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Heritage Statement

for

34 St Mary's Butts, Reading

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Executive Summary

This heritage statement assesses the effects of the construction of the Proposed Development on the settings of nearby listed buildings and the Conservation Area within which the Site is located.

The building on the Site, Number 34 St Mary's Butts, is currently unoccupied and is mentioned in the Conservation Area Appraisal as having a negative impact on the street scene. Two large apartments are proposed, which would require renovation and conversion to provide this accommodation and, once a tenancy is agreed, an active ground floor commercial use. The rear extension would not be visible from the street. However, improvements to the frontage would have a positive effect on the adjacent listed buildings, particularly Numbers 35 - 37 and would also benefit the wider street scene of the Conservation Area.

Having assessed the Proposed Development, it has been found that it would be in keeping with local heritage policy and with NPPF paragraph 196, respecting the need for conserving and enhancing the setting of the listed buildings and the Conservation Area.

1 Introduction

1.1 Instruction

1.1.1 This Heritage Statement has been commissioned by Ash Cummings Properties Limited ('the Clients') to inform a planning application. The 'Proposed Development' consists of a change of use of the upper floors, a first and second storey rear extension and commercial use of the ground floor.

1.2 The Site and Study Area

1.2.1 The Site address is 34 St Mary's Butts, Reading RG1 2LQ; National Grid Reference SU 71360 73274 (see Drawing A-1000). It is located on the southwestern side of St Mary's Butts, in the centre of Reading town, Berkshire. The 'Site' is the area within the red line boundary (planning application boundary), which is a sub-rectangular plot.

1.2.2 The Site is located within Character Area 2 of St Mary's Butts / Castle Street Conservation Area. However, the building on the Site is not listed and is considered to have a negative impact on the historic character and appearance of the Conservation Area. It is located between a listed building, Number 35-37, and a building of limited merit, Number 32, also considered to detract from the Conservation Area.

1.2.3 The Study Area extends to the buildings along the northern street edge of the corner between St Mary's Butts and Castle Street. The extent of the Study Area has been defined by those heritage assets whose settings may potentially be affected by the Proposed Development.

1.3 Purpose and aims

1.3.1 This Heritage Statement examines the level of effects of the Proposed Development on heritage assets present within the Study Area, proportionate to the extent of changes proposed. The aims of the Heritage Statement are to:

- assess the Significance of heritage assets and their settings within the Study Area;
- assess the effect of the Proposed Development on those heritage assets; and
- advise, where appropriate, on the integration of impact avoidance, minimisation measures, conservation methods and enhancement measures.

1.4 Methodology and method of assessment

1.4.1 The assessment follows the Methodology and method of assessment (see Appendix 9) and is produced based on guidance and information provided in:

1. Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance (Historic England 2008); and
2. Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: Note 3 - The Setting of heritage assets (Historic England 2017).

1.4.2 For settings assessments, the five step approach is based on Note 3 (Historic England 2017). The level of detail is proportionate to the Significance of the setting and the effects of the proposed changes.

Assessing setting

1.4.3 Significance of a heritage asset derives not only from a physical presence, but also from its setting. The way setting contributes to the Significance of heritage assets relates to Heritage Values and how setting can enable that Significance to be appreciated (see Glossary 10). The Significance of the setting of heritage assets is the historical, archaeological, architectural and artistic interest, and its setting and the associated values, which are evidential, aesthetic, communal and historical (see Methodology 9.2 and Glossary 10).

1.4.4 Heritage Values relate to the way we enjoy and experience the historic environment, and may be understood by assessing how heritage assets contribute to public benefit through:

- communal connections and meanings of a place (Communal Value);
- the way the public draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from aesthetic qualities (Aesthetic Value);
- the understanding gained by a historic illustration or a historic association that links a place with past and present people (Historical Value); and
- discovering the evidence about past human activity (Evidential Value).

Assessing the effect of the Proposed Development

1.4.5 An assessment of the Proposed Development in relation to the contexts described above is based on Steps 3-4 of Historic England guidance (2017). A measure of effects is based on the sensitivity of the settings and the impacts of the Proposed Development (see Methodology 9.4 - 9.6), to a level of detail proportionate to the Significance of the setting and the proposed changes. The findings are then considered within the context of local and national policy.

1.5 Structure

1.5.1 The remainder of this report consists of:

- a description of the baseline and photographic evidence, heritage assets and the Proposed Development at section 2;
- an assessment of the attributes of the setting at section 3;
- an assessment of potential impacts and effects on the setting of the adjacent listed buildings and the Conservation Area at section 4;
- section 5 includes a statement of justification and outlines the public benefits;
- section 6, consists of an assessment of the Proposed Development in the planning context; and
- section 7 is a list of references, followed by Appendices 8-11, consisting of the methodology, planning background and legislative background, glossary and Viewpoints.

2 Baseline evidence and Proposed Development

2.1 General

2.1.1 The Study Area has been defined by those designated heritage assets whose settings may potentially be affected by the Proposed Development. The baseline consists of a description of the Conservation Area, listed buildings, the photographic evidence for the assessment and the Proposed Development. This baseline information informs the scope of the assessment (see Methodology 9.2 and 9.3), including reference to views (see Methodology 9.3.3 and 9.3.4). Evidence of setting is often expressed by reference to views.

2.2 Views potentially affected by the Proposed Development

2.2.1 None of the Significant Views noted in the Conservation Area Appraisal would be affected.

2.2.2 Views along St Mary's Butts when travelling north and south along the street and when sitting on the benches at the west tower of the Minster Church are recorded as Viewpoints 1-7 (see Appendix 11). There are limited views from the Church, churchyard and benches due to screening by the bus stop, refreshment kiosk and fountain. Views when travelling north and south along St Mary's Butts provide greater opportunity for appreciation of the listed buildings.

2.2.3 The aesthetic appreciation of the fine grain of the listed buildings is affected by the gap in the street caused by the demolition of the rows of houses on the corner of Hosier Street and St Mary's Butts as evidenced in Viewpoints 1 - 3. Appreciation of the openness offered by the churchyard in the foreground with the listed buildings as a vista-stop is evident within Viewpoint 4. Views northeast show the street scene, Viewpoint 5, which evidence the distractions caused by the condition of the public realm. Views southwest show Number 34 within the historic context of the listed buildings, evidenced in Viewpoint 6. Viewpoint 7 also looks southwest, showing the street scene from this angle.

2.2.4 The rear extension would not be visible from any street views due to the depth of neighbouring extensions. However, views from the rear top floor window of Number 8 Castle Street and the rear windows of Number 10 and 12 Castle Street are noted (see Viewpoints 8-10).

2.3 The listed buildings potentially affected by the Proposed Development

2.3.1 The Grade I listed Minster Church of St Mary was built in a distinctive chequer work of flint and Taynton ashlar stone and has a tiled roof. The scene from St Mary's Butts is dominated by the west tower (List Entry Number: 1113573).

2.3.2 Number 34 overlooks the Grade II listed Jubilee Cross (List Entry Number: 1113574) and there are two groups of tombs within the churchyard which are also Grade II listed. Number 34 also overlooks the island in the road, on which The Queen Victoria Jubilee Fountain is located. It was designed by G. W. Webb, dates to 1887, and is a

significant local landmark, protected through its Grade II listing (List Entry Number: 1113571).

2.3.3 Adjacent to Number 34 is one of two 16th century timber-framed buildings with jetties at first floor level of Number 37 (List Entry Number: 1321885) and 57 St Mary's Butts (List Entry Number: 1156940).

2.3.4 The setting of the Former Cottage at the rear of Number 8 Castle Street is hidden from views along the streets (List Entry Number: 1321963). It is situated to the rear of Numbers 35-37, is a 17th century timber-framed building and is comparatively small in scale.

2.3.5 Number 8 Castle Street is Grade II listed (List Entry Number: 1113426) and is two storeys, while Numbers 10 and 12, also Grade II listed (List Entry Number: 1154727), is three storeys with an attic constructed in red brick. Brick is one of the distinguishing features of Reading's architecture and there are examples of good quality polychromatic brickwork on this façade and the former "Cross Keys" public house (now "Sahara"), opposite, which is a building of townscape merit.

2.3.6 On the corner of St Mary's Butts and Castle Street is The Horn Inn (List Entry Number: 1303691), the earliest phase of which is dated to the 16th century and is Grade II listed.

2.3.7 The landmark Grade II* listed Church of St Mary's in Castle Street (List Entry Number: 1113427) is a Georgian building with fluted columns, which were added later. In contrast to the majority of buildings on the street, it is set back from the street edge.

2.4 The Conservation Area Character Area affected by the Proposed Development

2.4.1 The St Mary's Butts / Castle Street Conservation Area was designated in 1972. The historic buildings are some of the oldest in Reading, at a point within the Saxon centre of Reading, north of Bridge Street. This was an original crossing point across the River Kennet. Saxon activity is linked archaeologically with the Grade I listed Church of St Mary, which is a prominent landmark on St Mary's Butts. "*The current street pattern dates from medieval times, when the St Mary's Parish was the original heart of the town*" (Reading Council 2008, page 9).

2.4.2 Number 34 is located in Character Area 2, which consists of Numbers 32-37 and Numbers 55-58 St Mary's Butts and The Horn. The varying scale and architectural style of the historic buildings are contiguous with the neighbouring buildings on Castle Street. Large modern buildings just beyond the Conservation Area boundary, such as Broad Street Mall have limited architectural merit and the Hexagon, Magistrates Court and police station, once part of the Civic Centre complex, detract from the scale, materials and grain of the Conservation Area.

2.4.3 58 St Mary's Butts is a broad thoroughfare dominated by traffic, calmed by a central traffic island with a commemorative fountain. The Queen Victoria Jubilee Fountain and refreshment kiosk are local landmarks. However, the traffic island is also used as a north to south turning head and the carriageways attract several bus routes

leading to frequent bus traffic. The resulting distractions of noise, fumes and visual intrusions interrupt the ability to appreciate this corner of the Conservation Area. The concrete and tarmac pavements, electricity sub-station, and plethora of street furniture detract from the historic character of the buildings.

2.4.4 The contribution made by Number 34 is mentioned in the Conservation Area Appraisal "*… a small number of buildings within the conservation area lack attention to detail and are poorly related in architectural terms (e.g. numbers 32 and 34 St Mary's Butts)*" (Reading Council 2008, page 23). "*… non-listed buildings in the Conservation Area do display a greater variety of fenestration and wall treatments, detracting from the character and appearance of the Conservation Area*" (Reading Council 2008, page 23). Internally, the use resulted in the installation of stud walls and the use of block and beam, described by the project architect, Mr Jeff Asemi of Bluebird Engineering Ltd, as having been gutted out at some point in the past and little internal historic fabric remains.

2.5 The Proposed Development

2.5.1 The Proposed Development would involve the change of use of the upper floors, a first and second storey rear extension and commercial use of the ground floor, with a bin and bicycle store. The elevation drawing (see Drawing A-1020) shows the improvements of the external appearance of the existing shopfront.

2.5.2 The Proposed Development also provides for interior renovation and alteration of the first and second floors to provide two apartments, each with a kitchen and living area and a bathroom.

2.5.3 A change from aluminium to sashwindows is proposed, in recognition of the recommendation in the ConservationArea appraisal *"… the opportunity should be taken to re-introduce more traditional frontages in terms of windows, doors, shopfronts, etc and of a scale in keeping with theirlisted neighbours.*" (Reading Council 2008, page 24).

3 Setting

3.1 General

3.1.1 Setting is the surroundings from which a heritage asset may be experienced (see Glossary, Appendix 10). Broadly the Significance of the setting would be the same as the Significance of the nearby Grade II listed buildings and the Conservation Area, holding **Medium Importance** (see Table 1). However, the contribution of various attributes of setting varies.

3.1.2 Four attributes of setting are of particular note and each holds Aesthetic, Evidential and Historical Values (see Glossary, Appendix 10). These key attributes of the setting are: firstly, the 'views'; secondly, the 'openness'; thirdly, the variety and age range of the building stock; and fourthly, 'history and degree of change over time'.

3.2 Specific and representative views

3.2.1 The Proposed Development would have no effect on Significant Views noted in the Conservation Area Appraisal. However, views of the Proposed Development are likely from the rear top floor window of Number 8 Castle Street and the rear windows of Number 10 and 12 Castle Street. Currently, representative views do not hold architectural or historic interest being modern rear extensions. Generally, these extensions have brick walls with occasional windows and a mix of flat and sloping roofs.

3.2.2 Specific views of the front of Number 34 are seen when people rest on benches near St Mary's Churchyard, the area's only green open space and adjacent to St Mary's Butts landmark building. This area attracts people, having pedestrian links around it to the wider area. From the benches in front of the west tower of Minster Church and walking around Character Area 2, people see a tightly knit urban street corner composed of continuous frontages of two and three storey buildings set to the back of the pavement edge.

3.2.3 Views of Numbers 35 – 37 and The Horn Inn are limited in Viewpoints 1 and 2 by the oblique angle and the fountain and refreshment kiosk in front of the buildings. These Viewpoints hold **Medium Sensitivity** to further change (see Table 2). The aesthetic appreciation of the listed buildings is affected by the gap in the street caused by the demolition of the rows of houses on the corner of Hosier Street and St Mary's Butts as evidenced in Viewpoint 3. Appreciation of the openness offered by the churchyard with the listed buildings in the background is evident within Viewpoint 4, which holds **Medium Sensitivity** to further change (see Table 2). Views northeast show the street scene, as shown in Viewpoint 5, which holds **Low Sensitivity** due to the distracting condition of the public realm. Views southwest show Number 34 within the historic context of the listed buildings, evidenced in Viewpoint 6, which holds **Medium Sensitivity** to further change (see Table 2). Viewpoint 7 looks southwest, showing the street scene from this angle. It holds **Low-Medium Sensitivity** to further change (see Table 2).

3.3 Openness

3.3.1 An open character to the immediate setting is created by the Minster churchyard and the wide street. In contrast, the fine grain and built line of the buildings opposite provide a sense of enclosure providing a varied experience depending on the viewer's approach. The date range and architectural variety, varied rooflines and the piecemeal extensions create composite forms that add to the interest of this Character Area. Based on the extent of infill, the setting has been proven to have the capacity to integrate residential infill whilst retaining character with a **Medium Sensitivity** to further change (see Table 2).

3.4 Variety and age range of the building stock

3.4.1 Many of the buildings are listed, indicating the architectural quality and historic interest associated with the buildings in the Conservation Area. Each contributes to the setting in terms of scale and siting, materials and architectural variation. The earlier buildings are two storeys high and the later buildings are three storeys and the length of the buildings along the street varies between two, three and four bays wide. Adding to the architectural variation is the gable frontage of The Horn Inn on the corner of St Mary's Butts, which creates a continuous frontage on Castle Street. This corner treatment juxtaposes with the rounded corners of the three stories of the buildings opposite, which are grander Georgian town houses.

3.4.2 Further interest is provided by variation between buildings of similar age and style and differences in the decorative treatments. For example, some buildings display Georgian-style proportions whilst others are Victorian-style in proportion. A small number have attic floors and a variety of roof shapes. The undulations of the roofs of the older buildings adds to the character and the jetty of Number 37 reflects the projecting corner of the gable end fronting St Mary's Butts.

3.4.3 Due to the protection provided by listing, there is a good survival of historic fabric. The timber-framing, tile roofs and smaller scale of the earlier buildings distinguishes them from their later brick counter-parts with slate roofs. Historic fabric is also appreciable in timber framed sash and casement windows and timber shop surrounds. The close proximity of these buildings heightens the appreciation of each building as unique and historically significant with a setting of **Medium-High Sensitivity** to further change (see Table 2).

3.4.4 The two churches contrast with this domestic architecture. While the Church of St Mary's largely dates to the Georgian period, the Minster Church of St Mary was built in different periods. Both churches were built to be more prominent than the surrounding buildings, which is achieved not only in the style, materials and scale but also in their siting and set back from the street. The churchyard of the Minster Church is also of importance, not only in the sense of the openness it offers but also through the listed buildings. Of particular interest is the Jubilee Cross, which is overlooked by Number 34. It is the Minster Church that would be most affected by the Proposed Development. Its setting has a **High Sensitivity** and the Jubilee Cross has a **Medium-High Sensitivity** to further change.

3.4.5 Number 34 also overlooks the tarmac island in the middle of the carriageway on St Mary's Butts, on which The Queen Victoria Jubilee Fountain is located. Its setting holds a **Medium-High Sensitivity** to further change.

3.4.6 The setting of the Former Cottage is hidden, accessed via an alley. It is comparatively small in scale. Its setting holds a **Medium Sensitivity** to further change.

3.5 History and degree of change over time

3.5.1 The width of St Mary's Butts outside the Minster Church is historically significant and in many towns such spaces are associated with the historic market. The width of the street is likely to be associated with a market that once existed in the core of the settlement as indicated by Domesday records of a pre-conquest market[1]. This interpretation is supported by the width of the Street would allow for ease of holding a regular historic market and this area was the core of the Saxon village. Carrying on this tradition, the modern market was held on Hosier Street and Dusseldorf Way, until impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. Reading Borough Council have been discussing ways to recommence trading since the summer. During opening hours, the modern market changes the character of the setting, becoming bustling and colourful.

3.5.2 Space for this modern market was created when the rows of houses on the corner of St Mary's Butts and Hosier Street were demolished. Additional changes to the setting that occurred at this time included the construction of an island in the middle of St Mary's Butts, which was about the time the Conservation Area was designated.

3.5.3 The modern island reflects the location of a historic island with a row of structures as seen on Ordnance Survey Maps. The more enclosed nature of the historic street is also apparent from the structures, some were alms houses, in front of Minster Church. These major changes occurred between 1879 and 1898, according to Ordnance Survey Maps, demarcating a time of great change in this part of town. It was after these changes had occurred that the fountain and cross were installed, the street frontages as seen today and the extent of rear infill had become established. Although minor changes continued across the century, including the installation of the tram lines and public lavatory, now closed, the street reflects the character recorded at the time it became a Conservation Area.

3.5.4 The listed buildings themselves have experienced a history and degree of change most evident in the extensions, which form part of the history of change in the wider growth of the town. The distinctive architecture from different periods ensure the ease of the readability of change and development over time. For example, the 19th century decorative treatments on 16th century buildings are subtle but distinctive.

3.5.5 The building on the Site forms part of this growth. The 1879 Ordnance Survey Map shows two buildings shared this plot but one was an odd wedge shape suggestive of infill. On the 1898 Ordnance Survey Map, the property is shown as a single building with a building to the rear, which infilled most of the plot and was constructed prior

[1] Historic Environment Record (HER) HER Number: 02112.02.020

to 1899 and remained in that form from approximately 1899 – 1931. During this time, it appears to have extended across the rear of Number 35, which suggests a different plot ownership to that which exists today. In contrast, the shape of the infill as currently seen appears to have existed by 1957. Today, the building has a single frontage, four bays wide, with a rear extension.

3.5.6 It is evident that the 'history and degree of change over time' holds Historical Value for the area with a **Low-Medium Sensitivity** to further change (see Table 2).

4 Assessing the impacts of the Proposed Development

4.1 General

4.1.1 This section of the report consists of an assessment of effects on the setting of the heritage assets. An assessment of the Proposed Development in relation to the historic context as assessed in section 3 and is based on Steps 3-4 of the assessment guidance (Historic England 2017). This is followed by an assessment of the impacts and effects (see 9.6 to 9.8) with a level of detail proportionate to the Significance of the setting and the proposed changes.

4.1.2 The Site comprises a three-storey frontage and rear extension, and a ground floor extension infilling the remainder of the Site area. All three floors were previously occupied by the Co-operative Bank, with associated changes to the fabric.

4.1.3 The ground floor frontage features a shopfront window and door and a door leading to a shared alley providing access to the rear of Numbers 32 and 34. The area in front has been noted as an opportunity for improvements to create a pedestrian friendly with a more attractive public realm. There is a presumption that the area's: buildings and spaces; significant trees; and important views should be "preserved or enhanced", as required by legislation.

4.2 Visibility of the Proposed Development

4.2.1 Due to the limited visibility of the extension from Significant Views as noted in the Conservation Area Appraisal, the Proposed Development is assessed as having **No Impact** (see Table 3).

4.2.2 Improvements to the frontage would have a positive impact on the way in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from street views and would represent a **Small Impact** with a **Minor beneficial Effect** on Viewpoints 1-7 (see Tables 3 and 4).

4.2.3 There would be a **Small Impact** to views to the rear top floor window of Number 8 Castle Street and the rear windows of Number 10 and 12 Castle Street. There would be some additional build to the rear as seen from aforementioned rear windows, which would have a very small impact on current views. The current views are of rear extensions, the majority of which have limited character and do not add to the significance of those buildings. Therefore, these changes would equate to a **Negligible Effect** on Viewpoints 8-10 (see Tables 3 and 4). The sash timber-framed windows would be an improvement in comparison to the current windows, visible from the courtyard to the rear of St Mary's Church.

4.3 Siting and location

4.3.1 Number 32 is a commercial building and has a rear extension that projects further to the rear than the first and second floor extension of Number 34. This proposal would result in a matching rear extension to Number 34 such that it would be positioned neatly in line with Number 32. The rear extension would add to the sense

of enclosure around the Former Cottage, which would have a **Very Small Effect**. The windows are blocked and this building has been enclosed at least since the 19th century as seen on Ordnance Survey Maps, which would have a **Minor Effect** (see Tables 3 and 4).

4.4 Scale and appearance of the Proposed Development

4.4.1 The old 'Co-operative Bank' lettering would be replaced with a blank signage plate untilcommercial tenants are found. The old ATM space and brick work would be replacedwith glazing. New stall risers to the frontage would form a solid brick base to theshop front, using reclaimed bricks, and would provide balanced proportions with theadjacent listed shop. The mullions, cill and profile of the windows also reflect theadjacent historic shopfront of the adjoining property. Timber-framed sash windowson the upper floor frontage and ground floor doors in painted hardwood areproposed.

4.4.2 These improvements to the frontage would have a **Small Impact** and positive effect on the adjacent Numbers 35-37 and would also benefit the wider street scene facilitating a greater appreciation of the fine grain along this part of the street. In turn, this would heighten awareness, and thereby appreciation, of the juxtaposition between this row of historic buildings and the architectural variety offered by the Minster Church, Jubilee Cross and Fountain.

4.4.3 The resulting change from the appearance of the garage to the proposed would have a **Small Impact** with **Minor beneficial Effects** to the frontage and a **Very Small Impact** with **Negligible Effects** on the Former Cottage (see Tables 3 and 4).

Wider impacts, permanence and consequential impacts

4.4.4 The previous financial and professional services resulted in the installation of stud walls and the use of block and beam fabric. Little historic fabric remains and the changes internally would involve some re-division of rooms, however, the upper floors are largely open plan. Any adverse impact would be off-set by bringing this space back into active use.

4.5

4.5.1 Construction has the potential to cause a number of impacts, which would be temporary and include increased noise and lighting. However, the construction phase would be controlled by planning conditions. Therefore, this temporary impact would be controlled.

As no reinforcement to the walls or ground works are needed for the upper floor

extension, there would be **No Effect** on any archaeological potential.

4.5.4 There would be no other consequential impacts caused by the Proposed Development.

5 Statement of justification

5.1 Necessity

5.1.1 The Proposed Development would improve the appearance of what is currently a disused building. Permission would allow alterations to the shopfront that would reflect the character of the Conservation Area through the use of materials in-keeping with the surrounding historic fabric and an appearance that reflects the adjacent listed buildings. The renovation and conversion of this building would provide accommodation and, once a tenancy is agreed, an active ground floor commercial use. The design of the commercial frontage of the Proposed Development incorporates:

- a symmetry, simplicity and a proportion in-keeping with the adjacent listed building; and
- architectural detailing and fabric, which is designed to heighten the aesthetic appeal of the building.

5.2 Public benefit

5.2.1 Public benefits would be delivered by bringing the building on the Site back into use, whilst providing a sustainable response to local housing needs with two large apartments.

5.2.2 Whilst achieving these sustainable benefits, the Proposed Development conserves the Heritage Values that contribute to the setting of the nearby listed buildings and the Conservation Area. Thereby, the Proposed Development creates an opportunity for enhancement.

6 Conclusions

6.1 Policy context - NPPF

6.1.1 Given the guidance within the NPPF to maintain heritage assets in economic and sustainable uses, a recognition of the positive contribution that heritage assets can make, the proposed alterations are not considered harmful to the Conservation Area. The assessment has found that the Proposed Development would cause very limited harm whilst conserving the historic character of the setting and delivering additional public benefits. Thus the Proposed Development accords with NPPF paragraphs 192 and 196.

6.2 Policy context – CS7

6.2.1 As stipulated by Policy CS7, the design of the Proposed Development respects and enhances local distinctiveness by improving the quality of the shopfront design and re-introducing timber-framed windows and doors.

6.3 Policy context – EN1 and EN3

6.3.1 This Heritage Statement responds to Policies EN1 and EN3, and the Proposed Development enhances the setting of the Conservation Area and listed buildings.

6.4 Policy context – CS33

6.4.1 As stipulated in Policy CS33, the Proposed Development respects the setting of the area's historic character.

6.5 Policy context – EN6

6.5.1 The Proposed Development respects local character by conserving the historic context.

6.6 Policy context - Reading City Centre Framework and Conservation Area Appraisal

6.6.1 The Proposed Development respects the guidance provided in Reading City Centre Framework and the Conservation Area Appraisal.

7 References

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8 Planning background and legislative framework

8.1 Legislative framework

8.1.1 The Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act 1953 provides for the preservation of buildings of outstanding historic or architectural interest and their contents and related property.

8.1.2 The planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 defines Conservation Areas as "*areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance".* Local planning authorities have the statutory duty to identify and designate such areas and introduces general controls over demolition and development. Section 66 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the decision maker to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. This means that, in carrying out the planning balance, where there is harm to the setting of a Listed Building or Conservation Area, the desirability of preserving the setting is to be accorded considerable importance and weight.

8.1.3 The National Heritage Act 2002 makes further provision in relation to the functions of the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England.

8.2 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

8.2.1 The NPPF (DCLG 2019) sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. National heritage policy is contained within section 16 of the NPPF. The over-arching principles are:

- *"the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the Significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;*
- *the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring;*
- *the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness"; and*
- *to bring to fruition, "opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place."*

"193. When considering the impact of a Development on the Significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its Significance."

"194. Any harm to, or loss of, the Significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification."

"196. Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the Significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use."

"197. The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset."

8.3 Local policy

8.3.1 The Site is located within the administrative area of Reading Borough Council. The Core Strategy, adopted in January 2008 with an alteration adopted in January 2015, sets out the Borough's overall planning strategy and important principles for development in Reading. Reading Borough Council has also published a Local Development Framework Reading Central Area Action Plan 2009. The Council is in the process of producing a New Local Plan, which contains the planning policies to guide development up to 2036. The New Local Plan includes EN1: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment, EN3: Enhancement of Conservation Areas, EN4: Locally Important Heritage Assets and EN6: New Development in A Historic Context.

Reading Borough Council Local Development Framework Core Strategy 2008 (Altered 2015) and Policy CS7: Design and the Public Realm

"All development must be of high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located. The various components of development form, including:

- *Layout: urban structure and urban grain;*
- *Landscape;*
- *Density and mix;*
- *Scale: height and massing; and*
- *Architectural detail and materials."*

"will be assessed to ensure that the development proposed makes a positive contribution to the following urban design objectives:

- *Character-a place with its own identity and sense of place*
- *Continuity and enclosure*
- *Quality of the public realm*
- *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."*

"Developments will also be assessed to ensure that they:

- *Respond positively to their local context and create or reinforce local*
- *character and distinctiveness, it 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; and*
- *Are visually attractive as a result of*
- *good high quality built forms and spaces, the inclusion of public art and*
- *appropriate materials and landscaping."*

"Applications for major and minor developments should be accompanied by a design access statement that deal with all the above matters."

Reading Borough Council Local Development Framework Core Strategy 2008 (Altered 2015) and Policy CS33

"*Policy CS33: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment Historic features and areas of historic importance and other elements of the historic environment, including their settings, will be protected and where appropriate enhanced. This will include:*

- *listed buildings;*
- *Conservation Areas;*

Other features with local or national designation, such as sites and features of archaeological importance, and historic parks and gardens.

Planning permission will only be granted where development has no adverse impact on historic assets and their settings. All proposals will be expected to protect and where appropriate enhance the character and appearance of the area in which they are located."

Reading Borough Council Reading City Centre Framework

"New and altered buildings and frontages need to be of good intrinsic quality themselves and to respect the qualities that already exist" (page 45).

Reading Borough Council's New Local Plan

EN1: PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

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

- *Listed Buildings;*
- *Conservation Areas;*
- *Scheduled Monuments;*
- *Historic parks and gardens; and*
- *Other features with local or national significance, such as sites and features of*

- *archaeological importance, and assets on the Local List."*

"All proposals will be expected to protect and where possible enhance the significance of heritage assets and their settings, the historic character and local distinctiveness of the area in which they are located. Proposals should seek to avoid harm in the first instance. Any harm to or loss of a heritage asset should require clear and convincing justification, usually in the form of public benefits."

"Applications which affect, or have the potential to affect, the significant features of heritage assets should be justified by a Heritage Statement."

"The Council will monitor buildings and other heritage assets at risk through neglect, decay or other threats, proactively seeking solutions for assets at risk including consideration of appropriate development schemes that will ensure the repair and maintenance of the asset, and, as a last resort, using its statutory powers."

"Where there is evidence of deliberate neglect or of damage to a heritage asset, the deteriorated state of the heritage asset should not be taken into account in any decision."

EN3: ENHANCEMENT OF CONSERVATION AREAS

"The special interest, character and architecture of Conservation Areas will be conserved and enhanced. Development proposals within Conservation Areas must make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness. Positive consideration will be given to proposals which take opportunities to enhance the character of conservation areas. These may include:

- *Reducing visual clutter caused by negative factors, such as poles and overhead wires, satellite dishes or unnecessary street furniture;*
- *Restoring original building features;*
- *Removing inappropriate additions or alterations to buildings;*
- *Protecting and encouraging the maintenance of green spaces and important trees, particularly where they are intrinsic to the history and character of the area;*
- *Improving signage and street furniture;*
- *Restoring or re-establishing appropriate paving, railings or walls;*
- *Sympathetic landscaping and planting;*
- *Improving or restoring green spaces, including front gardens, that are appropriate to the historic interest of a Conservation Area;*
- *Signage that reveals and promotes the Conservation Area and its boundaries;*
- *Interpretation panels to inform the public of the area's historical significance."*

"Where a Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan has been adopted for a particular Conservation Area, this will be a material consideration in determining applications for development."

EN4: LOCALLY IMPORTANT HERITAGE ASSETS

"Development proposals that affect locally important heritage assets will demonstrate that development conserves architectural, archaeological or historical significance which may

include the appearance, character and setting of the asset."

"Planning permission may be granted in cases where a proposal could result in harm to or loss of a locally important heritage asset only where it can be demonstrated that the benefits of the development significantly outweigh the asset's significance. Where it is accepted by the Local Planning Authority that retention is not important, recording of the heritage asset should be undertaken and submitted alongside development proposals. Replacement buildings should draw upon heritage elements of the previous design, incorporating historical qualities that made the previous building significant. This may include appearance, scale and architectural quality."

EN6: NEW DEVELOPMENT IN A HISTORIC CONTEXT

"In areas characterised by heritage assets, the historic environment will inform and shape new development. New development will make a contribution to the historic character of the area by respecting and enhancing its architectural and visual qualities and considering how heritage considerations can influence the design of new development. When determining planning applications for new development, the following factors will be taken into consideration:

a. *The positive contribution of the development to the existing historic townscape (scale, height, mass, proportion, plot size, street form, materials, significant vistas and*
b. *views, and open space);*
c. *Sensitivity to historic context;*
d. *Reflection of borough-wide major heritage themes that contribute to local distinctiveness (e.g. patterned brickwork or former worker terraced housing);*
e. *Whether development promotes and/or improves access to previously undiscovered or*
f. *neglected historic significance".*

9 Methodology and Method of Assessment

9.1 General approach

9.1.1 The historic environment consists of buildings, monuments, settlements, buried sites or scapes on land or underwater. This appendix explains the approach taken to determine the Significance of heritage assets, incorporating the contribution of their settings, the Potential for buried heritage assets to be present (together with their Significance, where known) and the predicted residual effects of the Proposed Development, where possible. Each of the aspects considered is dealt with individually in the sections below.

9.1.2 The detail of the assessment presented in the report is proportionate to identify issues likely to be relevant in enabling *"an informed and reasonable decision to be made"* when determining the planning application for the Proposed Development.

9.1.3 The assessed likely residual effect is used as the basis for assessing the 'harm' caused by the Proposed Development in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework 'NPPF', (DCLG 2019), which stipulates that all proposals fall into one of two scenarios: 'substantial harm' and 'less than substantial harm'.

9.1.4 The assessment was undertaken in accordance with the principles of the NPPF, within the context of the Development Plan and:

- uses the definitions and procedures set out in Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance (Historic England 2008) and in Seeing the History in the View (Historic England 2011); and
- follows the assessment approach set out in Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: Note 3 - The setting of heritage assets (Historic England 2017).

9.1.5 To begin the explanation of methodology and method of assessment, clarity of the use of the term Significance is provided.

9.1.6 The assessment is also based on information extracted from searches and studies relating to:

- The National Heritage List for England map;
- records held at the local records office; and
- a visit to the Site and Study Area.

9.2 Significance of heritage assets

9.2.1 From a heritage perspective, Significance is defined in Annex 2 of the NPPF as the heritage assets interest which "*may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic*". Included in the definition of Significance, in Annex 2 of the NPPF, is a statement about setting - "Significance derives not only from a Heritage Asset's physical presence, but also from its setting".

9.2.2 The term Significance in this sense should not be confused with assessment of the *Significance of an effect* (as is required in Environmental Impact Assessments, for

example), which is derived from a combined consideration of the nature of effect, confidence of the likelihood of the effect occurring, the sensitivity of the Heritage Asset and the magnitude of the impact.

9.2.3 This definition ties in with the Conservation Principles guidance document published by Historic England (2008), which provides more information on how the above may be interpreted, as evidential, historical, aesthetic and communal. The Significance of the Heritage Asset leads to a judgement of the heritage assets importance, in policy terms. The degree of protection afforded to a Heritage Asset is based on its Significance and expressed as having a specific degree of importance.

9.2.4 Where there would be a likely reduction of Significance caused by the Proposed Development, the importance of the recorded heritage assets is assessed (see Table 1).

Table 1: Criteria for measuring the importance attributed to designated heritage assets

Importance	**Indicative criteria**
Very High	Designated heritage assets of international Significance are legally protected and/or protected by international agreements or non-designated heritage assets of international Significance, which have no legal protection but are important in policy terms as they contribute to international research objectives
High	Scheduled Monuments and their settings are legally protected Non-designated heritage assets, which have no legal protection but are important in policy terms as they contribute to national research objectives Grade I and Grade II* listed buildings and their settings are legally protected Grade I Registered Parks and Gardens, Conservation Areas containing very important buildings and their settings are legally protected
Medium	Grade II listed buildings and their settings are legally protected Grade II Registered Parks and Gardens and their settings are legally protected Conservation Areas containing buildings that contribute significantly to its historic character are legally protected
Low	'Locally Listed' buildings and settings Historic (unlisted) buildings of modest quality in their fabric or historical association and their settings
Very Low	Buildings of no architectural or historical note; buildings of an intrusive character
Unknown	Buildings with some hidden (i.e. inaccessible) Potential for historic Significance

9.2.5 As discussed above, the Significance of the heritage assets is its archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic interest and its setting. Four values contribute to that interest, aesthetic, historical, communal and evidential.

9.3 Determining the baseline for settings of heritage assets

9.3.1 As defined in the Historic England Guidance Note (2017), the setting of a Heritage Asset is the surrounding landscape from where that asset may be experienced. Attributes of a setting may have a positive or negative effect on the Significance of a Heritage Asset. The extent of the setting is not fixed. Setting is separate from the curtilage, character and context of a Heritage Asset although these may be found to be interrelated. The guidance provides five steps in assessing settings as follows:

- *"Step 1: identify which heritage assets and their settings are affected;*
- *Step 2: assess whether, how and to what degree these settings make a contribution to the Significance of the heritage asset(s);*
- *Step 3: assess the effects of the proposed development, whether beneficial or harmful, on that Significance;*
- *Step 4: explore the way to maximise enhancement and avoid or minimise harm; and*
- *Step 5: make and document the decision and monitor outcomes. The first of these steps constitutes the baseline section, which is to identify the heritage assets potentially affected by the Proposed Development."*

9.3.2 Visits to each of those heritage assets likely to be affected by the Proposed Development allowed the author to compile a photographic record that forms part of the evidence base. Photographic views were taken towards and from the heritage assets looking towards the Site.

9.3.3 Viewpoints are chosen from within the Site and towards the Site at a point of 'accurate visual representation' (AVR) at or near heritage assets. Additional Viewpoints may be chosen from Viewpoints that take in the Site in the context of the settings of a number of heritage assets. Kinetic views may also need to be represented using a series of AVRs. These locations are mapped and Viewpoint context described. No access to private properties has been obtained during the field study. Viewpoints may be categorised as follows:

- Representative Viewpoints – selected to represent the experience of different types of visual heritage assets, where larger numbers of Viewpoints cannot all be included individually and where the level of effects are unlikely to differ;
- Specific Viewpoints – selected because they are key and sometimes promoted Viewpoints within the landscape; and
- Illustrative Viewpoints – Selected specifically to demonstrate a level of effect or specific aspect (e.g. screening).
- Key Views are those views that illustrate locations where there would be unobstructed visibility of the Heritage Asset and the Proposed Development.

9.3.4 The photographs have been taken using a Nikon camera using a 50 mm (35 mm format equivalent) lens. The photographs used to illustrate the assessment have been 'stitched' together using digital imaging software to provide a 'panorama

image', thus providing a visual context to the focus of the centre photograph. The photographs have been corrected for lens distortion and to correct changes of scale across the photograph and a cylindrical projection used to ensure consistency of scale across the panorama, vertically and horizontally when viewed on printed paper.

9.3.5 The work undertaken towards the production of the assessment has included desk study, fieldwork (including a site visit) and discussions with the design and assessment team (to help inform the design and assessment process).

9.3.6 The assessment presents mitigation options, including the enhancement of the Significance of heritage assets, mitigating and minimising adverse effects on the historic environment. Defining Significance of the heritage assets rely on professional judgement and on the information available at time of writing, thus the assessment may require revision if more information becomes available.

9.4 Settings of heritage assets

9.4.1 As defined in the Historic England Guidance Note (2017), the setting of a Heritage Asset is the surrounding landscape from where that Heritage Asset may be experienced. Designated and non-designated heritage assets are defined within Annex 2 of the NPPF. There may be various individual contributing attributes of a setting and these may have a positive or negative effect on the Significance of a Heritage Asset. The extent of the setting is not fixed and is separate from the curtilage, character and context of a Heritage Asset, although these may be found to be interrelated.

9.4.2 Visits to the Site and each of the heritage assets predicted to be indirectly affected by the Proposed Development, through changes to its setting, allowed the compilation of representative photographs to be taken within and towards the Site, where the view is interrelated to one or more heritage assets. No access to private properties was able to be obtained during the fieldwork.

9.4.3 The contribution of the current setting to the Significance of heritage assets was assessed (Step 2 in the Historic England Guidance Note). Identifying the contribution of setting depends on the Heritage Asset's physical surroundings and the visitor's experience of the heritage assets. Various individual attributes contributing to setting, likely to be affected by the Proposed Development, are assessed in terms of their individual contribution to the Significance of the heritage assets and an overall assessment of the contribution of the setting to the Significance of the Heritage Asset made. That contribution will vary depending on previous and proposed changes. The extent of previous changes will affect the sensitivity of the setting to further change.

9.5 Sensitivity

9.5.1 *"Heritage assets and their settings may contribute"* to the character of an area. "*The historic character of a place is the group of qualities derived from its past uses that make it distinctive…. including its original configuration and subsequent losses and changes."* In the latest Guidance Note 3 publication, sensitivity of setting is explained as 'the capacity of the setting to accommodate change without harm to the Heritage Asset's Significance'.

9.5.2 *"Settings of heritage assets which closely resemble the setting at the time the asset was constructed or formed are likely to contribute particularly strongly to Significance but settings which have changed may also themselves enhance Significance, for instance where townscape character has been shaped by cycles of change over the long term. Settings may also have suffered negative impact from inappropriate past developments and may be enhanced by the removal of the inappropriate structure(s)".* A measure of the sensitivity of the heritage assets is based on the indicative criteria in Table 2.

9.5.3 A measure of the sensitivity of the heritage assets is based on the indicative criteria in Table 2.

Table 2: Criteria for measuring the sensitivity of a heritage asset to further change

Level	**Indicative criteria**
Very High	The current setting has been influenced by limited degrees of incremental changes that are a reflection of the distinctive characteristics of the setting
High	The current setting has been influenced by medium degrees of incremental changes, some of which are harmonious within the original setting
Medium	The current setting has been influenced to a large degree by incremental changes, some of which are not in keeping with the original setting of the Heritage Asset
Low	Some aspects of the current setting has been compromised at specific locations within that setting such that the Heritage Asset contributes to the setting to a very limited extent
Very Low	The current setting has been widely compromised

9.6 Magnitude of impacts

9.6.1 The assessment of the magnitude of impacts is carried out on settings of designated heritage assets and the Heritage Asset's themselves, as applicable. The indicative criteria forming the basis for the magnitude of impact is given in Table 3.

Table 3: Criteria for measuring the magnitude of impact

Magnitude	**Indicative Criteria**
Very Large	Total loss of the attributes of the setting of heritage assets
Large	Comprehensive alterations to attributes of setting that alter the way heritage assets are experienced
Medium	Considerable alterations to attributes of setting that affect the character of heritage assets
Small	Slight alterations to attributes of setting that affect the surroundings, some of which affect the heritage values of heritage assets
Very Small	Slight alterations to attributes of setting that affect the surroundings but not the heritage values of heritage assets
No	No appreciable impact on attributes of setting

9.7 Level of effects

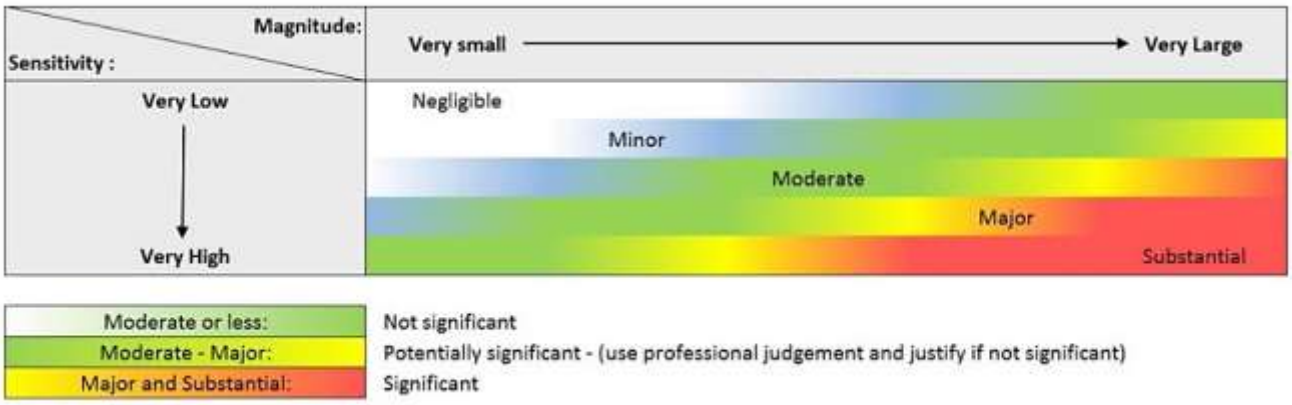
9.7.1 The assessment of effects is carried out on settings of designated heritage assets and the heritage assets themselves, as applicable. When assessing the effect on the setting of heritage assets, the sensitivity of different attributes of the setting to change is considered in conjunction with the impact of the Proposed Development. Assessing the combination of the sensitivity of the Heritage Asset and the magnitude of impact provides a resultant level of effect (see Table 4), which may be beneficial or adverse.

Table 4: Criteria for measuring the likely effects

Effect	Indicative criteria
Substantial	Profound changes to attributes of setting that represents a total alteration to the setting
Major	Comprehensive changes to attributes of setting that affect the character of heritage assets
Moderate	Considerable changes to wider attributes of setting, some of which affect the character of heritage assets
Minor	Slight changes to limited attributes of setting, some of which affect the character of heritage assets
Negligible	Slight changes to attributes of setting, which do not alter the character of heritage assets
No Change	Very slight changes to attributes of setting, which do not alter the character of heritage assets

9.7.2 Once mitigation has been taken into consideration, what remains are the likely residual effects which may be beneficial or adverse (see Table 5). There is often a weighing exercise involved in considering whether the overall outcome is more beneficial or more adverse, that is not reliant on a mathematical equation of greater or lesser numbers of beneficial and adverse effects. A detailed explanation of how a conclusion on the balance is arrived at is possible in circumstances where there are heritage-specific benefits. However, in projects where public benefits are wider and not heritage-specific, the judgement as to whether benefits outweigh harm needs to made by the decision maker for the permission being sought and not the author.

Table 5: The relationship between sensitivity, magnitude that cause a level of effect



9.8 The assessment effects within the planning context

9.8.1 The criteria adopted for determining the likely residual effect is also equated to the degree of harm to the Significance of a Heritage Asset. Professional judgement has been used to translate the assessed effects of the Proposed Development to the degree of harm in accordance with the NPPF (paragraphs 193-194), which may be 'substantial harm' or 'less than substantial harm'.

10 Glossary of general terms

General terms

Aesthetic Value	The ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place.
Associative relationships	The relationship between separate heritage assets by association, which may include functional and visual associations.
Curtilage	The curtilage of a building (the principal building) is in general terms any area of land and other buildings that is around and associated with that principal building. The courts have considered the precise extent of curtilage on many occasions. Determining the exact curtilage of any building is a complex question and much will depend upon the facts of the individual case. The key considerations are the physical layout of the buildings; the ownership past and present; and, the function of the buildings and spaces past and present.
Communal Value	The meanings of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory.
Cumulative change	Cumulative change includes permitted developments, yet to be construction, to be considered when assessing whether additional change will further detract from or enhance the Significance of a Heritage Asset
Evidential Value	The potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity.
Heritage Value	Heritage Values represent a public interest in places, regardless of ownership. The use of law, public policy and public investment is justified to protect that public interest. Heritage Values comprise of Evidential Value, Historical Value, Aesthetic Value and Communal Value.
Historical Value	The ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present – it tends to be illustrative or associative.
Kinetic	Relating to, caused by, or producing motion. The kinetic, or dynamic, nature of a view refers to the way in which it changes as the viewer moves through a Viewing Place.
in situ	Anything in its natural or original position or place, also referred to as 'primary context'
Level of effect	The level of effect ('effect' for brevity) is the measure of change caused to a Heritage Asset.

Magnitude of impact	The magnitude of impact ('impact' for brevity) is the measure of disturbance of buried heritage assets or alterations to built heritage assets.
Natural	Undisturbed natural geology accumulated without the influence of human activity
Potential	Professional judgement is used to interpolate potential within a site by understanding the baseline information for each archaeological period within a Study Area
Setting	The setting of a Heritage Asset is the surrounding landscape from where that asset may be experienced. Attributes of a setting may have a positive or negative effect on the Significance of a Heritage Asset. The extent of the setting is not fixed. Setting is separate from the curtilage, character and context of a Heritage Asset although these may be found to be interrelated

Viewpoint 1: Looking south-southeast from the benches in front of the Minster Church

Viewpoint 2: Looking south-southeast from the benches in front of the Minster Church

Viewpoint 3: Looking south-southeast from the west tower of the Minster Church

Viewpoint 4: Looking west from the churchyard of the Minster Church

Viewpoint 5: Looking northeast from Bridge Street

Viewpoint 6: Looking southwest from the Fountain

Viewpoint 7: Looking southwest from the turning head

Viewpoint 8: Looking east towards the rear of Number 34

Viewpoint 9: Looking south towards the Former Cottage

Viewpoint 10: Looking south towards the rear of Numbers 10 and 12 Castle Street