



Town Planning Bureau

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Planning, Heritage, Design & Access Statement

RE: APPLICATION FOR CHANGES TO THE SHOP FRONT OF A LISTED BUILDING.

SITE: 2-4 QUEEN VICTORIA STREET AND 149-150 FRIAR STREET, READING.

This letter forms the Planning, Heritage, Design & Access Statement for the above proposed works at the above identified property.

Date: May 2021

The application comprises:

Our ref: TPB-678-ST3

1. Completed application forms.
2. Red edged site location plan.
3. Existing and proposed drawings.

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

web
www.tpbureau.co.uk

'Alterations to ground floor principle façade; internal alterations and associated works'.

We should be grateful if you would give full consideration to this application for full planning permission for changes to the ground floor principal façade of a listed building and internal alterations and the matters set out below.

1. The Site, Surrounding Area & Context

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

Both QVS and Friar Street are key primary retail streets within the town centre and are in a highly accessible location, approximately 200m from Reading Railway Station to the north.

The site comprises units within a Grade II listed building, dating back to the early 1880s/1900s, similar to many of the properties on QVS, in that it comprises retail accommodation arranged over the ground and basement floors.

In the surrounding area, the remaining 1st, 2nd and 3rd floors are often office accommodation, albeit there are many vacant units, or in more recent years, these have been converted to residential, as is the case at no. 2-4 QVS (see Planning history below).



RTPI

mediation of space · making of place

Members of the Royal Town Planning Institute

These buildings are all of a uniform design as per the application Site, with tiled and terracotta principal facades and continuous ground floor retail frontages.

The proposal in this location represents a unique opportunity to enhance and utilise this highly accessible location within the town centre, including the restoration and secured longevity of the Listed Buildings.

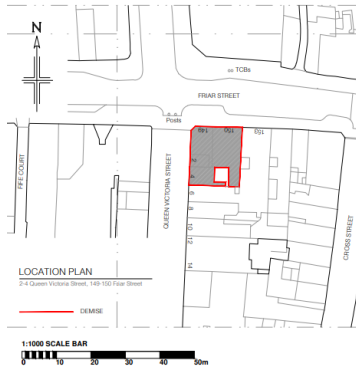


Image: Site location plan

The existing building is currently in a poor state of repair and has been much altered and much changed from its original state on the ground floors, and will benefit from refurbishment of the external façade and internal arrangement to modernise its usage. There is also a strong desire for a consistent approach to the frontages in Queen Victoria street.

The proposals accord with national and local planning policy and guidance, represent sustainable development and there are no material considerations that indicate that planning permission and listed building consent should not be granted for this proposed scheme.

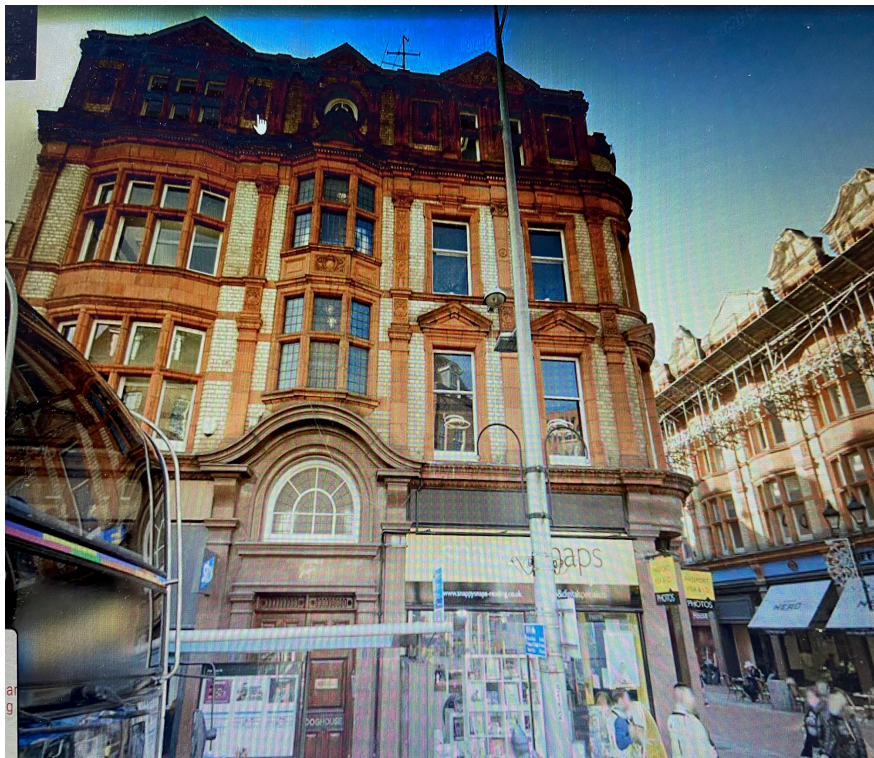


Image: Google Images - 149 Friar Street, Reading

2. Site & Planning History

Of relevance to this application is the below consent, for conversion to residential for the vacant retail units on the upper floors. This shows the importance of bringing back into use underutilised spaces. In the same way, the internal alterations to the site and the external changes to the facade proposed in this location will help to preserve and enhance this listed building, modernising, but still in-keeping with its heritage.

2-4 QVS: Planning and listed building consent was granted in 2017 (app refs: 170210 and 170211) for, “conversion of vacant office accommodation at first, second and third floor levels to create 7 x 2 bed residential units with part of ground floor and basement for ancillary storage space”. These proposals demonstrate the acceptability of loss of office floorspace in this part of Reading town centre and the introduction of accommodation.

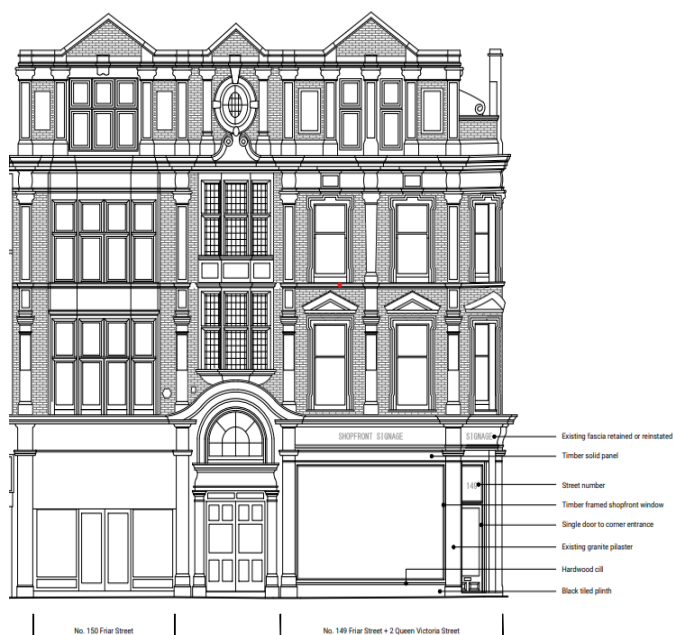
Relevant Adjacent Site History

There are numerous RBLP applications related to external shopfront alterations and signage which have not been included, but show that there is a real desire for a consistent approach to the frontages in Queen Victoria street.

Site: 1-15 Queen Victoria Street / 147-148 Friar Street: Planning permission and listed building consent has been sought for the following development for, “Part demolition of rear of site; repair and refurbishment of listed buildings; change of use of upper floors from office (Use Class E(g)) to apart hotel (Use Class C1); erection of a threestorey rear extension with mansard; erection of a part-single, part-two storey rear addition (Use Class E(a) or (b)); alterations to ground floor principle façade; creation of public square; and associated works.

The site above was subject to Pre apps and detailed consultation with Planning officers, Councillors, Reading BID, Reading Civic, Reading CAAC, amenity societies, business, local residents and social media. The feedback to date has been overwhelming positive and level of support has been beyond the Applicant’s expectations for the site, which is a positive endorsement for the minor changes proposed over the road at the site of this proposal.

3. The Proposal - Design & Layout



Internal Alterations

The application is accompanied by plans and drawings (see enclosed drawings pack) showing the existing layout and the proposed alteration of the internal layout and features.

The proposed plans show the new intended layout for each unit. Of the building elements to be retained, the internal alterations include:

- Removal of internal partitions and doors (including store and workshop etc);
- Removal of fixed furniture and fittings, such as built-in cabinets, counters and sanitaryware;
- Retention of sanitaryware on basement level.
- New partitions and doorways;
- Internal staircases will remain as existing.

Façade Alterations

The principal alterations to the front façades of the existing buildings will be at ground floor with the creation of new, uniform shopfronts (see enclosed drawings pack).

These will reinstate the original shopfront layouts and rhythm to the ground floor façade of QVS, utilising the existing shop frontage spacing, framed by granite pilasters, which will be retained. The shopfronts will have metal framed glazing and glass single entrance doors, uniform signage and street numbering and a black tiled plinth. This will continue round the corner to include 149 Friar Street, retaining the larger prominent unit here.

The original features of the cast iron columns, colouring and shop front dimensions will be retained. There will be timber windows and brick and terracotta surrounds, matching the materials and detailing of the building.

4. Access

Existing access to no.149 Friar street, is via a corner entrance onto Friar Street.

Despite the internal changes to merge no.2 QVS and no.149 Friar Street, as well as other internal amendments, the access from Friar street will remain the same, with Timber framed shop front windows either side of the single door to the corner entrance. Existing fascias will be retained or reinstated.

Access is via a level threshold. Access for number 4 QVS will be onto QVS, and access for no.150 Friar Street will be onto Friar Street. As existing (see the proposed plans included with this submission).

Car Parking

There is no car parking on site at present and none proposed.

Cycle Parking

Cycle parking would be provided on site by means of a cycle store located within the basement demise.

Servicing

The site does not benefit from car parking and it is not possible for any to be accommodated given the listed status of the building. Due to the City Centre location car parking provision is not necessary due to the highly sustainable nature of the site.

Given the location it is anticipated that travel to and from the retail units by public transport particularly the Metrolink and railway.

Vehicle movements associated with the retail units will be minimal and will not have a material impact on the highway network.

Where deliveries are made, it is anticipated that any deliveries will be combined to not result in a material increase in trips.

During the alteration works any waste generated will be stored within the building/site. This will be transferred to contractor vehicles which will park in the identified loading bay. Contractor vehicles will only park temporarily within this bay and will use nearby on street and public car parks at other times.

5. Relevant Planning Policy

Planning Policy Framework

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

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2019)

The NPPF establishes overarching national policies for plan making and decision taking. At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development where permission should be granted for development that accords with an up-to-date development plan, or where material considerations indicate otherwise.

Whilst the NPPF as a whole has been considered, of particular note is chapter 16: conserving and enhancing the historic environment.

This sets out the rigorous policy tests that should be adhered to in the assessment of the significance of a statutorily protected heritage asset and the impacts of proposed development.

Reading Borough Local Plan (RBLP) (2019)

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

Policy Considerations

The RBLP 2019 forms part of the adopted Development Plan, the principal policies relevant to this application include:

Sustainability, Design and Amenity:

- Policy CC1 - Presumption in favour of sustainable development;
- Policy CL2 - Sustainable Design and Construction;
- Policy CC5 - Waste minimisation and storage
- Policy CC6 - Accessibility and the intensity of development
- Policy CC7: Design and the public realm;
- Policy CC8: Safeguarding amenity

Natural and Historic Environment:

- Policy EN1: Protection and enhancement of the historic environment;
- Policy EN6: New development in a historic context

Transport:

- Policy TR1: Promote and improve sustainable transport modes
- Policy TR3: Access, traffic and highway related matters;
- Policy TR4: Cycle routes and facilities;
- Policy TR5: Car and cycle parking and electric vehicle charging

Retail and Leisure:

- Policy RL1: Network and hierarchy of centres;
- Policy RL2: Scale and location of retail, leisure and culture development;

Central Reading:

- Policy CR1: Definition of Central Reading;
- Policy CR2: Design in Central Reading;
- Policy CR7: Primary frontages in Central Reading; and
- Policy CR8: Small shop units in Central Reading.

Planning Policy Designations

The site is subject to the following planning policy designations from the RBC Proposals Map 2019:

- Adjacent Classified Highway Network (Friar Street);
- Adjacent identified Cycle Route (QVS and Friar Street);
- Primary Shopping Area;
- Office Core;
- Central Core; and
- Designated Primary Frontage in Central Reading (proposed).

The Site is located within Flood Zone 1, as identified on the Government Flood Map for Planning. Flood Zone 1 is at low probability of flooding and defined as land having less than 1 in 1,000 annual probability of river or sea flooding and sequential tests are met. The proposal to change the shop frontage and the internal alterations are as such that they will have no impact on this low risk of flooding.

In addition, the site has the following statutory heritage designations: • 2-4 QVS and 149-150 Friar Street - Grade II Listed.

6. Planning Considerations

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The NPPF establishes the government's planning policies for new development within England and how these are expected to be applied. 'At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which should be seen as a golden thread running through both plan-making and decision-taking'. In July 2018 the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government published the revised NPPF incorporating around 85 reforms. The sections most relevant here are outlined below:

Paragraph 11 of the NPPF establishes the presumption in favour of sustainable development, whereby proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan should be approved without delay. The up-to-date development plan in this case is the RBLP, which has been prepared with consideration to the NPPF and was adopted after the current NPPF.

Section 12 - Achieving well-designed places (formerly Section 7 - Requiring Good Design)

Paragraph 124: The creation of high quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities. Being clear about design expectations, and how these will be tested, is essential for achieving this. So too is effective engagement between applicants, communities, local planning authorities and other interests throughout the process.

Paragraph 127: Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments: a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development; b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping; c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities); d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit; e) optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and f) create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.

Section 16 - Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment (formerly Section 12)

Paragraph 189: Requires that the significance of any heritage assets affected by development proposals, including any contribution made by their settings, should be described by an applicant. The level of detail should be proportionate to an asset's importance.

Paragraph 190: Local planning authority to identify and assess the significance of heritage assets affected, including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset.

Paragraph 193: When considering the impact of a proposed 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.

Paragraph 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.

The National Planning Practice Guidance

On March 6th 2014 the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) launched the Planning Practice Guidance website which includes the section 'Conserving and enhancing the historic environment'. The guidance is a live document intended to provide further detailed information with regard to the implementation of the NPPF.

English Heritage, Conservation Principles

The Principles, Policies and Guidance for the sustainable management of the historic environment were produced to strengthen the credibility and consistency of decisions taken and advice given by Historic England staff (formerly English Heritage). The guidance is intended to be read by local authorities, property owners, developers and professional advisers and is fully aligned with the NPPF and many Local Plans refer to it as important policy.

Historic England, Good Practice Advice In Planning Note 2 - Managing Significance In Decision-Taking In The Historic Environment

The purpose of this note is to provide information on good practice to assist local planning authorities, consultants, owners, applicants and other interested parties in implementing historic environment policy in the NPPF and the related guidance contained within the National Planning Practice Guidance.

Historic England, Good Practice Advice In Planning Note 3 - The Setting Of Heritage Assets

This note provides guidance on managing change within the settings of heritage assets and supersedes 'The Setting of Heritage Assets', English Heritage, 2011

Reading Borough Local Plan (RBLP) (2019) Key Planning Considerations -

The following are considered to be the key considerations for this planning application:

1. Principle of development and proposed uses (Retail use)
2. Design Considerations.
3. Heritage Impacts.
4. Impact on Amenity.
5. Transport and Parking.
6. Servicing and Waste

Principle of Development and Proposed Uses

The NPPF sets out a presumption in favour of sustainable development unless the development would result in demonstrable and significant effects.

The NPPF states these assets are an irreplaceable resource, and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations (para.184).

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 (para.197)

Policy CC1 Reiterates the presumption in favour of sustainable development within the NPPF (noted above) and will approve developments that are in accordance with policy. Proposals contrary to the development plan will be refused unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The following key principles for the central Reading area are set out within the RBLP:

- The centre will contain a broad range of different but complementary uses within an area easily accessed by foot.
- The centre will appeal to all sectors of Reading's population as a place to live in, work in, study in and visit.
- New development will exhibit an excellent, safe and sustainable quality of design that contributes to the attraction of the centre.
- Areas and features that positively contribute to the unique and historic character of central Reading will be protected and, where appropriate, enhanced.

The Proposal

The proposal will play an important role in achieving those objectives, providing an enhanced retail offering and protecting and enhancing key heritage assets.

Consideration must also be given to the long-term potential impacts of the current Covid19 pandemic on the retail and leisure economy and behaviours of shoppers, tourists and workforces. A reinvigorated and enhanced retail and leisure town centre destination will play an important role in the post-Covid19 recovery of the Reading economy, encouraging a return to physical retailing and adaptable to a post-Covid19 environment.

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

Retail Use

Policy 6.25 At paragraph 85, the NPPF requires planning decisions to support the role of town centres, taking a positive approach to their growth and adaptation.

The focus of main town centre uses being located within town centres is highlighted at paragraph 86.

The Site is located within Reading Town Centre and is within an area designated as a Primary Shopping Area (including Primary Shopping Frontage), Office Core and Central Core.

Policy CR1 states that for proposed main town centre uses, the following will apply:

- Retail development will take place in the Primary Shopping Area;

Reading is identified as a Regional Centre under Policy RL1, where the greatest levels of development and change will be seen. The vitality and viability of centres should be maintained and enhanced.

The following improvements will be acceptable: • Accessibility and transport improvements; • Broadening range of facilities; and • Environmental enhancements.

Policy RL2 focuses retail and main town centre leisure and culture development of over 2,500 sqm to within town centres.

Under Policy CR7, ground floor uses in primary frontages in Central Reading should be in use classes A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, C1, D1, D2 or related sui generis uses (as per defined Use Classes prior to 1st September 2020).

Development must provide an active frontage with a display window or glazed frontage at ground floor level.

QVS is identified under Policy CR8 as a street that is characterised by small shop units, of less than 75 sqm, which make an important contribution to the diversity of the town centre.

In these areas, the amalgamation of individual shop fronts will not be permitted and major new retail development in the Primary Shopping Area should include a range of small shops.

The Proposal

The proposal will enhance and re-purpose the existing retail space into a new functional and modern fit-for-purpose layout of Use Class E(a) and E(b). All of the retail units will be under the 75sq.m. identified for the required small shop units, which will retain and enhance this existing provision and character to QVS, assisting small businesses and a community of independent retailers and groups such as 'Reading Indies'.

The proposals offer that smaller, boutique retail environment and opportunity for independent retailers to create a destination and community of businesses.

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

Design Considerations

There are several key separate elements to the design of the proposals that warrant individual focus as part of the policy assessment.

The following elements of the proposed external works are addressed in turn below. The internal works are discussed below under heritage considerations, we also refer readers to the drawings provided as part of this application pack.

- Repairs/works to the principle facades;
- Shop fronts

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

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

Policy CC7 reflects the national position in seeking high quality design, maintaining and enhancing the character and appearance of the area within which it is located.

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

- Respond positively to their local context and create or reinforce local character and distinctiveness, including protecting and enhancing the historic environment of the Borough and providing value to the public realm;
- Address the needs of all in society and are accessible, usable and easy to understand by them, including providing suitable access to, into and within, its facilities, for all potential users, including disabled people, so that they can use them safely and easily; • Are visually attractive as a result of good high-quality built forms and spaces.

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

- Respect the existing grid layout, provide continuity and enclosure and frontages that engage with the street at lower levels. Enhance ease of movement through and around the central area
- High quality architectural details and materials should be used, respecting form and quality in local areas
- Should be designed with consideration to adjacent development sites, not preventing or causing unreasonable burdens on future development.

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

The Proposal

Replacement works will be undertaken to allow for the changes to the units and the frontage required, these will be sensitive like-for-like replacements and retaining and repairing existing elements where possible, representing a sympathetic restoration and enhancement of character of the existing buildings.

The 149 Friar street entrance will remain in the same location. As will the no.4 QVS street entrance, retaining the historic ground floor shopfront rhythm.

Care has been taken in the design of the ground floor shopfronts to closely reflect the design, scale and detailing of the original shopfronts of the QVS terrace, as understood from historic photographs and records. The original uniformity and consistency of the QVS frontage has been lost over time with the alteration of individual shopfronts, amalgamation of units and addition of signage.

The proposals seek to reinstate the historic shopfront design and uniformity, creating a unique historical character to this part of QVS in the style of boutique heritage retail. Along the main QVS frontage, each shopfront will have the same metal framed glazing with single access door, wooden sill and black tiled base plinth.

The prominent corner unit at 145 Friar Street will be of the same detailing and treatment as the remainder of QVS, whilst retaining the scale and character of this larger corner unit.

The use of redbrick in construction with lighter, pale coloured architectural detailing is characteristic in this part of Central Reading and a feature of the listed QVS terrace with its red terracotta detailing and lighter yellow brick construction.

The proposals will be in keeping with, and respectful to, the existing buildings and setting.

Heritage Impacts

The NPPF requires proposals affecting statutory heritage assets to describe the significance of the assets (paragraph 189). Paragraph 193 states that great weight should be given to the conservation of designated heritage assets when assessing development and paragraph 194 states that any harm to the significance of an asset will require clear and convincing justification for such harm.

Paragraph 196 states that where less than substantial harm would be caused to significance, then public benefits including optimum viable use should be considered.

Policy EN1 of the RBLP seeks the protection and enhancement of the historic environment. All proposals will be expected to protect and where possible enhance the significance of heritage assets and their settings, the historic character and local distinctiveness of the area in which they are located.

Applications affecting Listed Buildings must not have an adverse impact on those elements which contribute to their special architectural or historic interest, including their setting. The Council will proactively seek solutions for assets at risk, including consideration of appropriate development schemes that will ensure the repair and maintenance of the asset.

Policy EN6 states that, in areas characterised by heritage assets, new development will make a contribution to the historic character by respecting and enhancing its architectural and visual qualities and considering how heritage considerations can influence the design of new development.

The following will be considered:

- Positive contribution to the existing historic townscape;
- Sensitivity to historic context;
- Reflection of borough-wide major heritage themes that contribute to local distinctiveness;
- Whether the development promotes and/or improves access to previously undiscovered or neglected historic significance.

The building is Grade II listed, and as such, the heritage impact must be assessed.

The following heritage overview reviews the proposed works and their impact on the identified heritage significance of the assets.

Repair works to halt deterioration:

- Continued deterioration of architectural detailing and external features will cause harm to the heritage significance.
- Reinstating structural stability and repairing and reinstatement of façade detailing will remove risk of harm and represent a benefit to the heritage asset.

New Shopfronts and signage:

- Proposed new shopfront design will provide a coherent architectural approach and reinstate consistency to the terrace and street.
- Detailing, and design will reflect traditional design of historic shopfronts and represent a significant enhancement to the architectural integrity and authenticity of the asset.

- The proposed timber windows and brick and terracotta surrounds would be wholly appropriate in terms of form, materials, character and detailing. These works represent an enhancement to the architectural interest.

Internal alterations:

- Replacement of modern basement partitions will not give rise to heritage impact.
- Whilst there would be a change to the character of the ground floor, no historic fabric will be lost, architectural elements will be retained (e.g. tall columns) and the commercial nature and character will be retained. This will not affect the heritage significance.
- Due to the heavy alterations already in existence, the internal spaces are of no heritage value.

The Proposal

The negative impacts would be mitigated, if not avoided, by the sympathetic design and considerable enhancements brought about by the benefits of the proposals, including:

- Preventing further deterioration of the Listed Buildings;
- Reviving the underused assets, providing an active and viable use that will provide for their future conservation and maintenance;
- Reinstatement of in-keeping historic shopfronts, enhancing the significance and authenticity of the buildings;
- Retention and restoration of key elements of heritage significance, such as the facades, internal elements of significance and elements of legible historical plan form; and
- Opportunities to reinstate appropriate detailing internally that retain a higher degree of survival.

The proposal represents a unique opportunity to save and restore these important heritage assets, breathing new life into the Listed Buildings and this part of the town centre. The significant heritage and public benefits of the proposal far outweigh the less than substantial harm (negligible harm) arising to the heritage significance and result in a net benefit and enhancement to the current situation.

The proposals are considered to comply with relevant tests and requirements of the NPPF and Policies EN1 and EN6 of the RBLP.

Public Benefit

In addition to heritage benefits, the NPPF requires an assessment of the balance of harm against other public benefits arising from development proposals.

It is clear that the reinstatement and enhancement of these important heritage assets are in themselves of public benefit, but the proposal will also deliver the following public benefits:

- Repair and reinstatement of the original historic frontages of the listed buildings and the architectural detailing that contributes to their significance;
- Visual improvement to these prominent retail streets with uniform shop frontages, signage and lighting, respectful to the original historic frontages
- Enhancing the diversity of retail provision and attracting boutique 'heritage retail' and independent retailers
- Provision for small businesses and shops with appropriate-sized retail units to meet demand and support the small business market

- The proposals will arrest the decline of QVS and support and bolster the Reading economy, which is of particular importance at this current time and will play an important role in the post-Covid19 recovery of the town centre.

Impact on Amenity

Paragraph 127 of the NPPF promotes development that will create a high standard of amenity for existing and future users.

Policy CC8 of the RBLP stipulates that development Must not cause a detrimental impact to living environment of existing or future residential properties in terms of (inter alia):

- Privacy and overlooking;
- Access to sunlight and daylight;
- Visual dominance and overbearing effects of a development;
- Harm to outlook;
- Artificial lighting; and
- Security and Safety

The property is a corner site, which has windows on three elevations, which ensures that there are copious areas of glass that provide a good outlook.

In terms of outlook from all relevant receptors, the proposed changes to the retail units represent a visually attractive development and improvement on the existing view, adding interest and an active, changing scenery.

All units have east or south facing windows, this ensures that the units will benefit from sunlight and daylight

The Site's town centre location benefits from existing natural surveillance of a busy high street and existing on-street CCTV network.

The retail frontages of QVS and Friar Street benefit from this and additional security measures that may be implemented by individual occupiers, such as internal CCTV.

The Proposal

The scheme will protect the amenities of existing residents and will provide a well thought out layout that provides good levels of outlook, access to sunlight and daylight and security and safety.

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

Transport and Parking

Sustainable Transport

The NPPF promotes sustainable modes of transport and opportunities for development to increase the use of walking, cycling and public transport as modes of travel.

Paragraph 104 supports an appropriate mix of uses across areas and larger sites with the aim of minimising the number and length of trips. Paragraph 108 seeks to ensure that appropriate opportunities to promote sustainable transport modes in developments have been taken, that safe and suitable access to the site can be gained by all users and that acceptable mitigation can be provided where required.

Policy TR1 states that developments should promote and improve sustainable transport facilities, encouraging walking, cycling and the use of public transport.

RBLP Policy TR3 states that development will only be permitted where:

- Accesses and works to the highway comply with the adopted standards of the Transport Authority;
- The development would not have a material detrimental impact on the functioning of the transport network;
- The proposals would not be detrimental to the safety of users of the transport network, including pedestrians and cyclists;
- The proposal would not generate regular movement of heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) on unsuitable roads, or on roads without easy access to the Classified Highway Network; and
- For non-residential uses, or new dwellings on classified roads, off-street servicing would be provided.

In relation to cycle routes and facilities, Policy TR4 requires developments to improve access for cyclists to, from and within the development.

The Site is in a highly accessible location in the heart of the town centre, with immediate access to town centre shops, services and facilities. There is extremely good access to public transport with the busy bus route a long Friar Street and Reading Railway Station approximately 250m to the north. The pedestrianised nature of QVS and other shopping parades, as well as the traffic restrictions along Friar Street, make the area surrounding the Site pedestrian and cycle friendly, enhancing the safe accessible nature of the Site.

Cycle Parking

Paragraph 105 of the NPPF states that parking standards should take into account the accessibility of sites, type and mix of development and availability of public transport. Policy TR5 of the RBLP requires car and cycle parking provision that is appropriate to the accessibility of locations to sustainable transport facilities, particularly public transport.

The Reading Parking Standards and Design SPD establishes the following car parking standards of relevance to the proposals that apply to Zone 1 (central Reading) and are a maximum:

- A1-A5 Retail: nil
- C1 Hotels: 0.25 spaces per room

The following cycle parking standards are a minimum as set out in the SPD:

- A1 Food Retail: 1 space per 6 staff and 1 space per 300 sqm
- A1 Non-Food Retail up to 1,000 sqm: 1 space per 6 staff and 1 space per 250 sqm
- A1 Non-Food Retail Over 1,000 sqm: 1 space per 6 staff and 1 space per 300 sqm
- A2 Financial & Professional Services: 1 space per 6 staff
- A3 Restaurants & Cafes: 1 space per 6 staff and 1 space per 300 sqm
- A4 Eating Establishment: 1 space per 6 staff and 1 space per 300 sqm
- A5 Hot Food Take-Away: 1 space per 6 staff and 1 space per 300 sqm

Loading bays and facilities for delivery and servicing within Zone 1 will be based on the merits of the individual application.

The proposal does not require any cars as it is merely changes to shop frontage and internal layout and is as such, a car-free development that reflects the highly accessible location of the Site, as described above. The proposals are therefore considered to be appropriate and in accordance with the NPPF and Policy TR5 of the RBLP.

Secure parking spaces will be provided at a level of 1 space per 6 staff to comply with cycle parking standards for C1 use and retail use. These will be provided in a designated cycle store in the basement level.

Additionally, there are multiple opportunities for cycle parking in the immediate vicinity, with Sheffield-style bike stands located on Broad Street, 100m south of the Site, and slightly further away on Friar Street and Belgrave Street

The Proposal

The location of the Site encourages the use of sustainable modes of transport and will have negligible impact on the local highway and transport network.

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

The proposal therefore accords with the NPPF and RBLP Policies TR1, TR3, TR4 and TR5.

Servicing and Waste

Policy CC5 requires development to minimise the generation of waste in construction and use of buildings. Proposals should be well designed to facilitate waste storage, reuse, recycling and composting.

The Reading Sustainable Design and Construction SPD details measures that should be considered in the pursuit of minimising and managing waste.

The re-use and refurbishment of existing buildings where possible, rather than demolition, will contribute to minimising waste and a Site Waste Management Plan (contained in the DAS) should be prepared for developments. For during the lifetime use of buildings, the SPD states that adequate provision should be made for both internal and external storage of waste.

Policy TR3 protects against detrimental impacts to highway safety and requires off-street servicing to be provided for non-residential development. The policy resists development that would give rise to regular movements of HGVs.

The existing retail units at the Site utilise existing servicing and waste arrangements, where servicing and deliveries to properties along QVS are permitted between 18:00 and 10:00.

There are also loading bays present on Friar Street, where loading is permitted between 05:00 and 23:00. Loading is also permitted on sections of double yellow lined kerbside on Friar Street outside of the 07:30-09:30 and 16:00-18:00 exclusion period.

The Proposal

The kerbside options on Friar Street, along with access from QVS, provide sufficient opportunity to continue servicing the retail units in the same manner and no further action is needed in this regard.

7. Summary and Conclusions

- This application is for full planning permission for changes to the ground floor principal façade of a listed building and internal alterations.
- The proposal provides the opportunity for preservation and enhancement of a heritage asset, alongside the desire for a consistent approach to the frontages in Queen Victoria street, and the other benefits the proposal will deliver, represent a strong justification for its approval.
- The Heritage Overview concluded that any harm to the significance of the Listed Buildings would be negligible and any harm is weighed against the conservation, preservation and enhancement of the heritage assets that the proposal delivers, which are significant.
- The proposal utilises matching materials and finishes to preserve and enhance the setting of a listed building.
- The internal works are minimal to facilitate the development and will therefore not harm the special interest of the listed building.
- The proposal will protect and enhance the amenity of existing and neighbouring occupiers.
- The units would provide good levels of amenity with good outlook and daylight levels.
- The site is in a highly accessible and sustainable location in the City Centre, close to transport links, employment opportunities, services and local amenities.
- The retail provision of the proposal maintains an appropriate use within the town centre and will enhance its vitality and viability.
- The provision of cycle parking is in accordance with parking standards.
- The proposals are of a high quality, well- considered and respond positively to heritage significance of the buildings and conservation areas.
- The scheme represents sustainable development that we submit can be supported by officers.
- The policy presumption is in favour of the grant of planning permission and there are no material considerations that outweigh that presumption.
- The proposals are therefore considered to comply with relevant planning policy and should be granted planning permission accordingly.

Should you wish to discuss this application, please do not hesitate to contact the Town Planning Bureau.

Yours faithfully

Town Planning Bureau