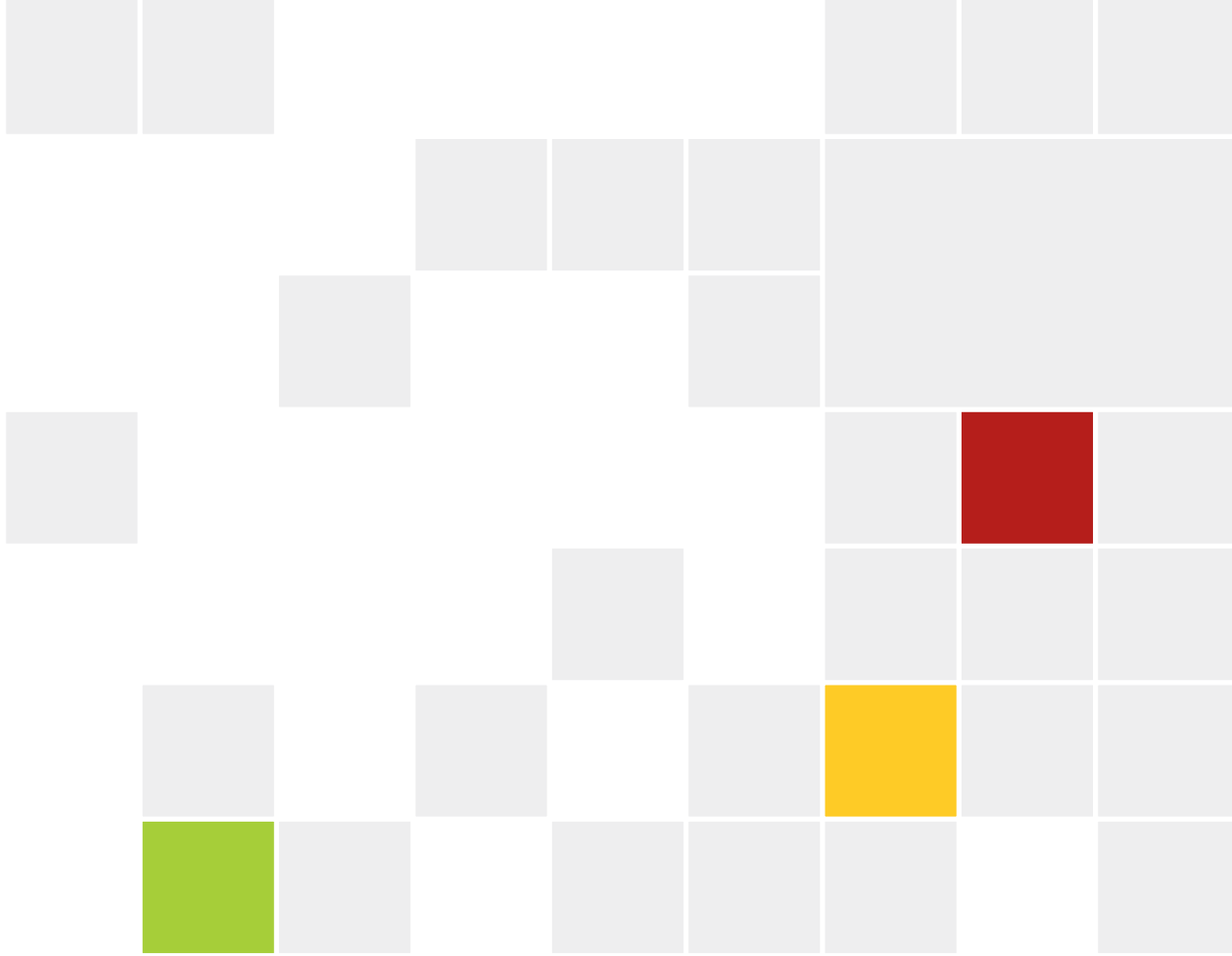
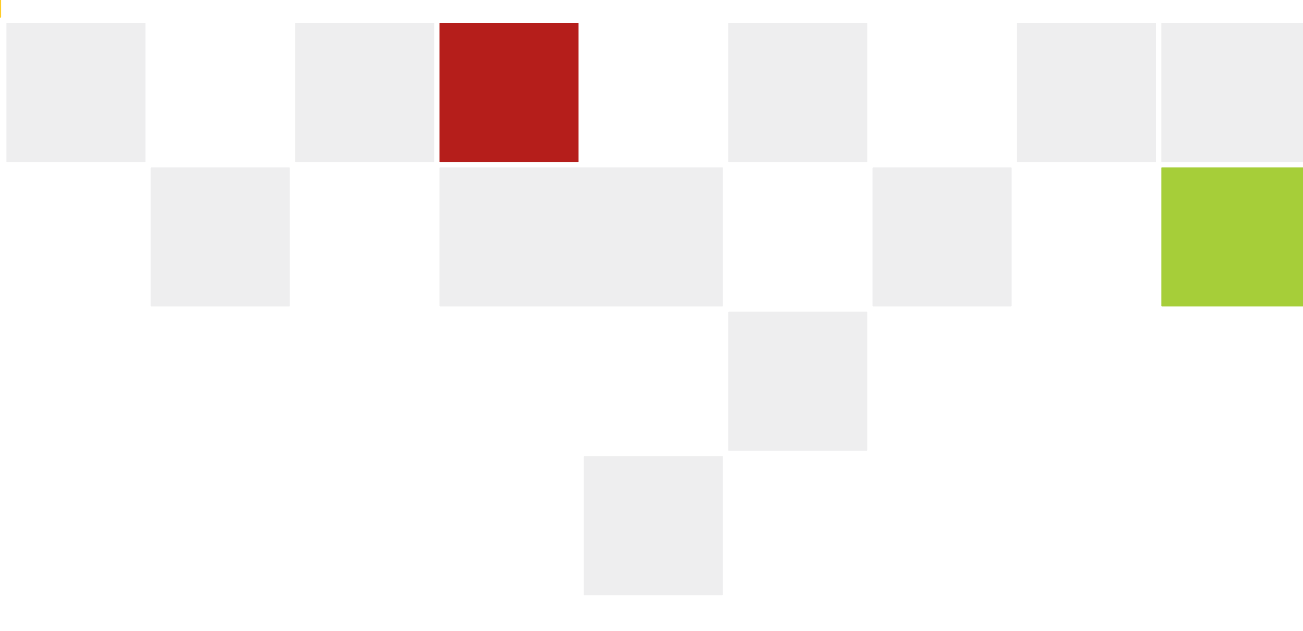




115 Chatham Street, Reading RG1 7JX

Planning and Affordable Housing Statement



Boyer

Prepared on behalf of Archel Homes Ltd | February 2021

Report Control

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction	2
2. Site and Surrounding Area	4
3. The Proposed Development	5
4. Planning History and Pre-Application	6
5. Policy Context	8
6. Assessment of the Proposals	11
7. Conclusion	19

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Planning and Affordable Housing Statement has been prepared in support of a detailed planning application by Archel Homes Ltd for the redevelopment of 115 Chatham Street, Reading RG1 7JX.
- 1.2 The site has been identified within the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019) as being within the 'West Side Major Opportunity Area'. Specifically, the allocation notes that the future development of this area will be primarily for residential use.
- 1.3 Currently, the area displays a generally poor quality of built environment and streetscape, with and the buildings on site currently 'turning their back' to Chatham Street. As such, the proposals have taken this important opportunity to redevelop the application site and introduce a new building of architectural merit which repairs the streetscene by reintroducing an active street frontage.
- 1.4 The scheme design has evolved through an iterative and collaborative design process, involving 4 separate pre-applications meetings and a detailed presentation and feedback session with the Council's Design Review Panel (DRP). A number of scheme amendments have been made throughout the process to positively respond to Officer and DRP comments. These are described in detail in the Design and Access Statement submitted with the application.
- 1.5 The design process has been informed by the site's evolving context. Discussions have been held with adjoining land owners to ensure that development proposals at adjoining sites have been considered. Equally, significant care has been taken to ensure that the proposal is respectful to, and does not harm the setting of the adjoining Grade II listed public house.
- 1.6 The proposed description of development is:

Demolition of the existing buildings on site and erection of a 3 - 5 storey building to provide 54 residential units (Class C3). Provision of private and communal external amenity areas, car and cycle parking and refuse storage.
- 1.7 Crucially, a policy compliant quantum of affordable housing is proposed, and this is considered to be a significant scheme benefit. The density and scale of the development would integrate successfully into the evolving fabric of the area, regenerating the Site and making a significant contribution to the delivery of much needed affordable housing in the Borough.
- 1.8 The proposals provide a high quality of residential accommodation with each of the market and affordable units meeting the Nationally Described Space Standards. Units either have winter gardens or balconies to provide additional amenity space and a generous communal amenity area is located to the rear. 6 M4(3) accessible dwellings are provided within the development.
- 1.9 A number of technical studies in addition to this Planning Statement have been prepared in support of this application. These include:

Table 1: Technical Studies

Document	Prepared by
Design and Access Statement	DHA Architecture
Transport Statement and Travel Plan	i-Transport
Daylight / Sunlight Assessment	EB7
Phase I Desk Based Study	ENZYGO
Archaeology and Heritage Statement	EDP
Sustainability and Drainage SuDS	Water Environment
Ecology Assessment	Aspect Ecology
Landscape Plan	Aspect Landscape
Energy and Sustainability Statement	XCO2
Air Quality Assessment	XCO2
Acoustic Assessment	XCO2
Utilities Statement	XCO2
Ventilation and Extract Statement	XCO2
Open Space Assessment	Boyer

1.10 The Planning Statement sets out the proposed development and assesses it against the relevant adopted planning policies set out in the development plan. The report is structured as follows;

- Section 2: The Site and Surrounding Area ;
- Section 3: Proposed Development;
- Section 4: Planning History and Pre-Application Response;
- Section 5: The Planning Policy Context;
- Section 6: Assessment of the proposals; and
- Section 7: Conclusions

2. SITE AND SURROUNDING AREA

- 2.1 The application site has an area of 0.42ha. There are two buildings on the site, a utilitarian two storey office building which fronts Chatham Street, and a two storey converted warehouse building to the rear. The Heritage Statement submitted with the planning application confirms that neither of the buildings have heritage value. Much of the site is taking up by car parking, and the buildings 'turn their backs' to Chatham Street, creating a sterile streetscene.
- 2.2 The site is located within close vicinity to Reading town centre ensuring excellent access to local amenities, and is within short walking distance to Reading Railway Station. The immediate vicinity is characterised by a mix of residential, retail and office uses. The majority of housing on the surrounding residential street are larger single family dwellings. The Chatham Square development is a short distance to the east of the site and is defined by a range of primarily residential buildings between 9-19 storeys in height.
- 2.3 The site has been identified within the Reading Local Plan (2019) as being within the 'West Side Major Opportunity Area', specifically within a site known as 'CR12c' which includes Chatham Street, Eaton Place and parts of Oxford Road. The allocation notes that the future development of this area will be primarily for residential use.
- 2.4 The site is not located within a conservation area. However, there are a number of listed building within close vicinity; there is a Grade II listed public house adjacent to the site (The Butler) and there are two Grade II listed building situated to the south-west of the site (Trinity Church and 118 Oxford Road). There are no locally listed buildings within close vicinity of the site. The site is also situated within flood zone 1 (lowest risk).

3. THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 3.1 The application seeks detailed planning permission for the demolition of existing buildings and the redevelopment of a building with stepped massing to provide 54 new homes together with car and cycle parking and private and communal amenity space, 16 (of which will be affordable (30%). The development would deliver a mix of new homes comprising of 1, 2 and 3 bedroom apartments as shown within the table below:

Table 2: Proposed Housing Mix

Dwelling Size	Affordable	Market	Total	Percentage
1 bedroom apartment	6	20	25	47%
2 bedroom apartment	8	18	26	49%
3 bedroom apartment	2	0	2	4%
Total	16	38	54	100%

- 3.2 The proposed new apartments will be located on previously developed land. Vehicular access will be maintained to the rear via Eaton Place and pedestrian and cycle access will be from both Chatham Street and Eaton Place. A total of 17 vehicular spaces (including 2 accessible spaces) and 32 cycle parking spaces (within a secure, weatherproof store) will be provided. Policy compliant refuse storage is also provided.
- 3.3 At present, the site is entirely covered by hardstanding and part of the applicant's objective is to enhance the site's environmental sustainability through extensive new areas of soft landscaping, including considerable new tree and shrub planting which will enhance the site's contribution within the character of the area. In addition to private winter gardens and balconies for the residential units, a generous rear communal amenity area is proposed. An accessible roof terrace is also provided at third floor level.
- 3.4 The design rationale that has informed the scheme proposals is set out within the accompanying Design and Access Statement and scheme drawings, alongside which this Statement should be read

4. PLANNING HISTORY AND PRE-APPLICATION

Planning History

- 4.1 There is no relevant planning history associated with the site.

Pre-application consultation

- 4.2 The applicant has engaged with in a collaborative pre-application process Council involving a four pre-application meetings, with Planning, Heritage, Landscaping/Sustainability and Highways Officers. The Council's final pre-application advice was provided on 22 December 2020. This advice has allowed the applicant and project team to better understand the type and nature of development most likely to be supported at the site.
- 4.3 The Council's pre-application advice and amendments to the scheme during the pre-application process are detailed below.
- 4.4 Principle of redevelopment: Officers accepted the principle of redevelopment of the site given the proposal would provide economic benefits by providing a more modern building which would result new residential accommodation in accordance with local policy.
- 4.5 Design and character: The scheme design evolved following the Council's advice and a number of design iterations have been presented to the Councils. As a result of discussions a number of positive amendments have been made. These include mediating the scheme massing away from the Grade II Listed Butlers Wine Vaults, adjusting the scheme's roof design, changes to proposed materials and fenestration detailing, and changes to the proposed internal layout of the building.
- 4.6 Affordable Housing: Officers confirmed that a minimum provision of 30% on-site affordable housing would be considered acceptable.
- 4.7 Heritage: During the discussions the design evolved as a result in order to reduce any impact on the adjoining asset and it was necessary to acknowledge the degree to which the Public House is already heavily compromised by the substantial and opposing scale of the Chatham Street Car Park to the east. The officers agreed the scheme had been carefully designed to step-up from the lowest elements closest to the listed building. The top floors were also recessed to provide a more sympathetic and gradual increase in height, to more sensitively address the listed building and avoiding crowding or overshadowing it.
- 4.8 Highways: Officers confirmed that the site is located within a sustainable location in the town centre and within proximity to public transport enabling a reduced provision of car parking spaces. Improvements to the location of cycle parking have been made following receipt of the Council's advice.

- 4.9 Overall, the pre-application process clarified that in principle the Council will support a residential led development on this site. The scheme revisions which were made during the iterative design process are detailed within the Design and Access Statement submitted with the application.

Design Review Panel (DRP)

- 4.10 The proposals were presented to the Council's DRP in January 2021. Whilst the formal written feedback has yet to be provided, the applicant received detailed and constructive feedback from the Panel who were generally supportive of the proposals. In particular, the DRP confirmed that the proposed principal height of the building was acceptable within the street context. The Panel also confirmed that the building's relationship with the adjoining Butlers Wine Vaults was acceptable.
- 4.11 Following the DRP, a number of changes were made to the scheme. In particular, the internal floorplates within the building have been 'flipped' to improve the quality of the 1 bedroom residential units. The approach of the stepped down roof adjacent to the Butlers Wine Vaults was considered to be overly fussy. The architects Design and Access Statement details how a more cohesive, rationalised roof designed has been developed to respond to the comments.
- 4.12 Final comments related to the proposed timber detailing surrounding the fenestration on the front elevation. This has been replaced by contemporary brick detailing which improves the overall composition of the front façade.

5. POLICY CONTEXT

- 5.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act requires that planning applications be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Statutory Development Plan

- 5.2 The current Development Plan for the area comprises the Reading Local Plan (2019). On this basis, policies contained within the Local Plan have been considered within our assessment. Relevant policies include:

Table 3: Local Plan (2019) Policies

Local Plan (2019)
CC1 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
CC2 – Sustainable Design and Construction
CC3 - Adaptation to Climate Change
CC4 - Decentralised Energy
CC5 - Waste Minimisation and Storage
CC6 - Accessibility and the Intensity of Development
CC7 - Design and the Public Realm
CC8 - Safeguarding Amenity
CC9 - Securing Infrastructure
EN1 - Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment
EN6 - New Development in a Historic Context
EN12 - Biodiversity and the Green Network
EN14 - Trees, Hedges and Woodland
EN15 - Air Quality
EN16 - Pollution and Water Resources
EN17 - Noise Generating Equipment
H1 - Provision of Housing
H2 - Density and Mix

H3 - Affordable Housing
H5 - Standards for New Housing
H10 - Private and Communal Outdoor Space
TR1 - Achieving the Transport Strategy
TR2 - Major Transport Projects
TR3 - Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters
TR4 - Cycle Routes and Facilities
TR5 - Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging
CR12c Chatham Street, Eaton Place and Oxford Road

Material Planning Considerations

- 5.3 In addition to the statutory development plan we consider that guidance contained within the NPPF should be taken into account by the Council when determining this application.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2019)

- 5.4 The National Planning Policy Framework sets out the Government's objective for the planning system to achieve sustainable development through economic, social and environmental gains, and to secure economic growth.
- 5.5 The overarching national planning policy theme evident from the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which the Government has advised should be at the heart of the planning system. In terms of development management, it advises that the primary objective is to foster the delivery of sustainable development and should not hinder or prevent future development.
- 5.6 The NPPF states that Local Planning Authorities should approach decision taking in a positive way to foster the delivery of sustainable development. Paragraph 38 continues by stating that:

"Local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way. They should use the full range of planning tools available, including brownfield registers and permission in principle, and work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. Decision-makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible".

- 5.7 Paragraph 59 states 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. Section 5 of the document sets the objective of boosting housing supply significantly.
- 5.8 Paragraph 118 part (c) requires that substantial weight should be given to the value of using suitable brownfield land within settlements for homes and other identified needs. Part (d) seeks to 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.
- 5.9 Paragraph 124 states that *"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."*
- 5.10 Paragraph 127 states that planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:
- *"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;*
 - *are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;*
 - *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);*
 - *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;*
 - *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*
 - *create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and wellbeing, 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."*

Supplementary Planning Guidance

- 5.11 Reading has a number of adopted supplementary planning guidance documents. Of relevance is the Sustainable Design and Construction (2019), Planning Obligations under Section 106 SPD (2015), Employment, Skills and Training SPD (2013), Residential Conversion SPD (2013), Affordable Housing SPD (2013), Affordable Housing SPD (2020) Consultation, Revised Parking Standards and Design (2011), Tree Strategy for Reading (2010), Reading Open Space Strategy Update Note (2018) and Waste Management Guidelines for Property Developers.

6. ASSESSMENT OF THE PROPOSALS

- 6.1 This section of the report assesses the proposals against the relevant statutory policies and any other material considerations.

Land Use

- 6.2 The Policy CC1 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (RBLP) requires a positive approach to development proposals that reflect the presumption in favour of sustainable development which lies at the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). To achieve sustainable development a proposal needs to meet economic, social and environmental objectives. It is considered that a proposal for new housing would contribute to providing: sufficient land for housing; a range of homes; and would make effective use of land (Para. 117 NPPF).
- 6.3 A key Government objective is to significantly boost the supply of new homes (Section 5 of the NPPF), and the local housing requirement is set out within Policy H1 of Reading Borough Local Plan (RBLP).
- 6.4 The site has been identified within the Reading Local Plan (2019) as being within the 'West Side Major Opportunity Area', specifically within a site known as 'CR12c' which includes Chatham Street, Eaton Place and parts of Oxford Road.
- 6.5 The Local Plan is clear that development of this area will be primarily for residential. There may also be some small-scale retail and leisure uses on the Oxford Road frontage (outside of the application site). The allocation recognises the site is surrounded by heritage assets, and importantly establishes the guiding principle that inappropriately scaled buildings at the fringes of the site will not be permitted. The following design and heritage sections assess the heritage significance of nearby heritage assets, and confirm that the scale of the proposed building is appropriate.
- 6.6 The policy also recognises the opportunity to enhance key frontages including via appropriate tree planting. The parameters set by this policy are applied in tandem with wider in-principle policies securing appropriate densities, typology, affordable housing contribution and mixes of new residential development.
- 6.7 The Council's pre-application response confirms that this site and the low-density buildings and open-air car park which occupy it, constitute a valuable development opportunity which can positively contribute to meeting the borough's ongoing housing need and the regeneration of this part of town. Overall, a residential redevelopment of the site which includes a policy compliant quantum of affordable housing, would optimise this underutilised site and is consistent with the overarching spatial strategy for the site set out within the Local Plan.

Residential Redevelopment

Density

- 6.8 The site achieves an efficient use of the land which is recognised as a priority both at a national level through the NPPF and locally within the Local Plan. The NPPF states that LPAs should actively “*encourage the effective use of land by reusing land that has been previously developed (brownfield land), provided that it is not of high environmental value*”. The Local Plan identifies the fact that there are considerable areas of underused land around the edge of Reading town centre, such as this site, which offer an opportunity to accommodate development at higher densities.
- 6.9 Policy CC6 of the Local Plan makes the important link between the scale and density of development and its ability to support accessibility by walking, cycling and public transport to a range of services and facilities. This supports the approach that the densest and largest scale development should take place in the most accessible locations. Policy H2, relates to density and mix and recognises the need to maximise the efficient use of land which requires that the density of residential development is informed by, amongst other things, the character and mix of uses of the area in which the site is located (including nearby heritage assets), its current and future level of accessibility by sustainable means and the need to achieve high quality design.
- 6.10 The proposed development would provide 54 dwellings which would equate to a density of approximately 370 dwellings per hectare (dph). Given, the site’s location within an area with an evolving residential character, which is driven by its location within a defined opportunity area, it is considered that the proposed density is in accordance with the Local Plan. Furthermore, the site is within an urban area close to Reading’s centre. It is highly accessible by public transport as well as being within walking and cycling distance of a range of amenities. Accordingly, the residential optimisation of the site is considered to be entirely appropriate.

Housing Mix

- 6.11 Local Plan Policy H2 identifies the Council’s preferred housing mix, and the policy’s supporting text states that with the significant need for housing in Reading and surrounding areas, it is important that efficient use is made of the land that is available to boost the delivery of new homes. The proposed development would provide a total of 54 homes in the following mix:

Table 4: Proposed Mix

Dwelling Size	Affordable	Market	Total	Percentage
1 bedroom apartment	6	20	25	47%
2 bedroom apartment	8	18	26	49%
3 bedroom apartment	2	0	2	4%

Total	16 (30%)	38 (70%)	54	(100%)
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- 6.12 In terms of the market housing mix, the Local Plan at 4.4.1.2 notes that Reading is likely to provide a significantly greater proportion of smaller dwellings than its neighbours in the Western Berkshire HMA. Given the site's central location, adjoining a busy road, it is considered that the site is less desirable to families and therefore a mix of smaller units is proposed.
- 6.13 It is also a significant material consideration that locally, streets such as Bedford Road, Charles Street and William Street are characterised by three or four bed single family houses. National and local planning policies seek to achieve a mix of unit sizes not just within a single building, but across the local area. In this instance, it is considered that the introduction of a development providing smaller residential homes will complement and balance the prevailing local mix when the surrounding streets are considered as a whole.

Affordable Housing

- 6.14 Reading's Local Plan Policy H3 (Affordable Housing) states that sites which deliver 10 or more dwellings should provide 30% of the total dwellings in the form of affordable housing. As identified within housing mix table, the applicant has confirmed that 16 (30%) of the proposed dwellings will be affordable. The tenure split reflects the most up to date position within Reading for a tradition build to sell (BtS) scheme. This currently suggests a provision at 62% social rent or affordable rent capped at 70% of the market rent with the other 38% to be a mix of other affordable housing tenures. The proposed affordable housing mix provides a tenure split of 50% social rent or affordable rent and 50% to be a mix of other affordable housing tenure. This is considered to be a proportionate tenure split which will add to the balance of local housing stock.
- 6.15 Therefore the proposed mix of affordable housing units meets the Council's desired unit mix and tenure mix in particular providing a majority of homes with two or more bedrooms, capable of accommodating families. Consequently the proposed mix responds positively to local demand. It is anticipated that the tenure of the affordable housing will be secured through the associated S106 legal agreement.

Design

- 6.16 The NPPF (Para 124) sets out that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development. The National Design Guide identifies 10 key components for good design and of particular note is the characteristic of 'Context' and it states that "*well-designed new development responds positively to the features of the site itself and the surrounding context beyond the site boundary. It should enhance positive qualities and improve negative ones.*" Additionally, there is specific reference to 'views inwards and outwards' of such sites.

- 6.17 Policy CC7 of the Council's Local Plan requires all development to be *“of high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located.”*
- 6.18 The proposals comprise a three to five storey block of 54 residential flats. This would require the demolition of both the existing warehouse-type building and utilitarian modern office block. At present, the application displays a generally poor quality of built environment and streetscape, with a large external car parking area the buildings currently ‘turning their back’ to Chatham Street. As such, there is an important opportunity to redevelop the application site and introduce a new building of architectural merit.
- 6.19 The Design and Access Statement prepared by DHA Architecture and submitted with the application explains the iterative process involved in the scheme's design development, and identifies the rationale behind the scheme design.
- 6.20 Previously, in the nineteenth and early twentieth century a row of terraced houses were located on the application site fronting Chatham Street. The proposals seek to repair the streetscene by returning the historic building line, creating a high quality contemporary building addressing the street. Generous ground floor planting in front of the building will help to soften this busy, urban area.
- 6.21 The proposal building height mediates between 3, 4 and set-back 5 storeys in height, which is considered to be appropriate in this central location within a defined opportunity area. The top storey has a significantly set back top storey, with dormer windows creating architectural articulation. The proposals were presented to the Council's Design Review Panel, who provided full endorsement of the proposed building height. In addition, the building design employs a bay elements that ensure that establish a rhythm, whilst emphasising verticality to ensure the proposed mass is visually broken down.
- 6.22 The building's height and massing has been sympathetically designed so as to maintain a visual gap with the adjoining Grade II listed Butler's Wine Vaults immediately to the east, as well as ‘stepping down’ to respect the height of this lower historic building. Overall, the proposals are considered to provide a visually interesting contemporary building.
- 6.23 The building's appearance, using a mixture of flat and parapeted cambered roofs with dormer windows, and symmetrical appearance, is designed to reflect the historic environment in Reading, whilst maintaining a contemporary appearance.
- 6.24 The material and treatment comprises a mixture of render, and light coloured red brick, with contemporary brick surrounds to the fenestration which is designed to provide interest in the Chatham Street elevation. It also deliberately contrasts with the Butler's Wine Vaults, so as to avoid a pastiche or dilution of the public house's prominence in the street, provided by its distinct architecture, and artistic and architectural treatment.

- 6.25 Pedestrian links would be provided to Chatham Street, providing an active street frontage. Generous planting to the front of the site softens what is, at present, a sterile urban environment. It is proposed that the ground floor units will each have independent street access from Chatham Street. A strip of land to the front of the site on Chatham Street is in the ownership of Reading Borough Council. The proposals envisage the landscaping of this area and initial discussions have been held with officers about the applicant entering into a S278 Agreement to provide footpath access to the residential units and associated landscaping. The adoption of the land would allow for the applicant to enter into a Section 142 licence with the Council permitting them to plant and maintain the planting along that Chatham Street frontage.
- 6.26 The new planting area proposes to use a collection of evergreen ornamental shrub and herbaceous planting adds texture and colour all year round. The frontage planting is framed by a formally clipped 0.5m high evergreen sweet box hedge which will provide both a formal edge alongside the pavement, and provide a sensory aspect to the design with a strong scent from the flowers in early spring.

Heritage

- 6.27 The NPPF (Para 124) sets out that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development. The National Design Guide identifies 10 key components for good design and of particular note is the characteristic of 'Context' and it states that *"well-designed new development responds positively to the features of the site itself and the surrounding context beyond the site boundary. It should enhance positive qualities and improve negative ones."* Additionally, there is specific reference to 'views inwards and outwards' of such sites.
- 6.28 Policy CC7 of the Council's Local Plan requires all development to be *"of high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located."*
- 6.29 Any decision made affecting listed buildings and their settings and Conservation Areas must satisfy the statutory tests of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (see in particular sections 16, 66 and 72) as well as the relevant policies within the NPPF and the Council's Local Plan.
- 6.30 Para 94 of the NPPF states that *"Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification."* Para 196 goes on to state *"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..."*
- 6.31 Policy EN1 of the Local Plan requires that historic features, areas of historic importance and other elements of the historic environment, including their settings will be protected and where possible enhanced. Applications which affect Listed Buildings will not have an adverse impact on those elements which contribute to their special character or historic interest including, where appropriate, their settings.

- 6.32 Policy EN6 requires that in areas characterised by heritage assets, the historic environment will inform and shape new development and that new development will make a contribution to the historic character of the area by respecting and enhancing its architectural and visual qualities and considering how heritage considerations can influence the design of new development.
- 6.33 An Archaeological and Heritage Statement prepared by The Environmental Dimension Partnership Ltd confirms that neither of the existing buildings on the site have any specific heritage significance, neither are they subject to any statutory protection. Consequently, their demolition and replacement with a high quality contemporary building is acceptable in principle.
- 6.34 The Heritage Statement provides a detailed assessment of the proposal's impact on the setting of nearby heritage assets. Of particular interest is the impact on the adjoining Grade II Listed Butler's Wine Vaults. The Statement confirms that the implementation of the proposed development would not result in the loss of those positive aspects of the listed building's setting that are considered to contribute positively to its significance. This comprises its position within the street scene of Chatham Street, its location within its rectangular plot and its detached surviving outbuildings to the south.
- 6.35 The existing buildings on the site which will be demolished do not currently contribute to the setting of the listed public house. Whilst the view across the car park within the Site to the western gable end of the listed building and boundary wall elevation would largely be closed off, this would not prevent appreciation of the spatial layout of the public house within the boundary plot and would not result in a loss of a designed or intended view.
- 6.36 The Heritage Statement notes that the massing of the proposed building has been carefully considered to step-up from the lowest elements at the east, closest to the listed building and broadly of similar height, to the tallest elements at the west. The top floors have also been recessed to provide a more sympathetic and gradual increase in height, to more sensitively address the listed building and avoiding crowding or overshadowing it.
- 6.37 It is not considered that the proposals would result in harm to the significance of any nearby heritage assets. Indeed, by replacing the Site's current street frontage, comprising a poor-quality office block and car park, with a well-considered residential development that takes its cues from the historic environment, the proposals will reinstate an element of the assets historic setting – i.e. residential structures with an active street frontage. This is considered to be a positive contribution to the significance of the assets, albeit to a negligible degree. Accordingly, the proposals are in compliance with policies EN1 and EN6 of the Reading Borough Local Plan, and the NPPF.

Relationship with Neighbours

Daylight and Sunlight

- 6.38 Reading Local Plan Policy CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity) expects new development to ensure that daylight/sunlight, outlook and privacy is maintained for existing occupants and neighbours in their homes. The supporting text to the policy notes that there is good practice guidance available to assist in planning decision making when considering amenity issues. The policy makes specific reference to the Building Research Establishment's (BRE) "Site layout planning for daylight and sunlight: A guide to good practice".
- 6.39 It must always be recognised that the document provides guidance and is not mandatory and is not an instrument of planning policy. It should also be recognised that the guidance is applied to all types of development in all contexts, ranging from small-scale countryside developments to high-density urban developments such as the subject of this application. It is clear within the guidance that the standards within it should be applied flexibly with respect to the development's context.
- 6.40 The application site is located within the wider West Side Major Opportunity Area. The Council's Local Plan policy CR12 promotes the residential redevelopment of sites within the West Side Major Opportunity Area (including the application site), and envisages a significant step-change to optimise the residential delivery within the local area.
- 6.41 The National Planning Policy Framework (2019) at paragraph 123 (c) states "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)".
- 6.42 This application is accompanied by a Daylight and Sunlight Report prepared by EB7. This technical assessment uses the methods set out in Building Research Establishment's (BRE) "Site layout planning for daylight and sunlight: A guide to good practice" to determine the daylight and sunlight amenity within neighbouring properties.
- 6.43 As a result of there being no relevant neighbouring residential receptors the assessment has concentrated on the quality of daylight and sunlight levels within the proposed accommodation.

Internal daylight and sunlight

- 6.44 The proposal has been carefully designed to ensure that the dwellings receive sufficient amounts of sunlight and daylight, and the number of dual aspect homes across the development has been maximised where possible.
- 6.45 In terms of sunlight, the emphasis of the BRE guidance is on living rooms rather than bedrooms and kitchens. The guide recommends that "*Sensitive layout design of flats will attempt to ensure that each individual dwelling has at least one main living room which can receive a reasonable amount of sunlight ..*"

- 6.46 An Internal Daylight and Sunlight Report prepared by EB7 is submitted with the planning application. This provides an assessment of the proposed habitable rooms throughout the development.
- 6.47 Internal daylight levels are assessed using Average Daylight Factor (ADF). This method considers the transmittance of the glazing to the room in question (i.e. how much light gets through the window glass); the net glazed area of the window in question; the total area of the room surfaces (ceiling, walls, floor and windows) and their reflectances; and the angle of visible sky reaching the window/windows in question.
- 6.48 The results indicate that 127 out of 133 (95%) rooms tested will satisfy or exceed their respective ADF target. This is considered to be an excellent level of compliance for a flatted scheme within an urban setting. However, 77 (97%) of the 79 bedrooms tested will adhere to the recommended target of 1% ADF. The two bedrooms that do not adhere to the 1% ADF target achieve c.0.9%, which is a modest transgression and would not be noticeable to the occupants.
- 6.49 In terms of Living Kitchen Diners (LKD's), 44 (94%) of 48 LKDs tested will satisfy their ADF target of 1.5%. The remaining rooms have levels ranging between 1.3-1.4% ADF against the 1.5% target. This minor transgression of up to 0.2% is unlikely to be noticeable to the occupants. Moreover, a number of the rooms that fall marginally below the targets do so because of the effect of projecting balconies above the windows.
- 6.50 While balconies provide much-needed private amenity space, they are a common trade-off with internal daylight penetration to the room due to the projection of above the window below. This effect of balconies is recognised within the BRE guidance which encourages flexibility in such circumstances although, as noted, the deviation from the targets in this instance is exceptionally minor.
- 6.51 Overall, the development provides daylight levels which meet or exceed the target levels appropriate for an urban environment, where transgressions are present they are generally minor and certainly in keeping with an urban environment.

Sunlight

- 6.52 The standard measure for the level of sunlight reaching a residential window is the Annual Probable Sunlight Hours (APSH), which is a measure of sunlight that a given window may expect over a year period. The BRE recommends that the APSH received at a given window should be at least 25% of the total available, including at least 5% during the winter.
- 6.53 Where the proposed values fall short of these, and the absolute loss is greater than 4%, then the proposed values should not be less than 0.8 times their previous value in each period (i.e. the proportional reductions should not be greater than 20%).
- 6.54 The results show that all of the 27 (100%) relevant living rooms assessed will adhere to the Annual Probable Sunlight Hours target of 25% including 5% Winter Probable Sunlight Hours.

- 6.55 The development demonstrates good compliance with the BRE Guidance for Daylight and Sunlight assessment.

Overlooking

- 6.56 Local Plan policy CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity) states that a back-to-back distance of 20 metres between dwellings is usually appropriate, although the circumstances on individual sites may enable dwellings to be closer without a detrimental effect on privacy.
- 6.57 The proposed building has been designed to ensure that the potential for overlooking to neighbouring residential properties is minimised. The new residential windows facing onto Chatham Street are all located at an oblique angle on opposite side of the street to the nearest neighbouring properties (well in excess of 20m), and this relationship is considered acceptable.
- 6.58 To the rear of the Site, there are emerging proposals at the neighbouring Eaton Court site. We understand that a formal planning application for a large residential redevelopment of the site will be submitted in the near future. The applicant has had advanced sight of the proposed floorplans for that site, and the Design and Access Statement submitted with this application includes proposed site layouts for the two sites with the window to window separation distances annotated. The windows of each site overlook amenity areas associated with each of the sites and the separation distances are in excess of 23m
- 6.59 The other neighbouring properties to the site are 10 Eaton Place and the Face Bar building. Whilst neither of the properties are in residential use, the design of the scheme has taken care to ensure that proposals do not fetter potential redevelopment of neighbouring sites in due course. The orientation of windows is generally such that opportunities for window to window views at close proximity has been minimised, with this only possible at acute angles and commensurate with a central urban location and the type of accommodation proposed.
- 6.60 There will be views from the proposed accommodation towards the Butler Wine Vaults. The nearest flank elevation of the pub has no windows within it, and as the building does not provide permanent habitable accommodation it is considered that the proposed relationship is acceptable. Equally, to the west of the site is the Chatham Street Surgery. It is not considered that the proposals will have any impact on this property.

Amenity

- 6.61 Policy H10 of the Reading Borough Local Plan states that dwellings will be provided with functional private or communal open space, including green space wherever possible, that allows for suitable sitting-out areas. Furthermore it states that the design of outdoor areas will respect the size and character of other similar spaces in the vicinity, clearly identify whether they are private or communal spaces, ensure that they are appropriately related to main entrances, enhance safety and the perception of safety for future residents and the general public, and not be compromised by the relationship of other buildings which may be detrimental in terms of overlooking, overbearing or overshadowing.

- 6.62 The proposed new apartments will benefit from 20 winter gardens and from private amenity space in the form of balconies 162sqm whilst a landscaped communal courtyard 152sqm would be provided to the rear of the site by Eaton Place. This generous rear courtyard amenity area is enhanced with soft and hard landscaping. The design principle of the courtyard design is to create a contemporary courtyard design which provides access to the apartment frontages from the parking court, while creating more intimate seating areas for the residents to sit and enjoy as a landscaped space.
- 6.63 The soft planting pallet of grasses, ferns and evergreen shrub planting line the walkway and surround three seating spaces defined by the change in paving surface. Vertical design elements such as multistem trees provide a more private area and help break up the spaces. Further details are providing with the Design and Access Statement and Landscaping Note submitted with the application.
- 6.64 All of the proposed market and affordable units meeting the Nationally Described Space Standards. 6 (11%) of the units are designed to be M4(3) compliant accessible units. The outdoor amenity areas are commensurate with the site's urban location. Overall, the proposed development provides a high quality of accommodation in accordance policy H10 of the Reading Borough Local Plan.

Highways

- 6.65 The NPPF (para 102) states that developments should be located and designed to optimise the use of public transport facilities and give priority to pedestrian and cycle movements.
- 6.66 The application is supported by a Transport Statement prepared by i-Transport which demonstrates that the proposals comply with the relevant policies. The existing access to the site will be retained for vehicles via Eaton Place with additional, separate pedestrian and cycle access provided from Chatham Street.
- 6.67 The site is within "Zone 2 Primary Core Area". As stated within the Council's Parking Standards SPD. Flatted developments within Zone 2 should provide a maximum of 1 space per 1-2 bed flats and 1.5 spaces per 3+bed flats. During pre-application discussions it was confirmed that the site is located within a sustainable location in the town centre and within proximity to public transport enabling a reduced provision of car parking spaces. The proposal provides 17 parking spaces (including 2 disabled spaces) (0.3 spaces per dwelling) which is considered to be proportionate to the site's location and access to public transport. Of the proposed new parking, 23% will be active electric vehicles spaces which exceeds the required standard.
- 6.68 The proposal provides 32 cycle spaces (0.6 spaces per dwelling) exceeding the required standard. The cycle storage will be situated to the rear of the site within a secure, weatherproof enclosure. Therefore, a policy compliant (in accordance with Reading Borough Council, Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD (2011), secure cycle parking store would be provided for residents

- 6.69 Refuse storage would be provided to the side of the site and thus will be convenient both for use by residents and for municipal collections. The Transport Statement provides swept path analysis undertaken for a refuse vehicle entering and using the turning head provided. Deliveries and servicing will be undertaken within via Eaton Place and swept path analysis has been showing entering the car park and providing adequate space to enter and exit the site.
- 6.70 Overall, The Transport Statement concludes that the access and proposed parking provision complies with local planning policy and in line with the transport objectives set out in the NPPF.

Other Matters

Contaminated Land

- 6.71 Reading Borough Local Plan policy EN16 (Pollution and Water Resources) states that Development will only be permitted on land affected by contamination where it is demonstrated that the contamination and land gas can be satisfactorily managed or remediated so that it is suitable for the proposed end use and will not impact on the groundwater environment, human health, buildings and the wider environment, during demolition and construction phases as well as during the future use of the site.
- 6.72 A Contaminated Land Report prepared by enzygo is submitted with this planning application. The report confirms that with respect to assess the site's potential ground contamination following a review of the site's previous uses, desk based data and a number of exploratory holes located to provide coverage across the site.
- 6.73 In terms of remediation, the Report notes that Asbestos contaminated material has been identified during the ground investigation and it is possible that further material could be encountered during construction works. Measures should to be incorporated in to the Contractors Construction Stage Health and Safety Plan and asbestos management plan as required to mitigate risk to construction works. However, no other remediation is considered necessary. As is usual for an application site of this nature, it is anticipated that further site investigation and remediation details will be secured by planning condition.

Ecology

- 6.74 Reading Local Plan policy EN12 (Biodiversity and the Green Network) states that New development shall demonstrate how the location and type of green space, landscaping and water features provided within a scheme have been arranged such that they maintain or link into the existing Green Network and contribute to its consolidation.
- 6.75 An Ecology Report prepared by Aspect Ecology is submitted with the planning application. The document is informed by a phase 1 methodology survey undertaken in January 2021. The site itself is not subject to any statutory or non-statutory ecological designations. The Report confirms that the buildings and hardstanding on site are of inherently negligible ecological value and the vegetation which is colonising the hardstanding comprises species which are common and widespread.

- 6.76 The building within the site offers low potential for roosting bats, although further survey work is suggested to confirm this. The proposals present the opportunity to deliver ecological enhancements at the site for the benefit of local biodiversity, thereby making a positive contribution towards the broad objectives of national conservation priorities and the local Plan. These measures include new planting and the provision of new roosting features for bats and nesting opportunities for birds.
- 6.77 Local Plan Policy (Policy EN14: Trees, Hedges and Woodlands) states that new development shall make provision for tree retention and planting within the application site, particularly on the street frontage, or off-site in appropriate situations, to improve the level of tree coverage within the Borough.
- 6.78 A detailed landscape plan prepared by Aspect Landscape is submitted with the application, and additional landscape detail is also included within the Design and Access Statement. The plan shows a significant increase in tree and vegetation planting to the front and rear of the site. In particular, the generous tree planting fronting Chatham Street will enrich enhance both local biodiversity and visual amenity of the local area.

Drainage Strategy

- 6.79 Reading Local Plan policy EN18 states that All major developments must incorporate sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) as appropriate and in line with the Government's Technical Standards. Paragraphs 163 and 165 of the NPPF require major development to incorporate sustainable drainage systems unless there is clear evidence that this would be inappropriate. The EA's Flood Map for Planning shows that the site is located in Flood Zone 1. The site is currently almost entirely impermeable in nature. Therefore, any development has the potential to reduce surface water runoff overall. A surface water and drainage strategy has been prepared by Water Environment.
- 6.80 The proposed development incorporates SuDS techniques, such as permeable surfaces and an underground storage tank, to prevent surface water flooding on the site up to the 1 in 100-year event including a 40% allowance for climate change. Furthermore permeably paving is proposed for the parking area on the site, providing filtration of the surface water through the permeable blocks and granular subbase. The permeably paved area and the remaining hardstanding area of the site would discharge to the crated storage tank.
- 6.81 Overall, the site is not at risk from flooding whilst the proposed surface water drainage strategy will ensure that flood risk is not increased elsewhere and so it is considered that the proposals would be in accordance with the objectives with policy EN18 and national policy.

Noise

- 6.82 A noise impact report has been prepared by XC02 to assess the impact of noise from surrounding highway network and other sources of ambient noise.

- 6.83 This assessment included a noise model has been used to predict noise levels at each facade of the proposed development. The predicted noise levels were then assessed in line with the local and national noise guidance and relevant standards.
- 6.84 The noise assessment based on the results of the noise survey indicates that, subject to the installation of sufficient mitigation measures, the proposed internal noise levels would be in accordance with BS 8233, ProPG and WHO's noise guidelines can be achieved through considerate design and incorporation of a number of mitigation measures. On this basis, it is considered that an appropriate acoustic environment can be achieved at the site and is in accordance with Policy EN17.

Sustainability

- 6.85 Policy CC2 of the Local Plan requires proposals for new development to be designed and have site layouts which use energy, water, minerals, materials and other natural resources appropriately, efficiently and with care and take account of the effects of climate change. As such the application is supported by a Sustainability Statement prepared by XC02.
- 6.86 The statement outlines a number of energy efficient measures to ensure the development minimises the potential carbon dioxide emissions from the site. These measures will be incorporated into the detailed design and once this stage has been reached detailed calculations regarding the predicted energy demand and carbon dioxide emissions will be undertaken to ensure the development accords with the objectives of Policy DP39.

Air Quality

- 6.87 Policy EN15 states that developments should have regard to the need to improve air quality and reduce the effects of poor air quality through design, mitigation and where required planning obligations to be used to help improve local air quality.
- 6.88 An air quality assessment has been undertaken by XC02 and is submitted with this application. The documents concludes that both during the construction and operational phase of the proposals the impact from the development will be negligible and not significant whilst the baseline air quality are likely to meet the relevant standards. On this basis, the proposals would be suitable in this location and would not cause any adverse effect on the surrounding area, which in accordance with policy EN15.

Utilities Statement

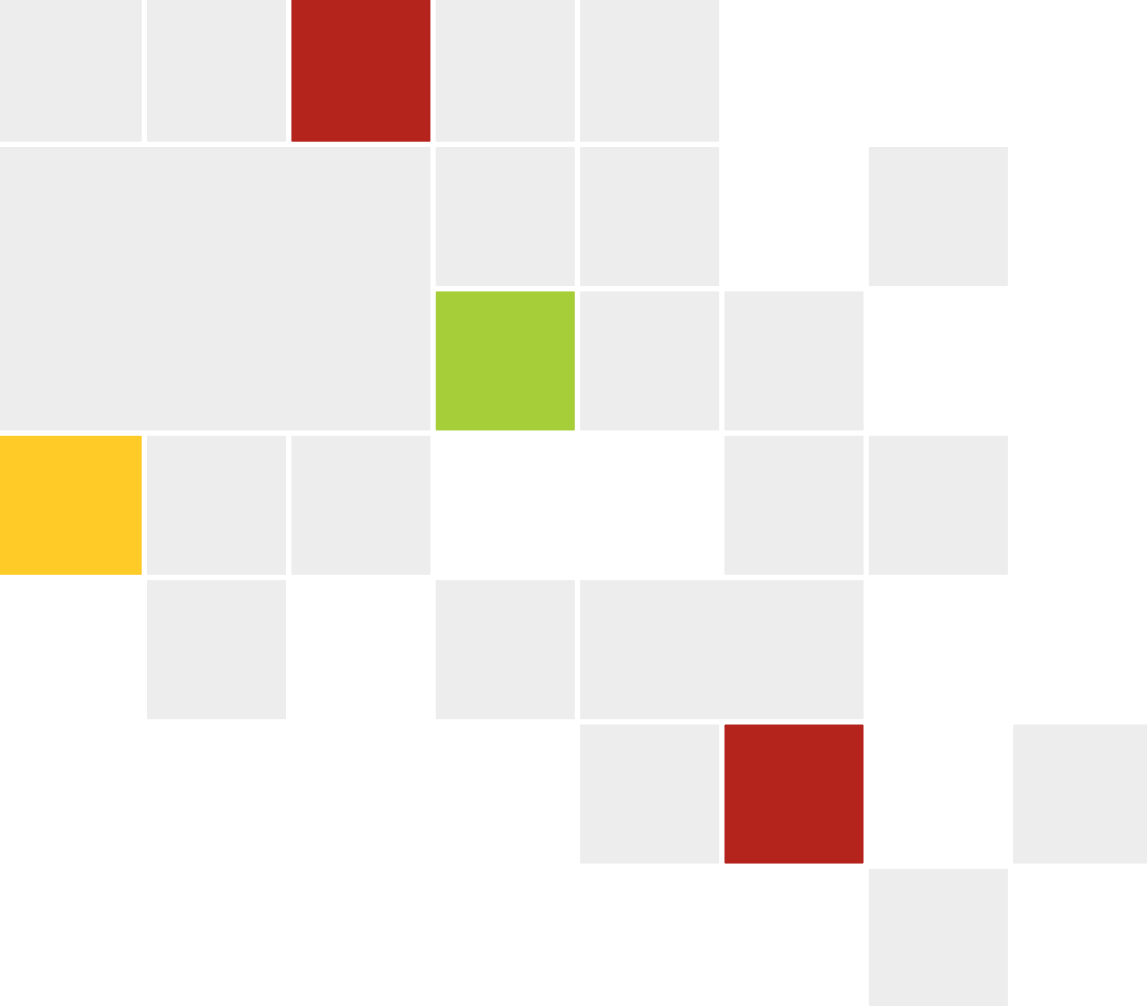
- 6.89 A Utilities Statement prepared by XCO2 is submitted with the planning application. This outlines that a desktop survey was carried out to obtain responses from various utility asset owners. The Utilities Statement identifies a strategy to ensure that electricity, gas, sewer, clean water connections can be confirmed with the relevant asset owners.
- 6.90 Overall, it is considered that the surrounding utility assets has adequate capacity for the proposed development and adequate connections are available.

Ventilation Strategy Statement

- 6.91 A Ventilation Strategy has been prepared by XC02 to demonstrate the proposed development's compliance with Building Regulations Part F, which sets out the minimum requirements to ventilate buildings adequately. The proposal will incorporate mechanical ventilation for all the apartments and acoustic attenuation will be advised, if required, at the next design stage.
- 6.92 Overall, it is considered the ventilation strategy proposed demonstrated the proposed development complies with Building Regulation Part F.

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1 This detailed planning application has been submitted on behalf of our client, Archel Homes Ltd, for the demolition of existing buildings and the redevelopment of the site to provide 54 new homes together with car and cycle parking and private and communal amenity space. The proposals provide a policy compliant quantum of affordable housing.
- 7.2 The proposal have evolved following pre-application discussions with officers and the Council's Design Review Panel. The proposal would make efficient use of a previously developed site and will improve the visual appearance of the site, replacing the existing hardsurface area with a high-quality development. The proposals repair the street frontage along Chatham Street by reducing the proposed building footprint and setting the property back to increase the amount of soft landscaping and improve the transition with Grade II listed building.
- 7.3 The site forms part of a large proportion of the sub allocation under Policy CR12c which relates to Chatham Street, Eaton Place and Oxford Road. In accordance with the aims of the site allocation, the proposals seek to optimise residential development and assist in this area of Reading.
- 7.4 A number of technical reports have been submitted in support of the proposals which demonstrate that any impacts associated with the proposals can be adequately mitigated.
- 7.5 In summary, the proposal would deliver a number of significant benefits, including public benefits, which attract very significant and very substantial weight and will make an important contribution towards achieving the economic, social and environment objectives of sustainable development. The benefits of the proposal will significantly and demonstrably outweigh any harm and on this basis and in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development, planning permission for the proposals should be granted without delay.



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