

PLANNING STATEMENT

Demolition of existing buildings and structures, associated reuse of frame with basement level used for car parking & servicing, erection of 4 no. residential blocks containing 46 no. dwellings above, associated parking (including replacement), access works and landscaping, relocation of substations & associated works to rear of indigo apartments to facilitate pedestrian access.

**9 Upper Crown Street,
Reading,
RG1 2SS**

Prepared by:

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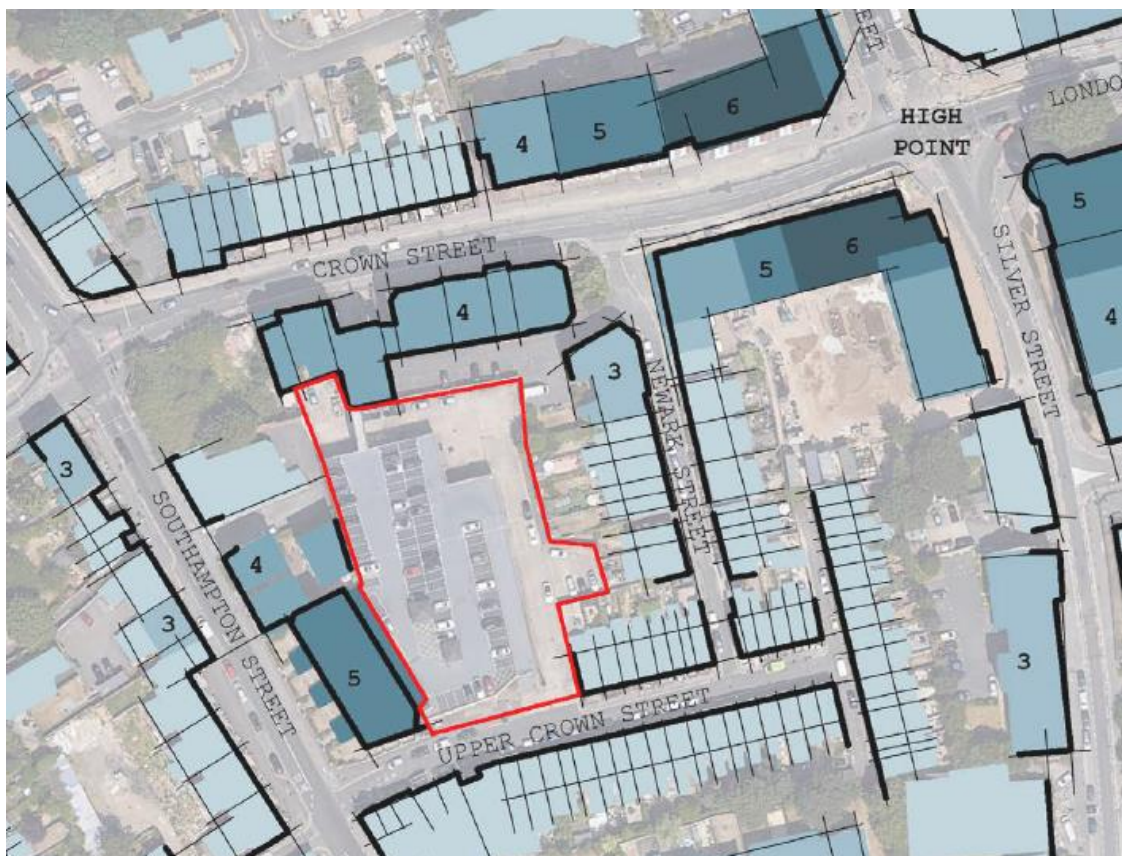
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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. This statement has been prepared by Woolf Bond Planning LLP in support of a planning application proposing the redevelopment and partial reuse of the existing buildings and structures on the site and the erection of 4 residential blocks containing 4 townhouses and 42 apartments with associated parking (including replacement), access works and landscaping. A basement parking level is retained, and works are also proposed to the rear of indigo apartments so to facilitate a revised pedestrian access to that block.
- 1.2. The existing site forms a brownfield site used for data storage and parking purposes, located in a highly accessible location. Further, the existing buildings on the site are presently of limited architectural merit. The site therefore offers an opportunity for a proposal that better contributes towards defined residential needs in Reading Borough and in addition, generate a substantive improvement to the area's overall design quality on land located just outside the southern boundary of the Reading Central Area.
- 1.3. This statement summarises the acceptability of the proposal having regard to relevant planning policy considerations. It details how the scheme responds to local planning policies such that the application can be supported. It concludes that the scheme is development plan compliant and entirely acceptable having regard to all relevant town planning considerations.

2. SITE LOCATION AND CONTEXT

- 2.1. A detailed summary of the existing site and its associated context is provided within the supporting Design & Access Statement.
- 2.2. The application site comprises an existing building of a functional appearance with a car park above across a significant part of the site (centre, south and west). To the north and east of the site is a level area of hardstanding which acts as a service yard/overflow car park for the existing building and sub stations on the site.
- 2.3. The site lies in a transitional area between the commercial activities located in Reading town centre and residential areas located just outside the town centre. There are a range of office and residential uses located around the site. Further, there are a range of heights comprising two through to six storey buildings in the immediate vicinity. The range of heights surrounding the site are illustrated on the plan taken from the Design & Access Statement below.



Plan from Design & Access Statement

- 2.4. To the south of the site lie two storey terraced homes along Upper Crown Street. To the east are further two storey terraced homes. To the north of the site is a location where development proposals for redeveloping land for residential purposes (fronting Crown Street) have come forward, including a recent development completed by Thomas Homes. The site is of a previously developed nature and as explained in later section of the statement is therefore in principle appropriate for the proposed development. As illustrated on the images below, the site offers a limited contribution towards the quality of the public realm in its current form.



Upper Crown Street looking east with site frontage shown edged blue (Source: Google Street View)



View of application site showing single storey building on western side of site with car park above (Source: Google Street View)

- 2.5. As outlined above, the site is located within an established transitional commercial and residential area within Reading, with residential properties lying to the north, east and south with commercial uses to the west. The application site is identified on the aerial image below.



Aerial View of Site (Source: Magic Maps)

- 2.6. As mentioned in the supporting Transport Statement, the site is located within a highly accessible location within 1Km of Reading Town Centre and with bus stops located on Southampton Street within 95 metres of the site's access. By forming previously developed land within walking distance of a range of key services and facilities and in very close proximity to public transport links, the site offers a perfect location to limit car modes of travel and a highly sustainable location for development consistent with the NPPF and the Council's development plan.
- 2.7. The site is not located within or adjoining a Conservation Area. In addition, there are no listed buildings on the site. The area is characterised by various styles and scales (predominantly 3 or 4 storeys to the west, up to 6 storeys to the north and 2 storeys to the south and east). Consequently, it is not a location that is defined by any prevailing vernacular or uniformity. The area is defined by a mixture of street forms including cul-de-sacs (without substantial planting) together with properties directly fronting onto the streets. The aerial photo also demonstrates the predominance of the buildings located towards the frontage of the respective plots. The

application proposes a mix of apartments and houses so to reflect the transitional character of this part of Reading. As indicated in the accompanying reports, the proposal ensures the retention of the amenity and privacy of the existing and proposed dwellings, whilst proposing a character compliant residential scheme.

3. THE PROPOSED SCHEME

3.1. The accompanying Design and Access Statement provides further site analysis, an assessment of constraints and opportunities and justification regarding the proposed scheme's design, layout and scale. It also includes a detailed summary of the proposed scheme's various elements.

3.2. The scheme's principal elements are as follows:

- The scheme provides for 46 new residential dwellings. It comprises 4 townhouses that face towards Upper Crown Street and 42 apartments within the central and northern body of the site. A true mix of 1, 2 and 3 bedroom properties are proposed so to enable a mixed community to form.
- 30% of the proposal is to form affordable housing consistent with the Council's policy requirements. The affordable housing is provided in a mix of 1, 2 and 3 bedroom properties.
- The existing building is to be largely demolished but some of its frame and brick will be reused and a basement parking area re-provided for use in part by existing leaseholders and in part by future residents.
- The existing substations are to be relocated and combined into consolidated new substation areas.
- A revised pedestrian access and associated alterations are proposed to the rear of indigo apartments that are located on the northern side of the site.
- All residential dwellings benefit from private amenity space and in addition there are areas of communal space dedicated throughout the development. The units seek to comply with internal space standards.
- A more efficient use of land in an accessible location on brownfield land.
- The elevations of the properties fronting Upper Crown Street are designed to reflect the character and variation of two storey properties within the locality. The elevations of the other buildings proposed on the site are designed to reflect the commercial and residential buildings to the north and west, providing an appropriate transition through the development in both design and scale terms.
- A package of energy and sustainability measures are proposed so to ensure the scheme exceeds the Borough's policy requirements and limits its overall demand upon the network in relation to water, gas and electricity requirements.

3.3. The application is supported by detailed reports relating to energy and sustainability, air quality, noise, transport, daylight and sunlight, ecology and flood risk / drainage. Where

relevant to respective planning policy requirements the reader is referred to these respective reports.

- 3.4. The below image forms the proposed site plan and illustrates the four respective buildings. Building 1 faces towards Upper Crown Street and is in a terraced housing form so to reflect the prevailing character of Upper Crown Street. The site is accessed via its southeastern boundary direct from Upper Crown Street in a similar location to existing. Three further buildings comprising apartment blocks are located in the centre and western parts of the site. These buildings have purposely been set back from the site's eastern boundary so to ensure an appropriate relationship with the residential properties located to the east on Newark Street. Further, building 3 is offset at an angle to the southeast of indigo apartments so to enable an appropriate relationship with neighbouring properties. An area on the southwestern and central parts of the site between the buildings will form a green landscaped and courtyard type environment of a highly attractive quality to the future residents and enable a permeable scheme.



Proposed Site Layout Plan

- 3.5. The below images assist in illustrating the scheme in 3D form when viewed from the south and east. They illustrate how the scheme steps up in scale as one moves northward towards the greater heights found on Crown Street to the north. The material palette for the proposed scheme consists of red brick in a standard course with soldier courses used to pick out the floor levels. Pre-weathered grey metal cladding is to be used on the mansard roofs as well as the pitched roofs and gable ends of the town houses. Timber has been used to compliment and soften the appearance of the brickwork.



3D Perspective view looking north



3D Perspective view looking west

4. NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

- 4.1. This section provides a summary of national policy relevant to the application scheme.

National Planning Policy Framework ('NPPF')

- 4.2. A revised NPPF was published in July 2021 and sets out a presumption in favour of sustainable development. It is a material consideration of particular standing in the making of planning decisions.

Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

- 4.3. The NPPF sets out a presumption in favour of sustainable development and paragraph 8 identifies that there are three dimensions to sustainable development, comprising (i) economic, (ii) social and (iii) environmental. An assessment of the scheme having regard to these three roles is set out later in this statement.

Delivering a sufficient supply of homes

- 4.4. Paragraph 60 explains that **'To support the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes, it is important that a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed, that the needs of groups with specific housing requirements are addressed and that land with permission is developed without unnecessary delay'**.

Promoting sustainable transport

- 4.5. Paragraph 105 states that **"The planning system should actively manage patterns of growth in support of these objectives. Significant development should be focused on locations which are or can be made sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes.... However, opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas, than this should be taken into account in both plan-making and decision making"**. As mentioned in section 2 and detailed in the supporting Transport Statement, the site is very sustainably located having regard to its location within a short walking distance of the Oracle Shopping Centre which forms a key section of Reading town centre with its extensive range of facilities. The site is also within 100 metres of a regular bus service. It is therefore an appropriate and accessible location for additional residential development.

Making effective use of land

- 4.6. Paragraph 119 refers to the need for **‘Planning policies and decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions. Strategic policies should set out a clear strategy for accommodating objectively assessed needs, in a way that makes as much use as possible of previously-developed or ‘brownfield’ land’.**
- 4.7. Paragraph 120, parts (c) and (d) state that planning decisions should:
- c) give substantial weight to the value of using suitable brownfield land within settlements for homes and other identified needs, and support appropriate opportunities to remediate despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated or unstable land;**
 - d) promote and support the development of under-utilised land and buildings, especially if this would help to meet identified needs for housing where land supply is constrained and available sites could be used more effectively (for example converting space above shops, and building on or above service yards, car parks, lock-ups and railway infrastructure)⁴⁸;**
- 4.8. Paragraph 125, part (c) refers to the importance of making an efficient use of land:
- 125. Area-based character assessments, design guides and codes and masterplans can be used to help ensure that land is used efficiently while also creating beautiful and sustainable places. Where there is an existing or anticipated shortage of land for meeting identified housing needs, it is especially important that planning policies 37 and decisions avoid homes being built at low densities, and ensure that developments make optimal use of the potential of each site. In these circumstances:**
- ...
- c) local planning authorities should refuse applications which they consider fail to make efficient use of land, taking into account the policies in this Framework. In this context, when considering applications for housing, authorities should take a flexible approach in applying policies or guidance relating to daylight and sunlight, where they would otherwise inhibit making efficient use of a site (as long as the resulting scheme would provide acceptable living standards).**
- 4.9. The scheme is fully consistent with the above objectives by enabling the delivery of a substantial number of new residential dwellings in an appropriate settlement location on previously developed land. As indicated in the Design and Access Statement together with the submitted plans, the proposed dwellings are orientated and arranged on the site to both make more efficient use of the site whilst ensuring adequate separation between existing and

proposed homes to provide sufficient amenity space and privacy. The proposed layout has also therefore considered the balance envisaged in section 11 of the NPPF in making more efficient use of the site whilst providing a scheme that has considered the area's prevailing character and setting. Indeed, it is noted that NPPF paragraph 120 refers specifically to the importance of supporting the development of underutilised land including building on or above car parks as is the case through this proposal.

Achieving well-designed places

- 4.10. Chapter 12 seeks that high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places are achieved through the planning process and explains that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development. The scheme is consistent with these objectives in enabling a high quality design appropriate to the site's somewhat transitional location and in enabling a substantial improvement in the overall design quality of the site and its contribution to the public realm. This point is detailed further in the supporting Design and Access Statement.

5. LOCAL PLANNING POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

- 5.1. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 sets out a requirement that planning applications are to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless other material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 5.2. The relevant existing development plan comprises the Reading Borough Local Plan (Adopted November 2019).
- 5.3. As illustrated on the proposals map extract below (the approximate application site boundary is edged in red), the site is located inside Reading town immediately south of the Reading central area.



Extract from Local Plan Proposals Map (approximate application site boundary edged in red)

- 5.4. The black line identifies the site's location adjacent to but just outside the defined 'Reading Central Area'. Further, the dark grey colour covering sites immediately to the northwest and northeast of the site indicate residential allocations for intensified residential development in

the near vicinity of the site. Finally, the red and yellow lines indicate the site's proximity to key cycle routes and the classified highway network.

Reading Borough Local Plan

- 5.5. Reading Borough Local Plan policies relevant to the acceptability of the scheme are summarised below:

Policy	Acceptability of the Application Scheme
CC1	Policy CC1 outlines how the presumption in favour of sustainable development will be applied. This indicates that proposals according with the development plan will be approved without delay. As outlined below, the application fully accords with the development plan when considered as a whole and consequently could be approved.
CC2, CC3 & CC4	These policies outline how new development should address factors associated with sustainable design and construction to take account of the effects of climate change. The proposed dwellings on the site have been designed to be constructed and lived in so to accord with these requirements. There is an intention to limit water usage and provide for tree and shrub planting as part of a landscape scheme shown on the submitted drawings. A combined sustainability approach using air source heat pumps and photovoltaic panels is proposed. Further details are set out in the supporting Design & Access and Energy & Sustainability Statements.
CC6	This policy highlights the importance of the scale and intensity of development reflecting the accessibility of the site. The site lies within 500 metres of the Oracle Shopping centre within the town centre and also lies on a bus route. It is therefore a sustainable location with easy access to the facilities of the town centre. In planning policy terms, it lies immediately adjacent to the defined Reading Central Area boundary. It therefore comprises an appropriate location for medium to high density development that makes efficient use of a brownfield site, whilst the design provides for an appropriate transition between the lower scales of development found on Upper Crown Street and the greater density of development found to the north of the site on Crown Street.
CC7	The policy requires a high quality design and layout. As detailed in the Design & Access Statement, this proposal provides a high quality proposal and a scale appropriate to the transition between the commercial activities on the edge of the town centre and the residential areas to the south and east of the site.
CC8	The accompanying Design & Access Statement and Daylight Report indicate how the scheme safeguards the amenity of existing and future residents. The daylight assessment identifies that the majority of window receptors located to the closest 'worst case' dwellings surrounding the site meet and exceed minimum targets for daylight and sunlight in accordance with BRE guidance.

Policy	Acceptability of the Application Scheme
	Reference is also made to the NPPF that refers to the importance of taking a flexible approach in applying daylight and sunlight standards where there is a clear need for housing and the need to make an efficient use of a site. Such a balance is achieved through the proposal. Further, the scheme has been designed so to achieve a substantial set back from the properties located to the east and avoid a direct south orientation of building 3 adjacent to indigo apartments located to the north. Further, an appropriate separation has been provided between building 4 and properties to the west with no buildings located immediately adjacent to the site's southwestern side due to the existence of an existing converted residential building of considerable scale.
H1	The scheme will make a material contribution towards the Council's minimum housing requirement or 15,847 dwellings over the plan period 2013 to 2036. It is noted that this requirement is to form an at least figure and in addition, there is a need to identify additional housing in neighbouring authorities through both the current housing requirement and in particular when the future standard method approach is applied to any new Local Plan.
H2	The scheme proposes 46 dwellings (in a primarily apartment led form) on a 0.346ha site. The density of development is therefore 133 dwellings per hectare. As the site adjoins the defined centre of Reading, this is considered appropriate and reflective of the densities envisaged for the centre. This is especially relevant when one considers that it is largely an apartment led form and therefore naturally the density will be higher by virtue of the scheme's character. It is further appropriate to the site's highly accessible location as described in the Transport Statement and is of a lower density when compared to close by allocations on sites to the immediate northwest and northeast where densities of between 139 and 200 dwellings per hectare are envisaged. The scheme includes 17 no. 1 bed, 10 no. 2 bed and 19 no. 3 bed dwellings. Whilst this is slightly below the indicated 50% of dwellings to comprise 3 beds or more, the need for a mix needs to be balanced against the apartment led nature of the proposal and the site's highly sustainable location adjacent to the Reading Central Area boundary. In such a transitional location on previously developed land, the proposed mix is considered to offer a true opportunity for a mixed community to develop and a substantial contribution towards the need for 3 bedroom dwellings in the form of both apartments and houses. The scheme therefore compares favourably to other examples of developments in the immediate vicinity of the site approved for dwelling mixes considerably more steered towards 1 and 2 bedroom units. These points alongside the need to make efficient and effective use of this rare available brownfield site mean that the scheme complies with the policy having regard to all other material considerations.
H3	30% of the proposed dwellings are to comprise affordable housing. Further, a genuine mix of affordable dwelling sizes are proposed through the application.

Policy	Acceptability of the Application Scheme
H5	The Design & Access Statement confirms that the scheme achieves the nationally described space standards. Further, the Design & Access Statement and Energy & Sustainability Statement confirm the scheme complies with the other standards required by the policy.
H10	Each dwelling has its own private amenity space (garden or balcony) as envisaged by the policy. As the site adjoins the defined centre, the extent of private space is considered appropriate and is not compromised by overlooking etc. In addition, areas of communal open space are available in the development as indicated in the landscape drawing.
TR5	The scheme includes appropriate car and cycle parking (including electric charging points) as envisaged by the policy. A detailed explanation is set out in the supporting Transport Statement.

- 5.6. The proposal therefore accords with the relevant policies in the development plan when considered as a whole (consistent with case law including the 2000 R v Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council and 2014 Arsenal Football Club Plc v SoS for CLG and Islington London Borough Council judgments).

6. KEY ISSUES

- 6.1. Having regard to the above site, scheme and policy context the key issues relating to the proposal are now considered in detail below.

Principle of Development

- 6.2. The application site is located within the defined settlement of Reading town where national and local planning policies strongly support new residential development. The below commentary taken from the Local Plan explains the Council's spatial strategy and the constrained nature of the Borough:

'3.2.1 The constrained nature of Reading Borough dictates the spatial strategy to some extent. Significant development can only occur where sites are available, which inevitably means a considerable focus on the centre and south of Reading. Opportunities for large-scale expansion of the town onto greenfield sites within the Borough are virtually non-existent, with the small rural areas within the boundaries subject to significant flood risk. This means a need to look within the existing urban area for opportunities, and to ensure efficient use of land'.

...

'4.4.3 However, Reading is a very tightly defined urban area, and sites for new development are limited. The undeveloped land that does exist is mainly either in the functional floodplain or is important public open space. Provision of new housing therefore involves a heavy reliance on previously developed land, and the supply of such sites constrains the amount of housing that can be delivered in the Borough. The Council therefore needs to set targets for housing provision that are capable of being met'.

- 6.3. There are some key points arising from the above. First, there is a considerable focus on the centre and south of Reading to meet housing needs. As a result, there is a need to actively look for opportunities to enable the efficient use of land. Second, there is a heavy reliance on previously developed land. Finally, the ability for the Borough to use greenfield sites to meet housing needs is virtually non-existent.
- 6.4. The site is of a previously developed nature and of poor architectural merit. It is located adjacent to a number of sites that have been redeveloped or allocated for residential redevelopment in recent years and as a result there are a few available sites of this type and character available as close to Reading town centre as the subject application site. It follows that the site offers a prime redevelopment opportunity to contribute towards the Borough's

minimum housing requirements. The principle of development on the site is therefore very much established and the ability to bring forward such a rare and appropriate site that is fully consistent with the Council's spatial strategy attracts significant positive weight in the overall planning balance exercise. These points are further supported by the NPPF that also advocates the importance of the efficient use of previously developed land especially in accessible locations.

- 6.5. As illustrated in earlier sections, the site lies in a transitional area adjoining the Reading Central Area, as defined in the Local Plan. It is therefore important to acknowledge this and the nuanced differences in policy approaches between sites within and outside of the centre. Whilst the central area policy would technically not apply, the site's location in the rest of the Borough area is clearly very different to a site that would be located for instance in suburban parts of the town, as it shares many similar characteristics with sites that are in the central area immediately to the north of the site's boundary. A policy balance therefore needs to be struck in considering how the site is developed for residential purposes. The approach followed is considered appropriate and reflects the transitional nature of the site with two storey terraced housing to the south and east, commercial / residential buildings to the west (extending to 5 storeys) and predominantly residential buildings (extending up to 6 storeys) to the north. This is also reflected in proposing a terraced housing character on the frontage to Upper Crown Street with apartment buildings located further to the north as one moves closer towards the central area.

Density & Dwelling Mix

- 6.6. The site is located in an area defined by its variation in both design and scale respects. As set out in the supporting Transport Statement, it is located in a highly accessible location in relation to the key services and facilities located in Reading town centre. As we discuss further below, the design follows a housing led form fronting onto Upper Crown Street so to reflect the more housing led nature of that road and then extends into apartment buildings further to the north so to ensure an efficient use of this brownfield site and a pattern and form of development more consistent with buildings located to the north and west of the site. The density of development at 133 dwellings per hectare provides for the efficient and effective use of brownfield land advocated both in the development plan and within the NPPF. Equally, it is of a lower density than the allocations located to the northwest (allocation no. CR14j) and northeast (allocation no. CR14k) of the site where if a medium amount of the allocated

development were assumed would suggest densities of 200 and 139 dwellings per hectare respectively.

- 6.7. Taking account of the transitional nature of the site's location (and its high level of accessibility) it is considered that the proposed density of the site is appropriate and helps maximise its use, whilst safeguarding the privacy and amenity of the existing and future residents on and adjoining the site. Ultimately the scheme is consistent with the Local Plan's objective set out below:

'2. Make the most efficient use of Reading's limited land, particularly previously developed land, to ensure that as many new homes as possible are delivered to meet identified needs, particularly needs for affordable housing;'

- 6.8. Policy H2 refers to the need for a mix of dwellings, with an expectation that sites outside of the town centre will provide 50% of units with 3 or more bedrooms, having regard to all other material considerations. The site's location immediately adjacent to the central area has been discussed above and in earlier sections of this statement. If the site were located in the central area, the policy would suggest the need for a minimum of 5% of the units to be at least 3 bed units. Very recent developments located on land in very close proximity to the site have occurred at the combined site indicated in light blue below (with the subject application site roughly indicated using a red line).



Relationship between application site (roughly edged in red) and developed site to the east (roughly edged in light blue) (Source: Google Maps)

- 6.9. The approved and constructed 13-21 Crown Street and 22 Silver Street, Reading, RG1 2SE site (LPA Ref. 170794/FUL) comprises a single block development containing 80 no. residential flats containing 28 no. 1 bed 39 no. 2 bed and 7 no. 3 bed units (LPA Ref. 180417). A further site immediately adjacent to it was subsequently approved and comprised 2 no. 1 bed and 7 no. 2 bed units. Of that total development only 8% of the scheme comprised 3 bed units and featured entirely apartments. By comparison, the subject scheme includes 19 no. 3 bed dwellings (including some housing) comprising an overall percentage of 41% of the development. It follows that the scheme performs very well when compared to other examples in the near vicinity in providing for larger sized dwellings. Whilst it is moderately below the 50% guideline, the site's highly accessible location and the need to secure an efficient use of the land alongside its geographic location directly adjacent to the Reading central area must be borne in mind. When all these matters are considered in combination, it is assessed that the proposed dwelling mix is one that will enable a true mixed community to develop whilst ensuring an efficient and effective use of a rarely available and highly accessible

brownfield site. The scheme can therefore be determined to be wholly compliant with Policy H2 having regard to these material considerations.

Affordable Housing

- 6.10. Policy H3 requires that residential development will make an appropriate contribution towards affordable housing comprising 30% of the total dwellings where a proposal comprises 10 or more dwellings. The scheme directly accords with this requirement by proposing 30% (14 units) of the dwellings as affordable housing. Further, a mix of 1, 2 and 3 bedroom affordable dwellings are proposed. The scheme therefore directly accords with the Council's policy requirement and in a way that a number of schemes have failed to around the Borough in recent years. The Council's most recent Annual Monitoring Report refers to a need for 406 affordable dwellings per annum but that in the most recent monitoring year only 80 were delivered:

Indicator 13: Affordable housing completions

	Rented (affordable/ social) (gross)	Shared ownership (gross)	Other affordable (gross)	Total (gross)
Homes delivered 2019-20	80	0	0	80

8.14 The amount of affordable housing completed in 2019-20 is significantly less than in 2018-19 (158), although is still higher than the overall amounts in 2017-18 (66), 2016-17 (60) and 2015-16 (52). All of the delivery this year has been in the form of rented accommodation. In particular, the delivery of 45 new local authority homes (mainly at Conwy Close) has been the main contributor to supply. The main private development delivering affordable homes was 23 dwellings at Worton Grange, whilst a housing association development at St George's Road delivered a further 12 homes. There are 403 affordable dwellings under construction, so the coming years should see good levels of delivery, albeit that it will still be some way short of the assessed annual need for new affordable housing of 406 from the SHMA.

8.15 It should be noted that this indicator relates to new dwellings completed, in line with the commitments monitoring, which is not necessarily the same point as when the dwelling is transferred to a registered provider or occupied, and for that reason the affordable housing delivery figures in this AMR may well differ from other affordable housing monitoring sources.

8.16 There are still constraints on the Council's ability to secure affordable housing. Some developers have been able to demonstrate that full compliance with the Council's policy is not viable. In addition, there continues to be significant use of the permitted development right to convert offices to residential (see Indicator 19). As no planning permission is required, these developments avoid the requirement to provide affordable housing.

8.17 There is a continued very substantial need to secure additional affordable housing – the results of the [Berkshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment](#) (5.56 MB, PDF) show that there is a need for 406 affordable dwellings per annum. At the same time, changes to the national planning system are making it more and more difficult to secure provision of affordable housing from new developments.

Extract from the Council's AMR

- 6.11. It is therefore clear that the need for affordable housing in the Borough is pressing. Homelessness does exist and is very noticeable upon visiting the town centre at night. It is partly for this reason that the Council's overall housing target is clearly defined as an 'at least' figure. The scheme's policy compliant contribution towards affordable housing needs therefore attracts significant positive weight in undertaking the overall planning balance exercise.

Proposed Building Layout, Design, Height & Scale

- 6.12. National guidance and local planning policies require that good design is a key aspect of planning with local policies seeking to ensure that new developments are appropriate to the character of the area.
- 6.13. Moreover, paragraphs 118(d) and 123(c) of the NPPF make it clear that planning decisions should promote and support the development of under-utilised land and buildings. The scheme is consistent with this objective that provides for an efficient use of land. In addition, in reflecting the materials and height of the neighbouring buildings, it is in character with the surrounding dwellings.
- 6.14. The accompanying Design & Access Statement outlines how the design of the dwellings are consistent with the surrounding area. The existing data centre presents an unattractive frontage to Upper Crown Street at odds with the otherwise terraced housing. As a result, it presents a poor contribution to the overall public realm. Subsequent to pre-application advice received a few years ago, the scheme has been materially revised so to enable a continuation of the terraced form fronting Upper Crown Street on the site's southern boundary. The site then slopes in a downward direction as one heads north into the body of the site. Further, as one moves northward, the existence of residential apartment blocks comprising up to six storeys in scale becomes visible on Southampton Street to the west and Crown Street to the north. The provision of apartments of a greater scale on these parts of the site therefore represent a logical transition from Upper Crown Street through to Crown Street. The use of apartments on the body of the site then enables an efficient use of the site consistent with the development plan and need for housing and the principles contained within the NPPF discussed earlier in this statement. The scale of the proposed dwellings are therefore consistent with the surrounding area and account for the site's somewhat transitional location.
- 6.15. As discussed, the proposed terraced development on the Upper Crown Street frontage seeks to replicate the existing architectural form found on that road. The apartment blocks take cues from a number of precedents in the immediate area including those found on Crown Street. The mansard roofs are consistent with the appearance of apartment buildings found in the locality and the buildings step back at mansard roof level so to reduce their overall perception of scale and mass. In relation to materials and architectural detailing, the scheme uses red brick as a base but with architectural detailing and varying materials so to compliment that

brickwork throughout the development and enable a varied and attractive design. The scheme therefore complies with Policy CC7.

Proposed Amenity Space & Standards for New Housing

- 6.16. As detailed in the Design & Access Statement, the proposed dwellings have been designed to comply with the nationally described space standards, consistent with Local Plan Policy H5. Further, all dwellings benefit from functional private balcony, terrace or garden space that will allow for suitable sitting out areas and outdoor storage and drying space. Communal outdoor space is also proposed on the central and western sides of the development as indicated on the landscaping drawing. Provision of this private amenity space will be appropriate to the likely mixed community that will develop, whereby all residents will value some private amenity space but the needs of future residents will differ and therefore whilst some units benefit from very large balcony spaces at top floor level or to the rear of the housing, others are smaller balconies appropriate to users less likely to be families. The scheme therefore complies with Local Plan Policy H10.

Impact upon Neighbouring Residential Amenities

- 6.17. The accompanying Design & Access Statement and Daylight Report indicate how the scheme safeguards the amenity of existing and future residents. The daylight assessment identifies that the majority of window receptors located to the closest 'worst case' dwellings surrounding the site meet and exceed minimum targets for daylight and sunlight in accordance with BRE guidance. Reference is also made to the NPPF that refers to the importance of taking a flexible approach in applying daylight and sunlight standards where there is a clear need for housing and the need to make an efficient use of a site as is achieved through the subject proposal.
- 6.18. The scheme has been designed so to achieve a substantial set back from the properties located to the east and to avoid a direct south orientation of building 3 adjacent to indigo apartments located to the north. Further, an appropriate separation has been provided between building 4 and properties to the west with no buildings located immediately adjacent to the site's southwestern side due to the existence of an existing converted residential building of considerable scale. Careful siting of the buildings and appropriate setbacks therefore ensure no undue impacts upon neighbouring residential amenities will occur accounting for the need to make efficient use of a site in an accessible location and its urban context. The scheme therefore complies with Local Plan Policy CC8.

Transport & Highways

- 6.19. The scheme is supported by a comprehensive Transport Statement. This identifies the site to be located in an accessible location and that the car and cycle parking can be provided in an acceptable manner consistent with the Council's parking standards. Further, the proposals are anticipated to reduce the number of peak and daily vehicle trips and the number of vehicle movements associated with the leased car parking bays will remain the same. The report therefore concludes that the development would not result in a severe residual impact in accordance with the NPPF's test.

Sustainability & Energy

- 6.20. The scheme is supported by a detailed Energy & Sustainability Statement that assesses the predicted energy performance and carbon dioxide emissions from the proposed development. The report proposes a communal air source heat pump approach to enable low carbon technology to be used effectively on the development. Whilst this would be sufficient to meet the Council's policy standards it is also proposed that photovoltaic panels will be used on the flat roof elements of the 3 respective apartment blocks. The scheme therefore over performs when considered against the relevant Local Plan Policies CC2 to CC4. Further, the redevelopment of a previously developed site in an accessible location forms an inherently sustainable approach towards meeting residential needs. Consequently, the scheme's sustainability and energy impact attracts positive weight in the overall planning balance.

Ecology, Drainage, Noise & Air Quality

- 6.21. The scheme is supported by comprehensive reports relating to ecology, drainage, noise and air quality. They confirm that the proposal is entirely appropriate having regard to these technical disciplines and the scheme complies with perspective development plan policies accordingly.

Summary

- 6.22. This application proposes 46 dwellings on a brownfield site to the north of Upper Crown Street. The area is characterised by its location as a transition between the greater densities located in the town centre to the north and the terraced housing to the south / east. The scheme therefore reflects this variety and provides an appropriate design solution for this location which enables the efficient use of the site and a material improvement in the site's overall

design quality. Further, it offers a material contribution towards defined housing needs (including affordable), whilst maintaining the amenity and privacy of both current and future residents. Detailed technical reports have been prepared having regard to relevant disciplines. It therefore complies with the Local Plan policies and the development plan when considered as a whole.

7. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES & SUMMARY

- 7.1. Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 confirms that determination should be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. For the reasons stated above, the application scheme is submitted entirely in accordance with relevant development plan policy when considered as a whole, recognising the site's location in a highly accessible location, adjacent to the Reading Central Area boundary.
- 7.2. With the above context in mind, the scheme is now assessed in relation to each of the defined pillars of sustainability contained within paragraph 8 of the NPPF.

An economic role

- 1) Increased house building in an area where there is a demand for new housing that in turn drives economic growth further and faster than any industry. In this regard, the proposals would contribute to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is being made available in the right place and at the right time to support growth.
- 2) For the economy to function, sufficient housing is required in the right locations and at the right time. This site, within a short waling distance of Reading town centre and transport services lies in a sustainable location.
- 3) The provision of 46 homes in a Borough where there is an established need for such new homes.
- 4) The application site is immediately available and can deliver much needed housing during the early part of the five year housing land supply period.
- 5) Meeting housing needs is a benefit (especially with the provision of affordable units), consistent with the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of housing.
- 6) In order for the economy to function, sufficient housing is required in the right locations and at the right time. Sites close to the centre of Reading and on previously developed land are considered by the Council to be an appropriate location for new housing development having regard to the speatial strategy.
- 7) Creation of construction jobs at a range of skill levels.

- 8) Create or support between 110 and 143 direct, indirect and induced jobs from the homes built on the site¹;
- 9) In terms of household expenditure, data from the ONS Family Expenditure Survey 2018-19² shows that the 'average UK household spend' is £571.80 per week (Table A33) (or £29,815 per year), whereas in South East England it is 19.3% higher than the UK average (Table A33). This means average weekly spend per household is £682.20. For this scheme, the total gross expenditure could be worth circa £1.6 million per year to the economy. A proportion of this household expenditure is anticipated to be spent in local shops and services and will help sustain the existing services in Reading. Given the current economic challenges facing the UK these are significant economic benefits.
- 10) Increased expenditure in the local area will support FTE jobs.

A social role

- 1) The provision of 19 additional affordable housing units in the Borough is a substantial social benefit. Further, future residents will be in close proximity to a wide range of other uses including the shops and services in Reading town centre and the wider area.
- 2) The appeal scheme secures high quality residential accommodation consistent with Development Plan.
- 3) The scheme provides homes that are accessible to local services.
- 4) A high quality design will enable a material improvement when compared to the site's current limited contribution to the public realm.

An environmental role

- 1) In terms of the environmental role, the site is not designated for its landscape, ecological value, open space, or recreational value. The scheme would not result in any significant harmful landscape or visual effects as it is visually well contained.
- 2) The site's sustainable location of the site ensures that pollution through transport movements would be minimised.
- 3) The proposals would deliver sustainable homes allowing the fulfilment of this important objective whilst at the same time moving to a low carbon economy and securing an environmentally sustainable form of new residential development.
- 4) The reuse of previously developed land is inherently sustainable and actively supported by the NPPF.

¹ See page 13 of the Homes Builders Federation "Economic Footprint of UK Housebuilding " (July 2018) - <https://www.hbf.co.uk/news/economic-footprint-uk-house-building-july-2018/>

²

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/personalandhouseholdfinances/expenditure/bulletins/familyspendingintheuk/april2018tomarch2019/relateddata>.

- 5) The scheme is supported by comprehensive Sustainability & Energy Strategy that seeks to exceed the Council's policy requirements.

- 7.3. By meeting economic, social and environmental goals the proposed development accords with the sustainable development principles contained within the NPPF. It is development plan compliant and can be approved without delay consistent with paragraph 11 of the NPPF.

Summary

- 7.4. The application site is located in an accessible location on previously developed land. Further, the site itself is prime for residential intensification and offers the opportunity for a substantive improvement in the site's overall design quality and contribution to the public realm.
- 7.5. The accompanying plans demonstrate that the layout, orientation, scale and design of the scheme is fully compliant with the design based policies and will not be consistent with the site's transitional location and the wider character of the area. Further, the proposal will have no material adverse impact on the amenity of neighbouring residential properties, nor on the historic or natural environment.
- 7.6. The scheme proposes 46 new residential dwellings, including a policy compliant affordable housing provision. It therefore directly contributes to the Council's minimum housing needs and the pressing need for housing advocated in the NPPF.
- 7.7. The scheme proposes a policy compliant scheme having regard to the development plan as a whole and relevant material considerations including the NPPF. Consequently, the application can be supported and planning permission granted.
