
- High quality architectural details and materials should be used, respecting form and quality in local areas;
- Should contribute to the diversity of the central area, be capable of easy adaptation over time and be designed to enhance community safety;
- Should be designed with consideration to adjacent development sites, not preventing or causing unreasonable burdens on future development.

6.56 In terms of density, **Policy CC6** states that scale and density to be related to the level of accessibility by walking, cycling and public transport to a range of services and facilities. The supporting text for the policy notes that the highest levels of accessibility in Reading are within the town centre, which is also one of the most accessible locations in the South East. Good levels of accessibility are considered to be those within 400m of a defined centre with a good range of facilities by pedestrian routes, and within 400m by pedestrian routes of a bus stop with a service frequency better than one bus every 20 minutes in each direction.

Assessment

Repairs/works to the principal facade

- 6.57 Urgent repairs and replacement works will be undertaken to the deteriorating architectural detailing of the building facades, particularly along QVS. These will be sensitive like-for-like replacements and retaining and repairing existing elements where possible, representing a sympathetic restoration and enhancement of character of the existing buildings.
- 6.58 Two pedestrian passageways to the new public square will be created with one entrance on QVS and one on Friar Street. The QVS entrance will be located between nos. 1 and 3 QVS, utilising the existing entrance to a servicing area for no.1. The Friar Street entrance will be assimilated into the existing ground floor frontage design and occupy the space between the retained iron pillars (third and fourth from the left), retaining the historic ground floor shopfront rhythm. The entrances will be gated to enable enhanced security during night-time hours, as detailed by the security strategy in the accompanying DAS.

Shop fronts

- 6.59 Care has been taken in the design of the ground floor shopfronts to closely reflect the design, scale and detailing of the original shopfronts of the QVS terrace, as understood from historic photographs and records. The original uniformity and consistency of the QVS frontage has been lost over time with the alteration of individual shopfronts, amalgamation of units and addition of signage. Historic imagery included within the supporting DAS shows an identifiable consistent pattern to the shopfronts on QVS. Whilst they differ in their lettering and window displays, the dimensions of the shopfronts are consistent and the uniform, continuous shop name fascia is a predominant feature.



- 6.60 The proposals seek to reinstate the historic shopfront design and uniformity, creating a unique historical character to this part of QVS in the style of boutique heritage retail. Along the main QVS frontage, each shopfront will have the same metal framed glazing with single access door, wooden sill and black tiled base plinth. The existing shop fascia will be retained and revealed with the removal of inconsistent later signage additions and alterations. Each shopfront will include consistent shop name lettering and street number engraving. This will recreate the original uniformity of the QVS frontage and bring back the former historic character and glory.
- 6.61 The prominent corner unit at 148 Friar Street will be of the same detailing and treatment as the remainder of QVS, whilst retaining the scale and character of this larger corner unit. The first-floor of 148 Friar Street currently incorporates large glazing, which is not appropriate for the apart-hotel use and will be replaced with timber-framed sash windows and redbrick infill with stone lintels and surrounds. This will match the rhythm and detailing of the remainder of the QVS frontage, enhancing the continuity of the frontage at first-floor level.
- 6.62 The historic frontage of 147 Friar Street differs from the remainder of the QVS terrace and has largely retained its original features and appearance over time, with some alterations to the first floor and modern signage. The proposals will retain the key architectural detailing of the shopfront, such as the painted black cast iron pillars, first floor architraves and the ground floor shop front rhythm. The positioning of the pedestrian entrance to the rear public square has been designed so as to not interrupt the scale and rhythm of the existing shopfront.
- 6.63 Three-storey rear extension with mansard: the proposed rear extension has been specifically designed to be sympathetic in scale, massing, design and materials, to that of the host building and surrounding buildings. At three-storeys in height, with additional mansard roof, the extension will be subservient to the main building of 1-15 QVS and will sit below the existing rear roofline, respecting the predominant local skyline. The use of a mansard roof with dormer

windows will reduce the perceived bulk of the extension and reflects features of the rear of the QVS terrace. The highly accessible location of the Site lends it to higher density and larger scale development, which the proposals achieve, whilst still being in keeping with, and respectful to, the existing buildings and setting.

- 6.64 The use of redbrick in construction with lighter, pale coloured architectural detailing is characteristic in this part of Central Reading and a feature of the listed QVS terrace with its red terracotta detailing and lighter yellow brick construction. The rear extension respects and reflects this in its red brick construction and with the inclusion of stone window surrounds, lintels and horizontal divides.
- 6.65 The provision of rear entrances to the retained retail units at ground floor will provide an attractive and active frontage to the public square and engage with the public realm, helping to enliven the square assist with enhancing vitality and viability with increased retail frontage and enhanced footfall. The stone pillars framing the shopfronts will continue the reflection of characteristic lighter coloured materials and will give a sense of grandeur and interest to the frontages of the public square, which reflects that of the principal façade and former glory of the QVS terrace. This is also a design evolution directly reflecting pre-application advice received on the earlier scheme.
- 6.66 The similar proposals presented at pre-application stage received a positive response and were noted as being appropriate in scale and design, with suggestions for some alterations which have been incorporated. The proposals represent an appropriate and sympathetic design response that will respect and enhance the listed building and provide a high-quality visual and functional environment that is secure and accessible to all, in compliance with the NPPF and RBLP policies.

Part-single, part-two storey rear addition

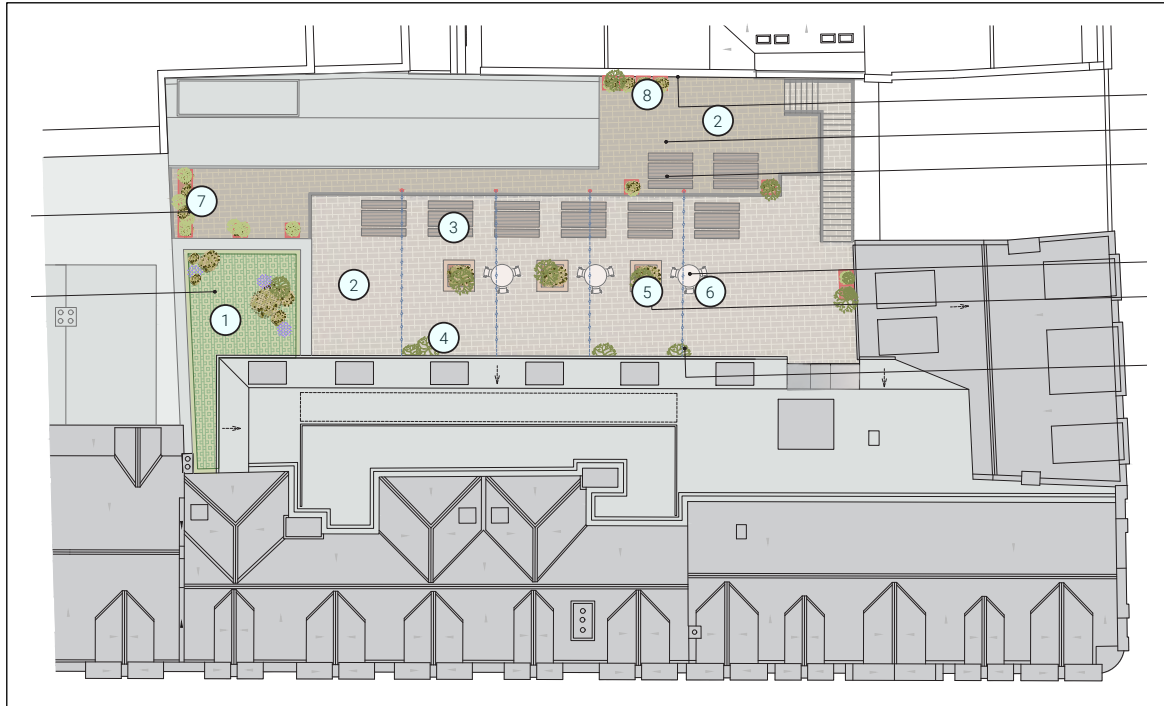
- 6.67 The rear addition within the public square mirrors the design and architectural detailing of the rear extension, whilst introducing its own unique features and interest. The addition frames the western edge of the public square, providing additional retail units and a first-floor terrace for outdoor seating and enjoyment, accessed by an internal lift and an external staircase.
- 6.68 The rear addition will be of the same red brick construction with lighter material detailing and full-height metal-framed glazing to the retail units, framed by stone pillars. The upper level will be set back, creating the first-floor terrace, which will be stone paved and include a painted black iron railing. Previously designed as a flat roof, the first-floor of the rear addition now incorporates a tiled pitch roof, which more closely reflects the design of other roofs in the immediate surrounds and is a direct design response to pre-application advice received on the previous scheme.

- 6.69 The rear addition is lower level and stepped back to ensure subservience to the retained and existing surrounding buildings, also enabling a greater degree of natural lighting for the square and the rear windows of the rear extension.
- 6.70 The design of the rear addition reflects the character and detailing of the host building and setting and is considered an appropriate design response to the Site. This element of the proposals is therefore in compliance with the NPPF and policies of the RBLP.



- 6.71 Public Square: One of the unique benefits of the proposals is the removal of the unsympathetic and eclectic modern additions to the rear of the main buildings and the creation of a new public square. The proposed use and management of the square is discussed later in this section, with the design specifically considered here.
- 6.72 At approximately 184 sqm, the public square is a good size for its intended multi-functional use, able to host numerous community and public events, performances and exhibitions, as well as the more general use as a functional outdoor meeting, relaxing and dining space. The square provides sufficient circulation space, access to the retail units and creates permeability through the site between Friar Street and QVS, which currently does not exist. The space will also provide a pleasant, everchanging and active outlook of interest for residents of the proposed apart-hotel.
- 6.73 The stone set paving will provide a light and airy open space that will complement the redbrick façade of the proposed extension and rear additions, as well as reflecting the stone detailing

within the façades. This material is also hard wearing and easily washable to assist with the maintenance of the public square. Timber-framed planters and other planted screening will be used to soften the square and add interest to the space, whilst also being easily movable to accommodate the multi-functional use of the square. Picnic-style and bistro street furniture will be used to reinforce the market square feel of the space and the functional use as an outdoor seating and dining area.



Design Assessment Conclusions

- 6.74 The material submitted with this application shows that due care has been taken to design proposals that strike an appropriate balance with desirable uses; preserve and enhance an iconic listed building; make effective use of the Site and respond to constraints; and create a safe, attractive and well-designed place for future enjoyment by the public and visitors. The proposals reflect the historic character, built form, street layout, design features, materials and setting of the surrounds and utilise high-quality materials and modern sympathetic design.

Summary

- 6.75 The design proposals were supported in principle at pre-application advice stages, have evolved with guidance received and are considered to fully accord with the NPPF and RBLP Policies CC6, CC7 and CR2.

3. Heritage Impacts

Policy

- 6.76 The NPPF requires proposals affecting statutory heritage assets to describe the significance of the assets (paragraph 189). Paragraph 193 states that great weight should be given to the conservation of designated heritage assets when assessing development and paragraph 194 states that any harm to the significance of an asset will require clear and convincing justification for such harm. Paragraph 196 states that where less than substantial harm would be caused to significance, then public benefits including optimum viable use should be considered.
- 6.77 **Policy EN1** of the RBLP seeks the protection and enhancement of the historic environment. 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. Applications affecting Listed Buildings must not have an adverse impact on those elements which contribute to their special architectural or historic interest, including their setting. The Council will proactively seek solutions for assets at risk, including consideration of appropriate development schemes that will ensure the repair and maintenance of the asset.
- 6.78 **Policy EN6** states that, in areas characterised by heritage assets, new development will make a contribution to the historic character by respecting and enhancing its architectural and visual qualities and considering how heritage considerations can influence the design of new development. The following will be considered:
- Positive contribution to the existing historic townscape;
 - Sensitivity to historic context;
 - Reflection of borough-wide major heritage themes that contribute to local distinctiveness;
 - Whether the development promotes and/or improves access to previously undiscovered or neglected historic significance.

Assessment

- 6.79 As identified in Section 5.0, the buildings of the application site are Grade II listed, under list entry 1113488 and 1113564. The listings date from 1978 and focus on the façade detailing and material of the buildings, with particular mention to the shop front designs.
- 6.80 The application is accompanied by a Heritage Statement, prepared by Heritage Collective. This provides a comprehensive historic assessment of the heritage assets, determination of their significance and value, and assesses the potential impact of the proposals on the assets. The Heritage Statement should be referred to for full details of the assessment, the key elements of which are summarised here in relation to the above relevant planning policy.
- 6.81 The Heritage Statement sets out a detailed history of central Reading and the formation of the streets and building layouts that have resulted in the present-day situation. It identifies that 147 Friar Street was built in the period between 1879 and 1895 and the current QVS layout and

buildings were part of a comprehensive redevelopment, completed in 1903. The Statement also notes the addition of the more modern rear extensions and alterations, which in some cases detract from the special interest of the original buildings.

Heritage Significance

- 6.82 In line with paragraph 189 of the NPPF, the Heritage Statement provides an assessment of significance of the heritage assets. This recognises the architectural and historic merits of the buildings and also the detraction from this arising from the more modern alterations, particularly those of ground floor shop fronts. Overall, it notes the buildings as good examples of late 19th/early 20th century commercial premises.
- 6.83 Full details of the assessment of significance are contained within the Heritage Statement and summarised here:
- 1-15 QVS & 148 Friar St Exterior:
 - Of considerable architectural quality - brickwork, terracotta, decorative gables, granite pilasters and original windows - adding to significance.
 - Modern ground floor shop fronts, signs and lights detract from significance.
 - Modern wooden infilling to double-height shopfront to 148 Friar Street detracts from architectural interest and significance.
 - Heavy alteration to rear of site with limited architectural merit, removal of rear chimney stacks and roofs altered, detracting from significance.
 - Notwithstanding above, rear elevation does retain some value, albeit to a significantly lesser degree than the front elevation.
 - 1-15 QVS and 148 Friar St Interior:
 - Nos. 1-3 QVS and 148 Friar St have been heavily altered and are of no particular heritage value.
 - Nos. 5-15 QVS basement and ground floors have also been heavily altered.
 - Nos. 5-15 QVS upper floors retain elements of original features (plan form, room portions and circulation, staircases and partitions) which adds to the heritage interest and significance.
 - 147 Friar St Exterior:
 - The double height colonnade shopfront and segmental headed dormer windows are of particular interest and add to the heritage significance.
 - 20th century shopfront with splayed frontage, boarding over the fascias and modern paintwork detract from the heritage significance and provide opportunity for enhancements.
 - 147 Friar St Interior:
 - Parts of interior have been heavily altered and are in a deteriorating condition.
 - 1930s additions of rear stair and lift core with curved walls are of some limited value.
 - Projecting chimney breasts, some partitions with lath and plaster and some elements of plan form add to the heritage significance but are able to accommodate change.
 - Built form to rear:
 - 2no. two and three-storey buildings formerly in use as store and cabinet factory associated with 147 Friar St contribute to its setting but are not of any special interest in their own right.
 - Remaining built form to rear is more modern, heavily altered and is either of neutral or negative heritage significance.

Heritage Impact

- 6.84 The Heritage Statement assesses the component parts of the proposed works and their impact on the identified heritage significance of the assets. The findings of this assessment are summarised here and are based on the schedule of works and significance drawings prepared:

- Repair works to halt deterioration:
 - Continued deterioration of architectural detailing and external features will cause harm to the heritage significance.
 - Reinstating structural stability and repairing and reinstatement of façade detailing will remove risk of harm and represent a benefit to the heritage asset.
- New Shopfronts and signage:
 - Proposed new shopfront design will provide a coherent architectural approach and reinstate consistency to the terrace and street.
 - Detailing, and design will reflect traditional design of historic shopfronts and represent a significant enhancement to the architectural integrity and authenticity of the asset.
 - The 147 Friar St shopfront will be returned to the 1939 arrangement. Whilst not original, this arrangement would only affect modern elements and will provide an appropriate entranceway to the public square. The original cast iron columns will be retained and these works will preserve the significance of 147 Friar St.
 - Solid glazing on the first floor of 148 Friar St would not be appropriate to the proposed apart-hotel use and the proposed timber windows and brick and terracotta surrounds would be wholly appropriate in terms of form, materials, character and detailing. These works represent an enhancement to the architectural interest.
- Demolition of rear buildings:
 - The modern rear additions are poor quality and detract from the appearance of the listed buildings. Demolition would not affect the heritage significance and offer an opportunity for enhancement to the rear of the site.
 - The three and two storey buildings associated with 147 Friar St do not have value in their own right but their demolition would have a limited effect on the significance of this building due to their historic ancillary use, but would not amount to material harm.
 - The demolition works are essential to the wider goal of reinvigorating the heritage assets and delivering the associated benefits.
- New rear extension:
 - The lack of embellishment and detail of the rear elevation to 1-13 QVS, enables it to accommodate the proposed rear extension. The introduction of the rear extension would result in some harm to the significance of the rear elevation of 15 QVS, which is relatively intact.
 - Elements of the existing rear elevation will be retained within the new rear extension, utilising existing openings and keeping change to a minimum.
 - The rear extension will sit below existing eaves, retaining the historic roof form, with clear subservience and the glazed lift core and circulation space is positioned outside of the host building to preserve legibility and integrity.
 - Architectural detailing reflects that of the high-quality QVS frontage, providing a more contemporary, restrained reference utilising repetitious rhythm of sash windows, red brick and stone materials (in accordance with pre-application advice), similar proportioned dormers, simplified eaves detailing, banding and cornices, and windows surrounds and colonnade. This offers a clear enhancement and experience to the of the rear yard, whilst balancing subservience and increasing vibrancy.
 - Whilst some harm would be incurred, the good design offers and aesthetic enhancement and helps mitigate any harm.
- New rear additions:
 - New buildings are of subservient scale, stepping down from the main buildings, continuing the established character of the rear elevation with brick colonnades and well detailed shopfronts.
 - More contemporary design of first-floor frontages ensures attention is not drawn away from the listed building or overall back of house character.
 - A pitched roof is incorporated for the first-floor in response to pre-application advice and to reflect that of existing surrounding buildings.
 - The rear additions are of high-quality built form and design and would not affect the heritage significance of the listed buildings.
- Internal alterations - 147 Friar St:

- Loss of 1930s rear lift and staircase will result in some impact to the significance, however the works would be beneficial as a whole, thus outweighing the harm.
- Replacement of modern basement partitions will not give rise to heritage impact.
- Whilst there would be a change to the character of the ground floor, no historic fabric will be lost, architectural elements will be retained (e.g. tall columns) and the commercial nature and character will be retained. This will not affect the heritage significance.
- Surviving elements, such as exposed roof trussed and timbers, on the upper floors will be retained and new partitions will reinstate the historic compartmentalised nature of the building. These works represent an enhancement to the significance.
- Internal alterations - 1-3 QVS:
 - Due to the heavy alterations, the internal spaces are of no heritage value.
 - Removal of the staircase would result in the loss of some historic fabric but this has already been altered and, along with the other significant previous alterations, any impact would be wholly limited and would not affect the heritage significance.
- Internal alterations - 5-15 QVS:
 - The proposed works would result in some harm to the heritage significance, primarily as a result of changes to the plan form and loss of an original staircase.
 - These works are essential to facilitate the viable reuse of the building and the harm has been minimised wherever possible.
 - Heritage benefits have been introduced, including partial restoration of lost elements of plan form and reinstatement of period detailing, which weigh against harm caused.

Heritage Assessment Conclusions

- 6.85 The Heritage Statement has identified that there is some heritage significance associated with the Listed Buildings, predominantly borne from the high-quality street frontages. The Statement recognises that there are some, but limited elements of note internally and that the rear additions and modern shop frontages have a negative impact on the special interest and heritage significance.
- 6.86 The Heritage Statement assesses that the proposals will have both positive and negative impacts on the significance of the assets. It notes that the negative impacts have been mitigated, if not avoided, by the sympathetic design and considerable enhancements brought about by the benefits of the proposals, including:
- Preventing further deterioration of the Listed Buildings;
 - Reviving the underused and predominantly vacant assets, providing an active and viable use that will provide for their future conservation and maintenance;
 - Reinstatement of in-keeping historic shopfronts, enhancing the significance and authenticity of the buildings;
 - Removal of poor quality rear additions, replaced with a contemporary reference to the established historic architectural pattern, creating a more inviting and accessible space;
 - Retention and restoration of key elements of heritage significance, such as the facades, internal elements of significance and elements of legible historical plan form; and
 - Opportunities to reinstate appropriate detailing internally that retain a higher degree of survival.

Public Benefits

- 6.87 The Heritage Statement concludes that any harm to the significance of the Listed Buildings would be less than substantial (medium level) and that this harm is weighed against the conservation, preservation and enhancement of the heritage assets that the proposals deliver,

which are significant. In addition to heritage benefits, the NPPF requires an assessment of the balance of harm against other public benefits arising from development proposals. It is clear that the repair, reinstatement and enhancement of these important heritage assets are in themselves of public benefit, but the proposals will also deliver the following public benefits:

- Repair and reinstatement of the original historic frontages of the listed buildings and the architectural detailing that contributes to their significance.
- Visual improvement to these prominent retail streets with uniform shop frontages, signage and lighting, respectful to the original historic frontages.
- Removal and enhancement to the form and appearance of built form at the rear of the site.
- Provision of modern, subservient and respectful built form to the rear of the site, enhancing the visual appearance and supporting and promoting the grandeur of the retained listed buildings.
- Provision of additional floorspace for retail and appropriate town centre uses in a highly accessible and sustainable location.
- Enhancing the diversity of retail provision and attracting boutique ‘heritage retail’ and independent retailers.
- Provision of a mix of retail uses, providing diversity in town centre offering and opportunities for respite and relaxation, such as with coffee shops.
- Provision for small businesses and shops with appropriate-sized retail units to meet demand and support the small business market.
- Introduction of apart-hotel use, providing short-term let accommodation, supporting the needs of, and attracting, working professionals and visitors to Reading, as well as assisting in remedying an identified under-provision.
- Provision of an enhanced public realm with the public square, providing opportunities for respite, relaxation and play, as well as community and public events and the opportunity to foster and support local community initiatives, exhibitions and performances.
- Provision of a town centre destination that will attract visitors, shoppers and workers to this part of the town centre, enhancing the activity, vitality and viability of this part of the centre.
- The proposals will arrest the decline of QVS and support and bolster the Reading economy, which is of particular importance at this current time and will play an important role in the post-Covid19 recovery of the town centre.

Summary

6.88 The proposals represent a unique opportunity to save and restore these important heritage assets, breathing new life into the Listed Buildings and this part of the town centre. The significant heritage and public benefits of the proposals far outweigh the less than substantial harm arising to the heritage significance and result in a net benefit and enhancement to the current situation. The proposals are considered to comply with relevant tests and requirements of the NPPF and Policies EN1 and EN6 of the RBLP.

4. Impact on Amenity

Policy

- 6.89 Paragraph 127 of the NPPF promotes development that will create a high standard of amenity for existing and future users.
- 6.90 **Policy CC8** of the RBLP stipulates that development Must not cause a detrimental impact to living environment of existing or future residential properties in terms of (inter alia):
- Privacy and overlooking;
 - Access to sunlight and daylight;
 - Visual dominance and overbearing effects of a development;
 - Harm to outlook;
 - Artificial lighting; and
 - Security and Safety.

Assessment

- 6.91 There are several key elements of the proposals and amenity tests that have been addressed as part of their design and assessment. These are taken in turn below.

Privacy and Outlook

- 6.92 Given the existing uses and nature of the functional development at the rear of the Site, there are limited existing properties beyond the Site that currently overlook the Site. The closest existing residential occupiers are those in the upper floors of no.146 Friar Street and some of the serviced apartments on the rear of upper floors of nos.17-27 QVS.
- 6.93 The rear façade of the proposed rear extension will comprise windows to the apart-hotel of the same orientation of those serviced apartments of 17-27 QVS. There is therefore not considered to be any privacy or overlooking issues associated with this arrangement. Users of the first-floor terrace to the rear addition in the public square will have some views of the upper most rear windows at the northern end of 17-27 QVS, but these will be at a distance of approximately 15m. Views from the users of the public square will be at a greater distance and more obtuse angle. There is not considered to be a detrimental impact on privacy or overlooking in this regard.
- 6.94 The rear windows of the upper floor of 146 Friar Street will be at 90 degrees to those of the proposed rear extension and at a closest distance of approximately 12m. Given the distance and angle of any views, there is not considered to be any loss of privacy or case of overlooking. The first-floor terrace of the rear addition in the public square and the fully glazed gable end of the first-floor unit may offer some views into the top floor rear windows of no.146 Friar Street, but planting screening will be provided as part of the public square landscaping which will aid in mitigating this.
- 6.95 In terms of outlook from all relevant receptors, the removal of the unsightly and uncoordinated existing rear structures will be an enhancement. The creation of the public square and new

retail units represents a visually attractive development and improvement on the existing view, adding interest and an active, changing scenery.

Public Square Management Plan

- 6.96 As per Officers request at pre-application, a Management Plan is presented that addresses details of the proposed hours of use, noise controls, capacity, alcohol sales, details of external lighting and general management practices including how access from the two entrances would be controlled - we refer readers to the said Management Plan that accompanies the application.
- 6.97 We confirm that the proposals will achieve Secured By Design accreditation and accepted a condition pertaining to compliance with such.

Security and Safety

- 6.98 The Site's town centre location benefits from existing natural surveillance of a busy high street and existing on-street CCTV network. The retail frontages of QVS and Friar Street will therefore benefit from this and additional security measures that may be implemented by individual occupiers, such as internal CCTV.
- 6.99 The rear public square will have gated accessways, which will be open for the majority of the day and trading hours of the associated retail units. Access will be restricted during night-time hours to provide additional security for the rear retail units and the access to the apart-hotel. Access through these gates at this time will be controlled by the apart-hotel reception for residents arriving out-of-hours. Access to the apart-hotel main entrance will be controlled via audio/visual link to reception and electronic key card access for guest once they have been registered and checked in. Internally, guests will utilise passes that will only allow access to their rooms and circulation space associated. Internal CCTV will also be in operation.
- 6.100 The proposed shopfronts and gated public square entryways have been designed to omit any hidden recesses that might encourage loitering or antisocial gathering. Adequate lighting will be provided in passageways and within the market square to ensure a safe and welcoming environment as well as clear visibility for CCTV cameras. The details of lighting in these areas will be secured by condition pursuant to any planning permission, but is anticipated to include high-level soft lighting, supplemented by wup/down lights on piers and new retail units. Further information is provided within the accompanying DAS.

Summary

- 6.101 The proposals are considered to provide an adequate safe and inviting environment that provides sufficient security and deters crime, without being an overly dominant feature or posing as a deterrent for all users. The proposals are considered to comply with the NPPF and Policy CC8 of the RBLP.

5. Open Space Provision

Policy

- 6.102 In seeking to serve community needs, paragraph 92 of the NPPF requires decisions to plan positively for the provision and use of shared spaces, such as meeting spaces and open spaces. Paragraph 121 of the NPPF is concerned with making efficient use of land and requires a positive approach to applications for alternative use of developed land where this would help meet an identified need. Proposals for improving the quality of access to open space should be supported.
- 6.103 **Policy EN9** of the RBLP requires all new development to make provision for appropriate open space based on the needs of the development. New open space should:
- Be in useable parcels of land and not be fragmented;
 - Be safely and easily accessible and not severed by any physical barrier, including a road;
 - Be accessible to the general public and be designed so as to feel that it is part of the public and not private realm;
 - Create a safe environment, appropriately considering lighting and layout to reduce the fear of crime;
 - Provide some informal landscaping for aesthetic, wildlife and recreational purposes; and
 - Link into the Green Network where possible.
- 6.104 The supporting text for Policy EN9 notes that people in and around the town centre are still further away from public open space than guidelines recommend.
- 6.105 **Policy EN10** states that in areas with relatively poor access to open space facilities (including as a result of severance lines), new development should make provision for, or contribute to, improvements to road and other crossings to improve access to green space and/or facilitate the creation or linking of safe off-road routes to parks.
- 6.106 In relation to public realm in Central Reading, **Policy CR3** requires development to make a positive contribution and will be assessed against the following:
- All sites greater than 1ha will need to provide new public open space or civic squares integrated with surrounding development;
 - New open spaces should be of a size and shape to accommodate imaginative uses. Where appropriate, provision of water features, trees, other planting and hard landscaping will be expected;
 - Public realm should conserve and enhance the historic environment of the centre and significance of heritage assets therein and their setting.
- 6.107 Section 7.7.7 of the Reading Open Space Strategy recognises the importance of town centre spaces and their role in creating urban sanctuaries in which people can relax, meet, play or take a break from working or shopping.

Assessment

- 6.108 The RBLP notes a lack of access to open space within Central Reading. Whilst there are some park areas nearby: Lavender Place Community Gardens, 360m straight line to the south west; and Forbury Gardens, 300m straight line to the east, there are limited civic squares or similar areas of public realm designed for congregation, meeting and relaxing. With the exception of the Railway Station approach, there are no such squares within a 500m radius of the Site, and beyond in some directions.
- 6.109 The public square will be integral to the proposed development, providing active, useable public realm in the heart of Central Reading, complementing the retail and apart-hotel uses and acting as a destination in this part of the town centre. The square will be a hub for respite for shoppers and workers within the town centre, a place to meet others, relax, eat and socialise.
- 6.110 The square will be a functional event space, adaptable and able to host numerous different format and size of events, ranging from outdoor markets, and art displays to sports screenings and stage events. At approximately 184 sqm, the main square will be able to host seated events and standing events - the number of attendees will be controlled having regard to Fire Safety and Licencing requirements.



- 6.111 The stone set paving of the square will create a light and airy appearance that complements the materials and features of the proposed rear extension, which in turn is respectful to and reflective of the materials and detailing present in the QVS frontage of the existing buildings. Moveable timber-framed planting and other potted vegetation and screening will assist in softening the square and providing a visually attractive space for users.

- 6.112 Security and safety matters have been addressed previously in this statement and further details are contained within the security strategy within the accompanying DAS and Management Plan. Appropriate lighting, CCTV and restricted access will create a welcoming but safe environment, free from the fear of crime.
- 6.113 **Biodiversity:** the Council state there is unlikely to be any impact on ecology grounds, and also acknowledge the limited scope for ecology improvements, however, the addition of a green roof and planting will make a modest contribution where currently there is no greening.

Summary

- 6.114 The proposed public square is a considerable significant public benefit of the proposals and an important part of preserving and enhancing the historic character of the Listed Buildings. The proposals are considered to comply with the provisions of the NPPF and RBLP Policies EN9, EN10 and CR3. The proposed public square was also supported in pre-application advice received, noting it as an inventive design response and a benefit of the proposals.

6. Air and Noise Impacts

Policy

- 6.115 NPPF paragraph 170 seeks to protect the natural environment, including preventing new and existing development from unacceptable or adverse impacts of air or noise pollution. Air and noise impacts is also a relevant consideration for amenity as per paragraph 127 of the NPPF. RBLP **Policy CC8** also seeks to safeguard existing and future residents from detrimental impact from noise and disturbance, dust and fumes, vibration and smell. **Policy EN15** states that where a development would introduce sensitive uses into, or intensify such uses within, an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA), detrimental effects on that use should be mitigated. Planning obligations may be used to secure contributions to tackle poor air quality or for air quality monitoring.
- 6.116 Where noise generating equipment is proposed, RBLP **Policy EN17** requires the noise source specific level (plant noise level) should be at least 10dBA below the existing background level as measured at the nearest noise sensitive receptor.

Assessment

Air Quality

- 6.117 Much of Reading is designated as an AQMA and the Site falls within such an area. Major developments are required to be accompanied by an Air Quality Assessment (AQA) if they will meet a set of criteria, including increasing the level of car parking or give rise to an increase in HGV movements or other detrimental air quality impacts.

- 6.118 The application is accompanied by an AQA, which assesses the impact of the proposals during construction and occupation, both on existing neighbouring uses and future occupiers of the development. The AQA concludes that the site is a 'low risk' site and the impact of dust soiling and particulate matter from construction activities can be reduced to negligible levels through recommended mitigation measures. Continuous visual assessment of the site is recommended, along with maintaining a complaints log to capture isolated incidents and to rectify them.
- 6.119 For the impact of vehicle emissions on future occupiers, the AQA finds that predicted particulate matter concentrations will be below relevant objectives and an acceptable level. The predicted nitrous oxide concentrations are found by the AQA to be below relevant air quality objectives at all assessed parts of the development, with the exception of the first, second and third levels of the Friar Street façade, where mitigation measures will need to be incorporated. The proposals will include mechanical filtered ventilation for apart-hotel rooms on the Friar Street façade and unopenable windows to these rooms.
- 6.120 The proposals are therefore in accordance with the requirements of the NPPF and policies CC8 and EN15. Please refer to the submitted AQA for further details of the technical assessment and recommendations.

Odour and Ventilation

- 6.121 The future tenants and what uses they will seek to operate within has not be secured and as this scheme is at planning stage, the future ventilation to fitted will not be known until post approval and the Applicant goes to market. However, as previously set out, these are modest units and are expected to fall within E(a) and maybe tip in to E(c). However, in preparing the scheme, a M&E assessment that details the ventilation strategy accompanies.
- 6.122 In any event, the retail units benefit from generous floor to ceiling heights, which provide sufficient scope to fit air handling. One such system, which is/ being successfully installed within a building the Applicant owns is the Recon Air Recirculation System that negates the need for a flue.
- 6.123 However, the final end user will be tasked with fitting out, however, based on initial feedback it is more likely that the end users will not have a requirement for full cooking facilities, with the site being presented to the independent market with a focus on retail and modest cafes.

Noise

- 6.124 This application is accompanied by a Noise Impact Assessment (NIA), produced by KP Acoustics. This assesses the impact of the proposals on existing sensitive receptors, as well as the conditions for future occupiers of the development, notably the proposed apart-hotel. The NIA has focussed on the impact of proposed plant, which will be located on the roof of the proposed rear extension (main plant enclosure), on the roof of the two-storey rear addition in the public square (secondary plant enclosure). The potential noise generation from activity in the public

square and the retail units themselves has also been taken into account. We should note, the Applicant controls the first floor of 146 Friar Street and it is not in residential use.

6.125 The NIA makes several recommendations to ensure appropriate noise levels are achieved for the apart-hotel use. The following mitigation measures will be incorporated into the proposals accordingly:

- *Use of recommended specified glazing;*

6.126 The Applicant confirms the secondary glazing of the apart-hotel/ rear window glazing will comply with this requirement. The restricted and double glazed windows will ensure that noise as a result of the uses, location and plant will not be affected.

- *Use of recommended technical specification of mechanical ventilation systems to meet identified noise levels;*

6.127 The Applicant Energy/ Ventilation Strategy that accompanies confirms the plant to be used and the NIA assessment has assessed the said plant.

- *Installation of appropriate underfloor sound insulation between the ground floor retail units and first floor apart-hotel; and*

6.128 The Applicant confirms appropriate underfloor sound insulation will be fitted between the ground and first floors, however, the detail of this is not available at submission due to the inability to gain access to ground floor units during this current lockdown and need to undertake investigation works. However, the method to be used could be subject to a detailed condition requiring submission and agreement.

- *Installation of noise reducing louvres to plant enclosures.*

6.129 The NIA confirms the method of noise reduction required and a specification for the plant enclosure louvres.

Summary

6.130 The NIA concludes that, with the incorporation of the recommended mitigation, the proposals will ensure noise levels to sensitive receptors will remain below the identified standard and requirements of policy and will not give rise to detrimental noise impacts. This will protect the amenity of existing surrounding residential and commercial uses as well as the proposed future occupiers of the apart-hotel. The proposals will therefore comply with the NPPF and RBLP policies CC8 and EN17.

7. Archaeology

Policy

- 6.131 Paragraph 189 of the NPPF requires an appropriate desk-based assessment for sites that have the potential to include heritage assets with archaeological interest. The Site falls within an identified Area of Archaeological Potential within which, RBLP **Policy EN2** requires applicants to identify and evaluate sites of archaeological significance and assess the impacts of development proposals. Where remains cannot be preserved in situ, they should be excavated, investigated and recorded. Where appropriate, Section 106 agreements will be negotiated to protect, enhance and interpret archaeological remains.

Assessment

- 6.132 An Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment is submitted with this application, which assesses the potential for the Site to contain historic remains and is reflective of its location within an identified Area of Archaeological Potential. The Assessment identifies the potential for remains from the early medieval period onwards but does not identify any over-riding archaeological constraints that would prohibit or significantly constrain the Site's development.
- 6.133 Notwithstanding this, there is the potential for redevelopment to have an impact on potential remains. As such, the Assessment concludes that further investigation is likely to be required to ascertain the nature and significance of any potential remains. It states that this could comprise evaluations following demolition of buildings to the rear of the Listed Buildings, and/or an archaeological watching brief, carried out alongside demolition and groundworks.

Summary

- 6.134 The applicant commits to implementing the recommendations of the Archaeological Assessment and such provisions can be secured by way of condition pursuant to any planning permission. The assessment of the archaeological potential and the implementation of appropriate investigative measures is in line with the requirements of the NPPF and Policy EN9 of the RBLP.

8. Transport and Parking

Sustainable Transport

Policy

- 6.135 The NPPF promotes sustainable modes of transport and opportunities for development to increase the use of walking, cycling and public transport as modes of travel. Paragraph 104 supports an appropriate mix of uses across areas and larger sites with the aim of minimising the number and length of trips. Paragraph 108 seeks to ensure that appropriate opportunities to promote sustainable transport modes in developments have been taken, that safe and suitable access to the site can be gained by all users and that acceptable mitigation can be provided where required.

- 6.136 **Policy TR1** states that developments should promote and improve sustainable transport facilities, encouraging walking, cycling and the use of public transport. The supporting text for this policy recognises that, for major developments, it is important that users of, and visitors to the development can make sustainable travel choices using non-car modes of transport. For developments likely to have significant transport implications, Travel Plans will be sought.
- 6.137 **RBLP Policy TR3** states that development will only be permitted where:
- Accesses and works to the highway comply with the adopted standards of the Transport Authority;
 - The development would not have a material detrimental impact on the functioning of the transport network;
 - The proposals would not be detrimental to the safety of users of the transport network, including pedestrians and cyclists;
 - The proposal would not generate regular movement of heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) on unsuitable roads, or on roads without easy access to the Classified Highway Network; and
 - For non-residential uses, or new dwellings on classified roads, off-street servicing would be provided.
- 6.138 **Policy TR3** also states that proposals involving either the construction of a new site access, or a material increase in the use of an existing site access, directly onto the Classified Highway Network will not be acceptable if they would be likely to result in the encouragement of the use of the network for short local trips or compromise the safe movement and free flow of traffic on the network or the safe use of the road.
- 6.139 In relation to cycle routes and facilities, **Policy TR4** requires developments to improve access for cyclists to, from and within the development. Development should not detrimentally affect identified cycle routes, of which both QVS and Friar street are.

Assessment

- 6.140 The Site is in a highly accessible location in the heart of the town centre, with immediate access to town centre shops, services and facilities. There is extremely good access to public transport with the busy bus route along Friar Street and Reading Railway Station approximately 250m to the north. The pedestrianised nature of QVS and other shopping parades, as well as the traffic restrictions along Friar Street, make the area surrounding the Site pedestrian and cycle friendly, enhancing the safe accessible nature of the Site. The Transport Assessment submitted with this application provides further detail on the accessibility of the site via pedestrianised areas, extensive cycle network and public transport provisions.
- 6.141 The proposed uses in this location will enhance the town centre offering to existing local residents and visitors, as well as introduce short-term letting accommodation into a highly accessible location. This will encourage the use of sustainable modes of transport and shorter trips to local facilities and services. The apart-hotel use will attract visitors and short-term workers to Reading and provide modern, high quality accommodation in the heart of the town centre that is accessible by public transport to many parts of the country, and highly accessible

by foot and cycle to local facilities and amenities, including the central Reading employment market. The apart-hotel also proposes secure cycle parking and changing facilities to encourage the use of cycling as a sustainable mode of transport by staff and guests.

- 6.142 The Transport Assessment has undertaken a TRICS assessment of the potential trips generated by the proposed apart-hotel use, compared to an assumed zero level for the existing vacant office floorspace. This identifies that approximately 238 two-way trips will be generated per day, of which 34% are identified to be via private vehicle. The Assessment notes that there are sufficient local public car parks to accommodate such level of private vehicle trips but also concludes that the high level of public transport accessibility of the Site will serve to reduce the requirement for vehicular trips.
- 6.143 The Site and specifically the apart-hotel is in close association to national rail (250m) and local bus services and as a result of the use proposed (longer stay hotel), it is expected that many users would utilise such modes of transport. However, if patrons were to arrive by taxi, there is a taxi layby located on Friar Street (less than 1minute walk) and there is more than sufficient road and parking capacity for drop off without compromising highway safety or adding to congestion.
- 6.144 For the remaining proportion estimated to travel via public transport, and those additional trips transferring from private vehicles, the Transport Assessment concludes that the existing public transport network has sufficient capacity to absorb these additional trips.
- 6.145 A Framework Travel Plan (TP) has been developed for the proposals and is submitted as part of this application. The aim of the TP is to encourage the use of sustainable modes of transport and to reduce reliance on the private car. The TP sets out numerous measures and initiatives that can be implemented to meet this aim, including:
- Travel information packs on public transport services available;
 - Information on available walking routes and health benefits and other encouragement measures;
 - Additional promotion of cycling, beyond facilities provided by the proposals, such as cycle safety and maintenance workshops, encourage participation in cycling events and provide information on routes and health benefits;
 - Promotion of public transport services and information, journey planner smartphone applications and display of timetables for staff;
 - Provision of local taxi numbers and details to promote this as an alternative to the private car; and
 - Local advertisement of jobs for the apart-hotel use within walking and cycling distance.
- 6.146 The Transport Assessment concludes that the proposals will have a negligible impact on the operation of the surrounding highway and transport networks and that the proposed car-free nature of the development is acceptable. There will be no alterations to the highways network or impact on highway safety in this regard. The collection and disposal of waste and servicing arrangements are addressed later in this Statement.

Summary

- 6.147 The location of the Site and the proposed uses are compatible and together utilise and encourage the use of sustainable modes of transport and will have negligible impact on the local highway and transport network. The proposals therefore accord with the NPPF and RBLP Policies TR1, TR3 and TR4.

Cycle Parking

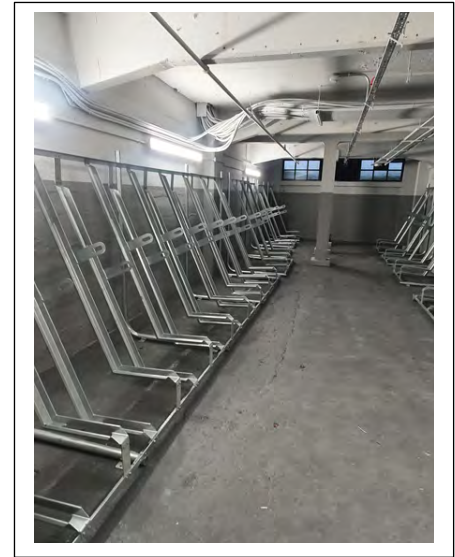
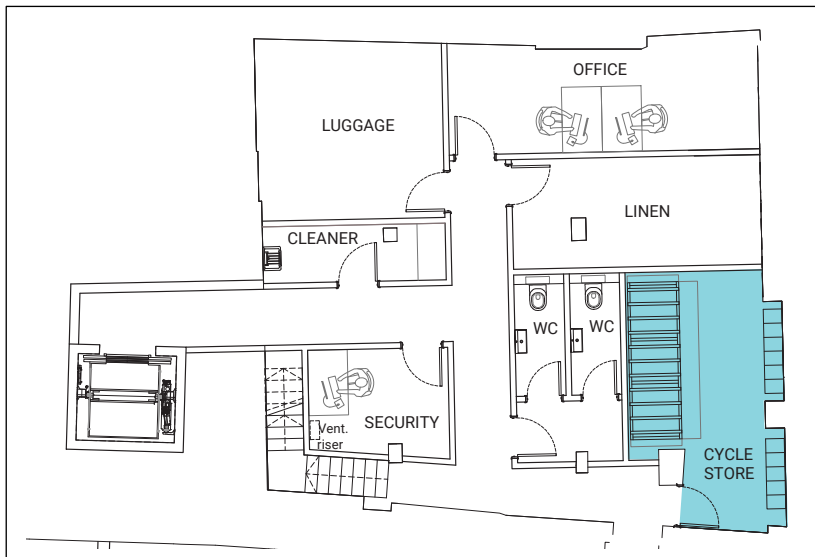
Policy

- 6.148 Paragraph 105 of the NPPF states that parking standards should take into account the accessibility of sites, type and mix of development and availability of public transport. **Policy TR5** of the RBLP requires car and cycle parking provision that is appropriate to the accessibility of locations to sustainable transport facilities, particularly public transport.
- 6.149 The Reading Parking Standards and Design SPD establishes the following car parking standards of relevance to the proposals that apply to Zone 1 (central Reading) and are a maximum:
- A1-A5 Retail: nil
 - C1 Hotels: 0.25 spaces per room
- 6.150 The following cycle parking standards are a minimum as set out in the SPD:
- A1 Food Retail: 1 space per 6 staff and 1 space per 300 sqm
 - A1 Non-Food Retail up to 1,000 sqm: 1 space per 6 staff and 1 space per 250 sqm
 - A1 Non-Food Retail Over 1,000 sqm: 1 space per 6 staff and 1 space per 300 sqm
 - A2 Financial & Professional Services: 1 space per 6 staff
 - A3 Restaurants & Cafes: 1 space per 6 staff and 1 space per 300 sqm
 - A4 Eating Establishment: 1 space per 6 staff and 1 space per 300 sqm
 - A5 Hot Food Take-Away: 1 space per 6 staff and 1 space per 300 sqm
 - C1 Hotels: 1 space per 6 staff
- 6.151 Loading bays and facilities for delivery and servicing within Zone 1 will be based on the merits of the individual application. Disabled car parking spaces are required from all developments in all zones at a level of 3 spaces or 5% of total capacity on developments proposing up to 200 car parking spaces. For parent and toddler parking, the requirement is for 2 spaces or 4% of the capacity for developments proposing up to 200 spaces. It is noted that in determining the required provision of both disabled and parent and toddler parking, it must be remembered that some of these motorists could have the option to switch transport mode, particularly where there is access to high quality bus corridors and routes.

Assessment

- 6.152 The proposals are for a car-free development that reflects the highly accessible location of the Site, as described above. The car parking standards are a maximum and the zero-parking provision is reflective of the location and availability of public transport. The principle of a car free development was noted as acceptable in the pre-application advice received on the previous scheme iteration. Reference was also made to the approved apart hotel development at 17-27 QVS, which is also car-free. The proposals are therefore considered to be appropriate and in accordance with the NPPF and Policy TR5 of the RBLP.

- 6.153 Secure parking spaces will be provided at a level of 1 space per 6 staff to comply with cycle parking standards for C1 use and retail use. These will be provided in a designated cycle store in the basement level. Additionally, there are multiple opportunities for cycle parking in the immediate vicinity, with Sheffield-style bike stands located on Broad Street, 100m south of the Site, and slightly further away on Friar Street and Belgrave Street.
- 6.154 The Applicant estimates that there will be upto 50 staff members on site at one time, therefore nine secure cycle spaces will be provided on site.



Summary

- 6.155 The provision of cycle parking is in accordance with the parking standards and the development will be car free, therefore it is considered appropriate for the development and complies with RBLP policy TR5.

9. Flood Risk & SuDS

Policy

- 6.156 The NPPF requires development in areas at risk of flooding to be avoided (paragraph 155), utilising the sequential test and directing development towards areas of lowest flood risk (paragraph 158). Development should ensure flood risk is not increased elsewhere and should be supported by a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) where appropriate. Paragraph 165 of the NPPF requires major developments to incorporate sustainable drainage systems unless it can be justified that these would be inappropriate.
- 6.157 **Policy EN18** directs development to areas at the lowest risk of flooding in the first instance. It also states that all major developments must incorporate Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) as appropriate. Runoff rates should aim to reflect greenfield conditions and, in any case, must be no greater than the existing conditions of the site.

- 6.158 The Site is located within Flood Zone 1, as identified on the Government Flood Map for Planning. Flood Zone 1 is at low probability of flooding and defined as land having less than 1 in 1,000 annual probability of river or sea flooding.

Assessment

- 6.159 The Site location is at low risk of flooding and the most suitable location for development, in accordance with the sequential approach. The proposals do not meet the minimum requirements for a Flood Risk Assessment and one has not been prepared for this application.
- 6.160 The proposals do not introduce any additional impermeable surfaces than that of the existing Site and are not considered to give rise to additional surface water runoff levels. The building fabric and structures will be designed to minimise the risk of infiltration and water damage.
- 6.161 There are limited opportunities to provide a comprehensive SuDS owing to the Site constraints and the presence of Listed Buildings. A green roof is incorporated into the first-floor extension, which will offset the impermeable area by 33 sq m, reducing the existing impermeable area (1,179 sqm) down to 1,146 sqm. Impermeable paving has been considered and discounted as inappropriate for the market square owing to the high traffic nature of this location and the need for robust and durable materials.
- 6.162 Consideration has been given to the provision of an attenuation tank to control the discharge of surface runoff, however this has been discounted owing to the archaeological potential and risk of the Site that could be impacted by such an installation.

Summary

- 6.163 The proposals are at low risk from flooding and comply with the sequential approach for such development. Policy EN18 provides flexibility in the incorporation of SuDS where this is appropriate for any particular site or development. The Site constraints prohibit the provision of a comprehensive SuDS and significant weight is to be given to the protection and conservation of the heritage assets and archaeological potential. With no additional impermeable area added and a reduction in impermeable area through the inclusion of a green roof, the proposals will provide a lower surface runoff rate than currently exists. Therefore the proposals comply with the NPPF and Policy EN18 of the RBLP.

10. Sustainability

Policy

- 6.164 Paragraph 150 of the NPPF requires new development to avoid increased vulnerability to the impacts of climate change and to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Development plans should identify opportunities for decentralised, renewable or low carbon energy supply systems (paragraph 151). Paragraph 153 builds on this and requires the determination of applications to consider the feasibility and viability of compliance with sustainability policies where the type of development and design may justify otherwise.

- 6.165 **Policy CC2** requires all major non-residential developments or conversions to meet the most up-to-date BREEAM 'Excellent' standards, where possible. Development should include recycling grey water and rainwater harvesting where systems are energy and cost efficient.
- 6.166 In considering adaptation to climate change, **Policy CC3** requires the following measures to be incorporated into development:
- Orientated to maximise opportunities for natural heating and ventilation;
 - Designed in resilience to climate change with measures such as solar shading, thermal mass, heating and ventilation, material colour choices, green and brown roofs and walls etc;
 - Trees and planting for shading of amenity areas and buildings, utilising native species;
 - Minimise the impact of surface water runoff and where possible, mitigation and resilience measures for any increase in river flooding levels as a result of climate change.
- 6.167 **Policy CC4** states that development of over 1,000 sqm should consider the inclusion of decentralised energy provision within the site, unless it can be demonstrated that the scheme is not suitable, feasible or viable for this form of energy provision. Developments will be expected to link to existing decentralised energy provision in the vicinity.

Assessment

- 6.168 This application is accompanied by an Energy and Sustainability Statement (ESS), which assesses the sustainability potential of the proposals and makes recommendations, as well as undertakes a BREEAM assessment of the proposals. The ESS recognises the constraints of the Site and the limitations that the conversion of Listed Buildings places on incorporating certain technologies, design elements and sustainability measures. Those measures contributing towards the sustainability of the proposals include:
- Redevelopment of previously developed land;
 - Reuse and refurbishment of existing buildings;
 - Reduction in CO2 emissions associated with the existing site by 79.5% through reduced energy demand and energy efficient building materials;
 - Provision of air source heat pumps and photovoltaic panels;
 - Energy efficient light fittings and daylight cut-offs;
 - Water efficient fixtures and fittings to achieve over 40% reduction over industry baseline;
 - Responsible sourcing of construction materials;
 - Construction Waste Management Plan to minimise waste and recycle where possible;
 - Operational waste management strategy;
 - Minimisation of overheating through adequate insulation, efficient lighting, appropriate glazing materials and blinds and through thermal mass absorption; and
 - Provision of a green roof within the development and soft landscaping for the public square.
- 6.169 It is noted within the ESS that the apart-hotel element within the retained Listed Buildings should aim to meet BREEAM Excellent in accordance with RBLP Policy CC2, and the new build element (less than 1,000 sqm) should aim to meet BREEAM Very Good. The ESS, as per accepted guidance and in consultation with the Council, the two distinct elements of the proposal have

been assessed separately i.e. the new build element and the listed building together with the interwoven extension.

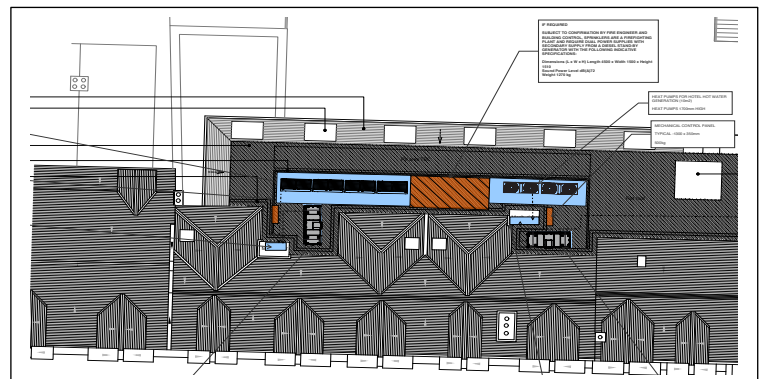
- 6.170 **New Building**: we are pleased to confirm the ‘new build’ element achieves Very Good 60.55% (threshold is 55%).
- 6.171 **Refurbishment**: the ESS has assessed the apart-hotel and concludes that, owing to the nature of the Listed Buildings and the importance of their preservation and conservation, it is not feasible to achieve BREEAM Excellent for the retained elements. However, we have already consulted the Council on this matter who have advised there can be flexibility but the BREEAM report should set out clearly what score can be achieved, which is what is presented in the XCO2 document.
- 6.172 Despite the Site constraints, the proposals will provide the highest levels of sustainability and energy efficiency possible, whilst balancing the achievement of this with the need to preserve, conserve and enhance the Listed Buildings and protect the archaeological potential of the Site. The ESS provides further details on the types of renewables and energy efficiency technologies that have been assessed, proposed for inclusion and discounted as a result of Site constraints. The ESS also confirms that the Site is not within an area where a district heating source is expected to be implemented in the future.
- 6.173 Finally, the SAP Carbon factors are presented, which are found to compliant with relevant standards with CO2 saving set out below.

SAP2012 carbon factors

- 68.5% (408.5 tonnes per annum) for the refurbishment and extension part of the development; and,
- 23.5% (3.0 tonnes per annum) for the standalone new-build part of the development.

SAP10 carbon factors

- 79.5% (325.7tonnes per annum) for the refurbishment and extension part of the development; and,
- 30.9% (2.0 tonnes per annum) for the standalone new-build part of the development.



Summary

- 6.174 The proposals are considered to meet many of the best practice techniques and use of technologies to enhance the sustainability of the Site and the proposed development, within the feasibility of the Site constraints. The proposals will result in a much enhanced sustainability performance than the existing Site and will ensure an efficient reuse of the existing Listed Buildings. The proposals are therefore considered to comply with the provisions of the NPPF and RBLP Policies CC2, CC3 and CC4.

11. Servicing and Waste

Policy

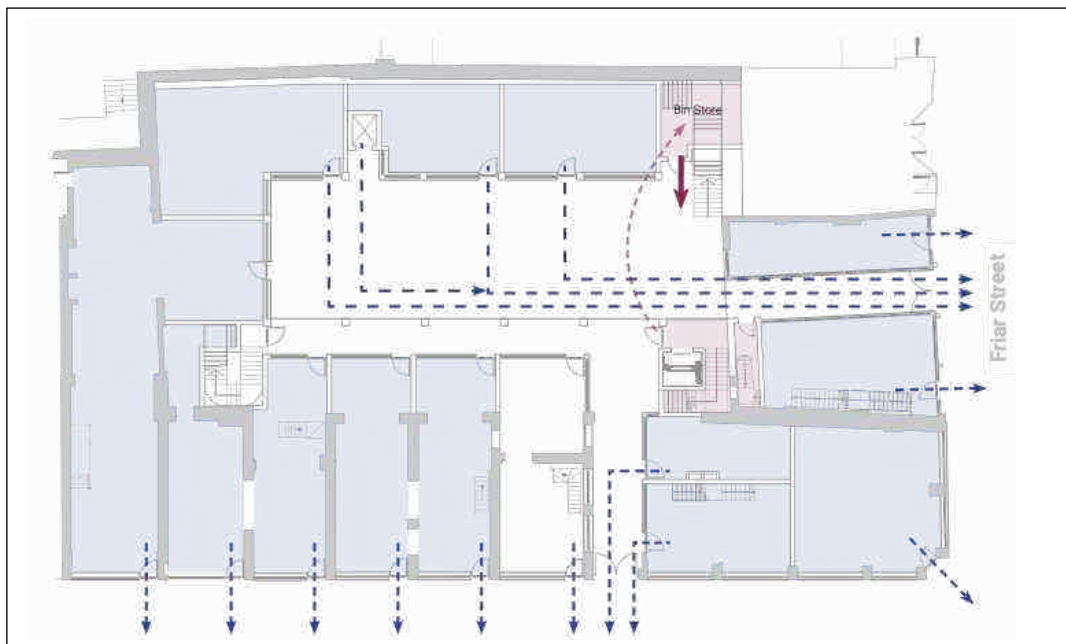
- 6.175 **Policy CC5** requires development to minimise the generation of waste in construction and use of buildings. Proposals should be well designed to facilitate waste storage, reuse, recycling and composting. The Reading Sustainable Design and Construction SPD details measures that should be considered in the pursuit of minimising and managing waste. The re-use and refurbishment of existing buildings where possible, rather than demolition, will contribute to minimising waste and a Site Waste Management Plan (contained in the DAS) should be prepared for developments. For during the lifetime use of buildings, the SPD states that adequate provision should be made for both internal and external storage of waste.
- 6.176 **Policy TR3** protects against detrimental impacts to highway safety and requires off-street servicing to be provided for non-residential development. The policy resists development that would give rise to regular movements of HGVs.

Assessment

- 6.177 The existing retail units at the Site utilise existing servicing and waste arrangements, where servicing and deliveries to properties along QVS are permitted between 18:00 and 10:00. There are also loading bays present on Station Road and Friar Street to the east of the Site, where loading is permitted between 05:00 and 23:00. Loading is also permitted on sections of double yellow lined kerbside on Friar Street outside of the 07:30-09:30 and 16:00-18:00 exclusion period.
- 6.178 A Delivery and Servicing Plan (DSP) has been prepared and submitted in support of this application, which assesses the current servicing and waste situation and provides a strategy for future servicing of the development proposals. The DSP identifies that the combination of kerbside options on Friar Street and Station Road, along with access from QVS, provide sufficient opportunity to continue servicing the proposed retail units and the additional requirements of the apart-hotel use with more than enough capacity in the existing provision and arrangements.
- 6.179 **Servicing Apart-hotel:** arrangements for the apart-hotel use will be predominantly driven by laundry servicing, which will be combined with other servicing requirements to limit trip generation. Unlike a normal hotel, the apart-hotel will not require servicing and deliveries associated with food provision. It is anticipated, this would be 4 to 6 laundry per week (less than one per day) and one dry goods per week.
- 6.180 **Waste Apart-hotel:** they will utilise a self-bin store to be created off the main public square, which will enable easy transportation of waste bins between the site and refuse vehicles. General waste and recyclables will be separated within each apart-hotel unit kitchen and collected with the cleaning of each unit. It is envisaged that waste collections will be undertaken by a private waste contractor with collections 2-3 times per week, increased during busy periods where required (upto a maximum of 1 per day). This town centre site is already

served by refuse vehicles and collection would be coordinated with other comparable users so as to simply 'tag on' the extra collection when collecting from other premises locally.

- 6.181 **Servicing Retail:** the DSP notes the existing use of the site and floor area, the proposed use will be consistent in floor area, therefore, the servicing is expected to be similar to the existing situation.
- 6.182 **Waste Apart-hotel:** the DSP notes the existing use of the site and floor area, the proposed use will be consistent in floor area, therefore, the servicing is expected to be similar to the existing situation.
- 6.183 Visits by servicing vehicles will be scheduled and coordinated to reduce waiting times and for efficient
- 6.184 To ensure compliance with the DSP and of the servicing arrangements, a member of staff will be appointed responsibility for overseeing and implementing the management plan. They will also be responsible for monitoring and feeding back its implementation over time with record of any incidences and requirements for adaptation/mitigation.



Summary

- 6.185 The DSP concludes that the servicing and waste arrangements will enable the efficient operation of the proposals and will minimise any impact of servicing movements on the existing road network. The Transport Assessment submitted with the application also concludes that the proposals will not give rise to detrimental impacts to the highway network or highway safety. Refuse disposal arrangements will be subject to a condition pursuant to any planning permission to ensure appropriate monitoring and control.
- 6.186 The utilisation of a private refuse collection contractor is in accordance with the pre-application advice received on the proposals and also reflects the approved position at no.17-27 QVS. For the reasons set out above, the proposals are considered to comply with the NPPF and Policies TR5 and CC3 of the RBLP.

7.0 Summary & Conclusions

Summary

- 7.1 This Planning Statement and supporting material show that the development proposals presented herewith represent sustainable development, are in accordance with the up-to-date development plan and should be granted planning permission accordingly.
- 7.2 The lack of desirability of the existing use, the demand for apart-hotel uses and the opportunity for preservation and enhancement of a heritage asset and the other benefits the scheme will deliver represent a strong justification for alternative uses with a summary of the key matters of consideration set out below.
- 7.3 The proposals represent a unique opportunity to save and restore these important heritage assets, breathing new life into the Listed Buildings and this part of the town centre. The significant heritage and public benefits of the proposals far outweigh the less than substantial harm arising to the heritage significance and result in a net benefit and enhancement to the current situation in full compliance with the tests and requirements of the NPPF and Policies EN1 and EN6 of the RBLP.
- 7.4 There is clearly been established there is no demand for the office accommodation and the associated works to bring this up to a reasonable standard are unsustainable, it would not be DDA compliant. There are strong material considerations when taken into account, the only conclusion one can reach is that the proposals are in compliance with the provision of the NPPF and Policy EM3.
- 7.5 The scheme will generate jobs in their own right, as well as creating secondary and tertiary employment opportunities.
- 7.6 The retail provision of the proposals is an appropriate use within the town centre and will enhance its vitality and viability in accordance with the NPPF and policies CR1, CR7, CR8 and RL2 of the RBLP.
- 7.7 The apart-hotel use is a compatible and supporting use for this location within central Reading and will assist in enhancing the vitality and viability of the centre in accordance with the NPPF and RBLP Policies RL1, CR1, CR4 and CR6.
- 7.8 The design proposals were supported in principle at pre-application advice stages, have evolved with guidance received and are considered to fully accord with the NPPF and RBLP Policies CC6, CC7 and CR2.
- 7.9 The proposals are considered to provide a safe and inviting environment that provides sufficient security and deters crime, without being an overly dominant feature or posing as a deterrent for all users in compliance with the NPPF and Policy CC8 of the RBLP.

- 7.10 The proposed public square is a considerable significant public benefit of the proposals and an important part of preserving and enhancing the historic character of the Listed Buildings, complying with the provisions of the NPPF and RBLP Policies EN9, EN10 and CR3.
- 7.11 The proposed public square was also supported in pre-application advice received, noting it as an inventive design response and a benefit of the proposals.
- 7.12 The NIA concludes that, with the incorporation of the recommended mitigation, the proposals will ensure noise levels to sensitive receptors will remain below the identified standard and requirements of policy and will not give rise to detrimental noise impacts.
- 7.13 This will protect the amenity of existing surrounding residential and commercial uses as well as the proposed future occupiers of the apart-hotel, therefore complying with the NPPF and RBLP policies CC8 and EN17.
- 7.14 The location of the Site and the proposed uses are compatible and together utilise and encourage the use of sustainable modes of transport and will have negligible impact on the local highway and transport network, which complies with the NPPF and RBLP Policies TR1, TR3 and TR4.
- 7.15 The provision of cycle parking is in accordance with the parking standards and the development will be car free, therefore it is considered appropriate for the development and complies with RBLP policy TR5.
- 7.16 The proposals are at low risk from flooding and comply with the sequential approach for such development.
- 7.17 Policy EN18 provides flexibility in the incorporation of SuDS where this is appropriate for any particular site or development. The Site constraints prohibit the provision of a comprehensive SuDS and significant weight is to be given to the protection and conservation of the heritage assets and archaeological potential. With no additional impermeable area added and a reduction in impermeable area through the inclusion of a green roof, the proposals will provide a lower surface runoff rate than currently exists. Therefore the proposals comply with the NPPF and Policy EN18 of the RBLP.
- 7.18 The proposals are considered to meet many of the best practice techniques and use of technologies to enhance the sustainability of the Site and the proposed development, within the feasibility of the Site constraints. The proposals will result in a much-enhanced sustainability performance than the existing Site and will ensure an efficient reuse of the existing Listed Buildings. The proposals are therefore considered to comply with the provisions of the NPPF and RBLP Policies CC2, CC3 and CC4.
- 7.19 The DSP concludes that the servicing and waste arrangements will enable the efficient operation of the proposals and will minimise any impact of servicing movements on the existing road network.

- 7.20 The Transport Assessment submitted with the application also concludes that the proposals will not give rise to detrimental impacts to the highway network or highway safety.
- 7.21 The utilisation of a private refuse collection contractor is in accordance with the pre-application advice received are considered to comply with the NPPF and Policies TR5 and CC3 of the RBLP.
- 7.22 We have consulted Planning officers, Councillors, Reading BID, Reading Civic, Reading CAAC, amenity societies, business, local residents and social media. The feedback to date has been overwhelming positive and level of support has been beyond the Applicant's expectations. The feedback is encouraging the speedy delivery of the scheme.
- 7.23 In summary, the engagement found that the scheme presented is a positive benefit that on the feedback received, is supported by the local community and key stakeholders.

Public Benefits

- 7.24 The Heritage Statement concludes that any harm to the significance of the Listed Buildings would be less than substantial (medium level) and that this harm is weighed against the conservation, preservation and enhancement of the heritage assets that the proposals deliver, which are significant.
- 7.25 In addition to heritage benefits, the NPPF requires an assessment of the balance of harm against other public benefits arising from development proposals. It is clear that the repair, reinstatement and enhancement of these important heritage assets are in themselves of public benefit, but the proposals will also deliver the following public benefits:
- Repair and reinstatement of the original historic frontages of the listed buildings and the architectural detailing that contributes to their significance;
 - Visual improvement to these prominent retail streets with uniform shop frontages, signage and lighting, respectful to the original historic frontages;
 - Removal and enhancement to the form and appearance of built form at the rear of the site;
 - Provision of modern, subservient and respectful built form to the rear of the site, enhancing the visual appearance and supporting and promoting the grandeur of the retained listed buildings;
 - Provision of additional floorspace for retail and appropriate town centre uses in a highly accessible and sustainable location,
 - Enhancing the diversity of retail provision and attracting boutique 'heritage retail' and independent retailers;
 - Provision of a mix of retail uses, providing diversity in town centre offering and opportunities for respite and relaxation, such as with coffee shops;

- Provision for small businesses and shops with appropriate-sized retail units to meet demand and support the small business market;
- Introduction of apart-hotel use, providing short-term let accommodation, supporting the needs of, and attracting, working professionals and visitors to Reading, as well as assisting in remedying an identified under-provision;
- Provision of an enhanced public realm with the public square, providing opportunities for respite, relaxation and play, as well as community and public events and the opportunity to foster and support local community initiatives, exhibitions and performances;
- Provision of a town centre destination that will attract visitors, shoppers and workers to this part of the town centre, enhancing the activity, vitality and viability of this part of the centre;
- This is a proposal, which based on stakeholder consultation, will lead to significant public benefits.
- The proposals will arrest the decline of QVS and support and bolster the Reading economy, which is of particular importance at this current time and will play an important role in the post-Covid19 recovery of the town centre.

Conclusions

- 7.26 Reading is poised for a bright future and to position itself as nationally recognised city of culture and sustainability, leading the way in green tech innovation. The redevelopment and growth of the city centre is a pivotal in achieving this ambition and is already underway with major schemes approved and under construction that will modernise and diversify Reading's offer in culture and leisure, education, research and development, retail and employment sectors.
- 7.27 The success of Reading's future vision will depend upon its ability to build upon its existing legacy in these sectors and harmoniously assimilating its valuable heritage in a celebration of its past with its future.
- 7.28 The QVS/Friar Street Site has an important role to play in the delivery of Reading's wider vision and represents a unique opportunity to retain and promote Reading's heritage as part of a diversified and modernised retail, culture and leisure offering.
- 7.29 The proposals presented herewith are a chance to save these iconic and recognisable Listed Buildings, breathing new life into them and reinvigorating this part of the heart of Reading 'city' centre, attracting businesses, shoppers, visitors, workers, students and investment into Reading especially in these current uncertain times.
- 7.30 Through the proposed development, the Site will become a destination within the centre, attracting people from the wider region to its new and refurbished retail offering, sought after apart-hotel accommodation, revered public realm and community cultural events space, all set within sympathetically and lovingly restored Listed Buildings.

- 7.31 This will be a space for small and small-to-medium-sized existing and burgeoning businesses to flourish, creating an enterprise community, with supported from established brands.
- 7.32 A place for the community and public to meet, relax, rejuvenate, perform, rejoice and celebrate in the new public square, becoming a focal point of this part of central Reading.
- 7.33 A place that supports the working population of Reading and local businesses and bolsters the leisure and tourism sector. A scheme committed to local employment, skills enhancement, job creation and driving footfall in this part of the town centre.
- 7.34 The proposals have evolved over time through engagement with the Council and have been carefully designed to achieve an exact balance of considerations that have been rigorously tested through technical assessments and supported with an evidence base and thorough justification.
- 7.35 The scheme fulfils and shares the aspirations of Reading 2050: A Vision for Reading 2050.
- 7.36 The proposal has been supported by the Council during pre-application discussions and the feedback from key stakeholders to date has been overwhelming positive - the level of support has been beyond the Applicant's expectations. The engagement found that the scheme presented will be a benefit to the town centre and is supported by the local community and key stakeholders, who consider this will be a good thing for Reading.
- 7.37 The world has evolved and adapted over the last year in response to the outbreak of the Covid19 pandemic, which has affected the global economy and life as we know it in a way that could not be anticipated. With the development and rollout of effective vaccines, the path is laid out for a recovery from these impacts, but to exactly what future is as yet unknown. The importance of this Site and proposals is amplified by this situation and they have a key role to play in the recovery of Reading from the impacts of the pandemic, delivering a reinvigorated city centre and flexible and adaptable retail, leisure and cultural offering that will be much needed in the rehabilitation of these sectors and Reading as a whole.
- 7.38 This application demonstrates compliance with national and local planning policy and guidance, as well as best practice techniques and approaches where possible, all the while continuing to strike that delicate balance. It has been demonstrated through this application that the proposals accord with an up-to-date development plan, represent sustainable development and there are no material indications that indicate otherwise. This heritage led regeneration scheme of this key town centre site should therefore be granted planning permission and listed building consent accordingly.

