



(Built) Heritage, Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment

Dukesbridge House, Reading

July 2020

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Heritage, Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment has been prepared in support of proposals which are subject to an application for planning permission at Dukesbridge House, Reading. 'Heritage' and 'Townscape and Visual' are treated as individual disciplines and separate assessments are provided in accordance with legislation, planning policy and best practice guidance.

The assessment as a whole is informed by five accurate visual representations (AVRs or verified views). The verified views are a tool to inform the assessment of impact to heritage, townscape and visual receptors. The location of the viewpoints has been informed by architectural and historic accounts of the area, an appraisal of the existing site and surroundings, and planning policy.

Planning History

Change of Use

Prior approval was granted in 2020 to convert the existing office building into 77 dwellings (ref: 190602). In conjunction, planning permission (ref: 191393) was also granted for external alterations to facilitate the implementation of prior approval, including the replacement of grills with windows at lower ground floor level on east and south elevations; new windows at ground to second floor on north elevation; new external cycle parking and bin storage within courtyard area.

The works are separate to this application for planning permission, but the change of use has a bearing on the function of the existing buildings and its function. It is a material consideration to the determination of the planning application.

Previous Proposal

In addition, pre-application discussions were held with officers at Reading Borough Council in 2019 regarding the redevelopment of the eastern part of the application site. The proposals at that stage were limited to roof and side extensions to the east elevation of the existing building to provide a residential-led scheme, including public realm improvements and landscaping.

Those discussions confirmed to the design team and the officers that the inclusion and redevelopment of the western part of the application site (abutting Duke Street) was key to 'unlocking' the site potential. This scheme incorporates the western part of the site, in accordance with those discussions. It also includes a comprehensive revision to the architectural approach, which was previously constrained by the retention of the existing building.

Planning Policy

Policy designations outline the strategic aspirations for an area, contribute to the understanding of its function and the potential for, or even lack of, change.

The application site is located in Central Reading, which is identified by policy RL1 of the 2019 Local Plan as the regional centre and focus of development. It is also within a 6 minute walk from Reading Station.

The central location and proximity to public transport is conducive to sustainable development at a greater density, subject to a detailed understanding of the townscape, including the application site location within the Market Place / London Street Conservation Area.

Rationale for Taller Structure

The application site is located within a Conservation Area which primarily comprises low-rise and finer grain development. The proposals do not comprise a tall building as defined by the Local Plan; however, it is taller than some elements of its immediate surroundings and we have therefore been mindful of the criteria set within policy CR10 in preparing this assessment.

Critically, the application site has a unique set of characteristics that differentiates it from the historic core of the Conservation Area. The height of the proposed development is commensurate to these considerations.

First, the eastern boundary of the application site abuts the Eastern Tall Building Cluster identified in the Tall Building Strategy (2008). The proposed development would be visually associated with this modern development, particularly in riparian views east and west.

Second, the application site is situated along the Kennet riverfront and adjacent to High Bridge. It therefore sits at a historic threshold into the town centre and an area of local townscape importance.

Third, the proximity to the Kennet also means that the application site sits in an area of low topography. Accordingly, the height of the proposed development is much less marked on the skyline than would otherwise be in areas to the north and south. The extent of visibility is largely limited to the immediate environs only, as demonstrated by the submitted verified views. The revised height has further reduced visibility relative to the 2019 pre-application proposal, including within the core of the Conservation Area at King Street and Market Place.

Finally, the proposed development seeks to replace a building that does not contribute positively to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, as discussed below.

Heritage

The application site is located in the Market Place / London Street Conservation Area. There are also heritage assets in the immediate and wider area.

The assessment has considered the significance of heritage assets, the contribution of setting to that significance, and the impact of the proposed development upon setting and therein significance.

The character and appearance of the Conservation Area in this location is linked to the Kennet frontage, and the setting of nearby Grade II listed structures, comprising High Bridge, the Coroner's Court and 2 & 4 London Street. The existing building on the application site does not make a positive contribution to the significance of these heritage assets. The building was constructed in the late twentieth century and has no historical association with the Conservation Area; it is not of architectural merit; it has inactive frontages; and, it provides very limited urban design benefit to the river frontage that it occupies.

The proposed development seeks to make a significant change to the application site, through an extension to the roof and eastern elevation of the existing building. The proposals would rationalise the existing building and extend it to improve its visual appearance and function. In contrast to the 2019 pre-application scheme, it would include the comprehensive reconsideration of the corner junction to Duke Street and the Kennet which would greatly improve this space and facilitate better access to the river frontage.

The Conservation Area itself is linear in layout and visibility of the proposed development from within it will be relatively limited. There would be no visual impact in longer views from the historic core around the St Laurence's Church, the Town Hall complex and Market Place. Glimpse views from Broad Street may be obtained, although the extent of visibility would be negligible as the observer travels along the pedestrian route. Again, the revised height has further reduced visibility relative to the 2019 pre-application scheme.

To the south of the application site, the Conservation Area extends along London Street and the proposed development will be visible from a section of this route. This area of southern suburbs is today separated from the application site and the historic core to the north by the Inner Distribution Road. The site is within an area of low topography that already has taller development forming part of its backdrop. The horizontal form of the proposed roof would rationalise the layering of this approach view, whilst the stepped massing would ensure it is recessive from the street frontage.

The proposed development is most perceptible from within the Conservation Area at High Bridge and the new bridge in Yield Hall Place. From these locations the proposed massing has been carefully considered to be recessive from the frontage of Duke Street and, from High Bridge, appear subservient to the historic buildings in the foreground. The material of the roof extension distinguishes it from the more solid masonry base of the existing building and the overall composition of the building is successful. There is an established context of modern development in views both east and west, as identified by the 2007 Conservation Area Appraisal and the Tall Building Strategy. The proposals strike an acceptable balance between the Conservation Area and this emerging context.

Moreover, the proposed development would deliver heritage benefits to this immediate area and the heritage assets in close proximity. Those benefits comprise the improved access to the river footpath, a hard and soft landscaping strategy for Duke Street and the riverfront, an improved architectural composition to the existing building and, importantly, the regeneration of the application site and its environs.

Townscape and Visual

Outside of the historic core, the townscape assessment has considered the proposed development within its urban context, including the buildings, the relationships between them, the different types of urban open spaces, including green spaces and the relationship between buildings and open spaces.

The proposed extended parts of the existing building front both the Kennet and Duke Street. The river frontage is distinct from the character and appearance of the finer grain Duke Street. View J of the Tall Building Strategy notes views within the central area east and west along the Kennet river “have the potential to be improved by the inclusion of tall or very tall buildings”. The proposed development is not tall within this context, but is complimentary to the key characteristic of the view described by the Strategy, which “is the manner in which it is framed by tall buildings with a large block size; further tall buildings would enhance this characteristic”.

The proposed development would not impact any other views identified by the Tall Building Strategy.

Furthermore, the proposed development will improve the townscape function of the riverfront, by virtue of providing step-free access from Duke Street. The curved elevation to the junction of Duke Street and the Kennet will open up this space and improve legibility down to the river frontage. It will include a commercial unit (A1-A5 use) that will activate Duke Street and the public realm, which will be lined by soft landscaping that will provide visual amenity and also form a defensible space to the building.

At the south-east corner of the application site a new extension will replace the existing bin store, which is unsuitable in such a prominent location. The extension will comprise a commercial unit (A1-A5 use) that will activate the river frontage in conjunction with the wider landscaping scheme.

To the rear (east) of the site at Highbridge Wharf the existing environment comprises a service yard and surface level car park, which has poor visual amenity and is ad-hoc in layout. The area will be rationalised by the proposed development and the elevations of the existing building improved to provide natural surveillance and improved amenity. In turn, this would bring a small improvement to the setting of the listed building to the rear of Nos 18 and 20 Kings Road, which has already been compromised by piecemeal interventions.

Of particular importance, the proposed development will provide a significant number of homes that will optimise the use of the Site. These will be complemented by ancillary ground floor commercial units and, in conjunction with the landscaping and architectural benefits of the proposals, this would enliven the area and improve the townscape function.

Summary

The proposed development has evolved through a detailed understanding of the application site, its surrounding context and the aspirations of the development plan. Design development has benefited from discussions with Reading Borough Council during the pre-application process. The proposals have also benefitted from the inclusion of the wider site to ensure a comprehensive design solution to unlock the architectural and urban design potential of the corner junction of Duke Street and the Kennet.

The proposed development represents an opportunity for optimisation of brownfield land that would contribute to the delivery of much needed housing in the area and improvement to the function of the public realm in close proximity to the River Kennet. The assessment demonstrates the proposals would not give rise to any unacceptable impacts to heritage, townscape or visual receptors. On the whole, the proposed development would demonstrably improve the appearance, character and function of the townscape, in accordance with the development plan.

1.0

// DUKESBRIDGE HOUSE, READING



Introduction

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Montagu Evans has been instructed by Lipman Properties (hereby referred to as the 'Applicant') to provide consultancy services and produce this Heritage, Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment (the 'HTVIA') in support of proposals which are subject to an application for planning permission at Dukesbridge House, Reading (the 'Site').
- 1.2 The Site is located in the administrative boundary of Reading Borough Council (the 'Council'). The Site is described at **Section 5.0** and also within the Design and Access Statement prepared by Emre Arolat Architecture (EAA). **Figure 1.1** outlines the boundary of the Site. An aerial view of the Site is provided at **Figure 1.2**.
- 1.3 A description of the proposals (the 'Proposed Development') is provided within the Planning Statement prepared by Pegasus Group. The Proposed Development may, however, be summarised as:
'Roof and side extensions to existing building to provide a residential-led scheme with associated landscaping, public realm improvements, alterations to the existing vehicular access and car parking and provision of cycle parking and waste storage'
- Purpose of the Report**
- 1.4 The HTVIA provides an assessment of the impact of the Proposed Development on heritage, townscape and visual receptors.
- 1.5 The Site is located in the Market Place / London Street Conservation Area. There are also heritage assets in the wider area and the HTVIA assesses the potential of the Proposed Development to impact their setting. The heritage assessment will consider the significance of heritage assets, the contribution of setting towards that significance, and the impact of the Proposed Development upon that significance.
- 1.6 The townscape assessment will consider the Proposed Development within its urban context, including the buildings, the relationships between them, the different types of urban open spaces, including green spaces and the relationship between buildings and open spaces.



Figure 1.1 Site Location Plan Source: Emre Arolat Architects

1.7 The visual assessment will consider the impact of the Proposed Development upon visual receptors. The assessment relates to how people will be affected by changes in views and visual amenity at different places, including publicly accessible locations. Visual receptors are always people, rather than landscape features.

1.8 The assessment is informed by five accurate visual representations (verified views). The location of the viewpoints has been informed by architectural and historic accounts of the area, an appraisal of the existing Site and surroundings, and relevant policy designations.

Planning History

Change of Use

1.9 Prior approval was granted in 2020 to convert the existing office building into 77 dwellings (ref: 190602). In conjunction, planning permission (ref: 191393) was also granted for external alterations to facilitate the implementation of prior approval, including the replacement of grills with windows at lower ground floor level on east and south elevations; new windows at ground to second floor on north elevation; new external cycle parking and bin storage within courtyard area.

1.10 The works are separate to this application for planning permission, but the change of use has a bearing on the function of the existing buildings and its function. It is a material consideration to the determination of the planning application.

Previous Pre-Application

1.11 In addition, pre-application discussions were held with officers at the Council in 2019 regarding the redevelopment of the eastern part of the Site. The proposals at that stage were limited to roof and side extensions to the east elevation of the existing building to provide a residential-led scheme, including public realm improvements and landscaping.

1.12 Those discussions confirmed to the design team and the officers that the inclusion and redevelopment of the western part of the Site (abutting Duke Street) was key to 'unlocking' the site potential. This scheme incorporates the western part of the Site, in accordance with those discussions. It also includes a comprehensive revision to the architectural approach, which was previously constrained by the retention of the existing building.

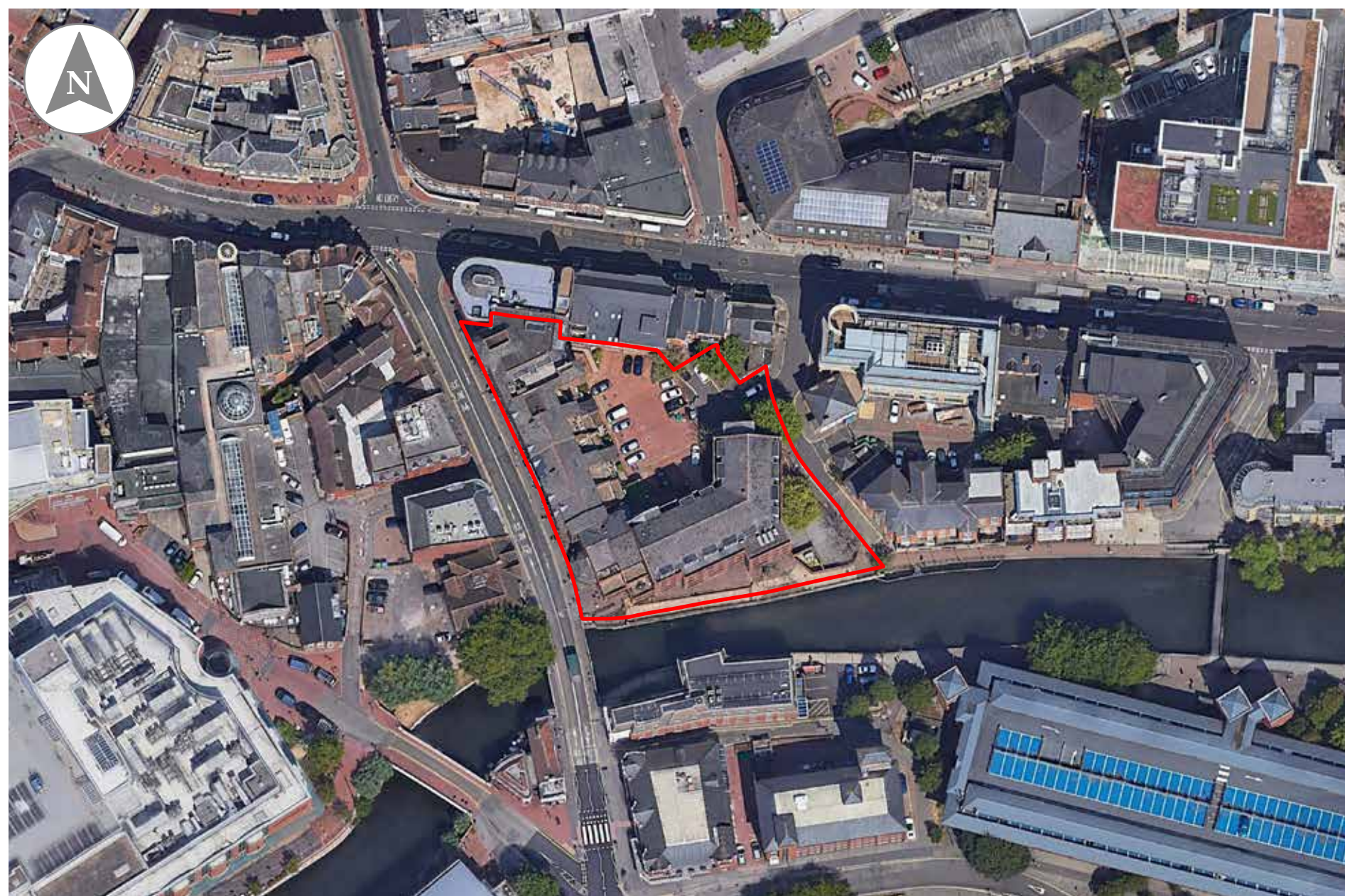


Figure 1.2 Aerial View. Source: Google (base map)

2.0

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Methodology

2.0 METHODOLOGY

2.1 This section provides an overview of the assessment framework. The method is the product of legislation, policy and best practice guidance.

Study Area

- 2.2 The study area comprises:
- All heritage receptors (500m radius):
 - listed buildings;
 - conservation areas;
 - registered parks and gardens;
 - scheduled ancient monuments; and
 - locally listed buildings (non-designated heritage receptors).
 - Townscape character areas (300m radius);
 - Visual receptors (300m radius).
- 2.3 Site observations, a manual desk-based review of OS maps, characterisation studies and relevant heritage receptors were used to determine the study area. The study area has been informed by building locations and heights, topography and townscape features, and an understanding of the scale of the Proposed Development.
- 2.4 **Section 7.0** identifies viewpoints that have informed the ‘visual study area’. The study area may be defined as the anticipated extent of visibility (from a height of approximately 1.5m (eye level) above the ground). It is acknowledged and accepted that judgments made by a surveyor are subjective, which provides limitations to the identification of a visual envelope. There will be areas within the study area where visibility is not possible e.g. due to interposing development. Conversely, the assessment considers further long distance views where identified and relevant.

Site Visit

2.5 A site survey of the baseline situation was undertaken by Montagu Evans during April 2019 to understand the immediate setting of the Site and to identify the townscape character and appearance.

Assessment Process Framework

Heritage

- 2.6 The term ‘heritage asset’ is used within this assessment to describe both designated (e.g. Listed Buildings, Registered Park and Garden, Registered Battlefield or Conservation Area) or non-designated (identified by the local authority e.g. building of townscape merit etc) assets. For the purposes of this HTVIA, built heritage receptors do not include archaeological remains.
- 2.7 Paragraph 189 of the NPPF states:
In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets’ importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance.
- 2.8 ‘Significance’ (for heritage policy) is defined in the NPPF (Annex 2) as:
the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset’s physical presence, but also from its setting.
- 2.9 This is reaffirmed by Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 2: Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment (2015).
- 2.10 Where a proposal may have an effect on the surroundings in which the heritage asset is experienced, a qualitative assessment is made of whether, how and to what degree setting contributes to the significance of heritage assets. Setting is defined in the NPPF as:
the surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.

2.11 The assessment of setting is informed by the check-list of potential attributes outlined by the Historic England guidance document Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets (2017) (hereafter “GPA3: Setting”).

- 2.12 GPA3: Setting identifies five steps towards assessing the implications of development proposals which may affect the setting of heritage assets (it is consistent with other guidance):
- Identify the assets affected
 - Assessing the contribution setting makes to significance
 - Assessing the effect of the proposed development
 - Maximising enhancement and minimising harm
 - Making and documenting the decision and monitoring outcomes

2.13 Part e is incumbent on the decision maker, through the provision of conditions.

Townscape and Visual

- 2.14 The framework for assessment of townscape and visual impact has been prepared using the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition (Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, 2013) (‘GLVIA3’). We have also had regard to the methodology set out in An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment (2014) prepared by Natural England.
- 2.15 The two components of TVIA are:
- Assessment of townscape effects: assessing effects on the townscape as a resource in its own right; and
 - Assessment of visual effects: assessing effects on specific views and on the general visual amenity experienced by people.

Townscape

- 2.16 Townscape is the “*built-up area, including the buildings, the relationships between them, the different types of urban open spaces, including green spaces, and the relationship between buildings and open spaces*”, as defined in GLVIA3.
- 2.17 An initial assessment defined distinct and recognisable patterns of elements, or characteristics that make one area different from another, rather than better or worse. This process, defined as townscape character assessment, is the process of identifying and describing variation in the character of townscape.
- 2.18 The assessment was informed by both field survey and desk based research of secondary sources, with reference to existing character assessments where applicable. The assessment allowed the description of character areas/types, their key characteristics and for them to be mapped with boundaries. The mapped boundaries suggest a sharp change from one townscape area. On site, however, this often represents a zone of transition. Townscape character areas are identified and assessed according to their built form, materials, maintenance, and statutory and non-statutory designations.
- 2.19 The objective of identifying the existing context is to provide an understanding of the townscape in the area that may be affected – its constituent elements, its character and the way this varies spatially, its geographic extent, its history, its condition, the way the townscape is experienced and the value attached to it.
- Visual**
- 2.20 Visual impact assessment relates to how people will be affected by changes in views and visual amenity at different places, including publicly accessible locations. Visual receptors are always people (although usually visual receptors are defined according to use e.g. residential, business, road, footpath etc.), rather than landscape features.
- 2.21 The aim of the visual baseline is to establish the area in which the development may be visible, the different groups of people who may experience views of the development, the places where they will be affected and the nature of the views and visual amenity at those points.
- 2.22 The baseline study identifies individuals and/or defined groups of people within the area who will be affected by changes in the views, ‘visual receptors’. The following visual receptors are identified by GLVIA3 as being likely to be the most susceptible to change:
- Residents at home;
 - People, whether residents or visitors, who are engaged in outdoor recreation, including use of public rights of way, whose attention or interest is likely to be focused on the landscape and on particular views;
 - Visitors to heritage assets, or to other attractions, where views of the surroundings are an important contributor to the experience;
 - Communities where views contribute to the landscape setting enjoyed by residents in the area.
- 2.23 It should be noted that the assessment does not comprise a ‘residential amenity assessment’, which considers private viewpoints from residential properties. This is separate from townscape and visual assessment (refer to GLVIA3, paragraph 6.17).
- 2.24 Assessment viewpoints were identified based on a comprehensive review of the surrounding area, including the following criteria:
- Heritage receptors; and/or
 - Townscape character; and/or
 - Where the development may be prominent; and/or
 - Be visible from concentrations of residential areas; and/or
 - Open spaces (parkland, publicly accessible space); and/or
 - Potentially sensitive receptors (e.g. schools); and/or
 - Accessibility to the public; and/or
 - The viewing direction, distance and elevation; and/or
 - Townscape and transport nodes.
- 2.25 The visual assessment is supported by Accurate Visual Representations (AVRs), which provide the basis for the assessment of the Proposed Development and its effect on the identified views. Each viewpoint is reproduced at **Section 7.0** in the following formats:
- **Existing** – baseline photography; and
 - **Proposed** – ‘existing’ plus render (AVR3) of the Proposed Development.
- 2.26 The methodology for the compilation of AVRs prepared by PreConstruct is provided at **Appendix 1.0**.
- 2.27 The objective of a photomontage is to simulate the likely visual changes that would result from a proposed development, and to produce printed images of a size and resolution sufficient to match the perspective in the same view in the field.
- 2.28 Accurate visual representation is two-dimensional and cannot capture the complexity of the visual experience. It is an approximation of the three-dimensional visual experience the observer would receive on site. Neither do they capture transient significant effects arising from noise or traffic on perception, or that wider range of expectations and associations that anyone in an urban scene may have. A visit to the location from which the photographs were taken is strongly encouraged to appreciate and understand the visual impact.
- 2.29 The text accompanying each view seeks to contextualise it. Inevitably one must accept that judgement is involved in this specialist area on the basis of the above and the importance of design quality in the operation of policy. In preparing any written assessment, allowances are made for these factors as well as the assessor’s knowledge of the scheme.

3.0

// DUKESBRIDGE HOUSE, READING



Legislation and Planning Policy

3.0 LEGISLATION AND PLANNING POLICY

3.1 This section sets out the legislative and planning policy context for the redevelopment of the Site, including national and local guidance.

Legislation

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act) 1990

3.2 The Site is located in the Market Place / London Street Conservation Area. Section 72 of the Act states “*special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.*”

3.3 The Site does not contain any statutorily listed buildings, although these are located in the wider area. Section 66 requires “*special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses*”.

Development Plan

3.4 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 stipulates that where in making any determination under the Planning Acts, regard is to be had to the development plan, and the determination must be made in accordance with that plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Development Plan Policy	Key Provisions
Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)	EN1 (Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment) EN3 (Enhancement of Conservation Areas) EN4 (Locally Important Heritage Assets) EN5 (Protection of Significant Views with Heritage interest) EN6 (New Development in a Historic Context) EN11 (Waterspaces) CC7 (Design and the Public Realm) CR2 (Design in Central Reading) CR3 (Public Realm in Central Reading) CR6 (Living in Central Reading) CR7 (Primary Frontages in Central Reading) CR10 (Tall Buildings) RL1 (Network and Hierarchy of Places)

Table 3.1 Development Plan Policy

National Policy

National Policy	Key Provisions
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2019	Chapter 12 ■ Paragraph 127 ■ Paragraph 128 ■ Paragraph 129 ■ Paragraph 130 ■ Paragraph 131 Chapter 16 ■ Paragraph 189 ■ Paragraph 190 ■ Paragraph 192 ■ Paragraph 193-6 ■ Paragraph 200 ■ Paragraph 201

Table 3.2 National Planning Policy

Material Consideration

- 3.5 In addition to legislation and policy, the assessment will take into consideration relevant planning guidance and any material considerations, including:
- National Planning Practice Guidance (online);
 - Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third Edition (GLVIA) (2013);
 - An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment (2014);
 - Photography and photomontage in landscape and visual impact assessment: Landscape Institute Advice Note 01/11;
 - Historic England, Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 2: Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment (2015)
 - Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets (2017);
 - Tall Buildings: Historic England Advice Note 4 (2015);
 - Reading City Centre Framework (2008); and
 - Reading Tall Buildings Strategy (2008).

Section Summary

Principle of Development

- 3.6 The Site is located in Central Reading, which is identified by policy RL1 as the regional centre and focus of development in the Local Plan. It is also within a 6 minute walk from Reading Station. The central location and proximity to public transport is conducive to sustainable development at a greater density, subject to a detailed understanding of the townscape.

Taller Building

- 3.7 The Proposed Development is not considered a tall building; policy CR10 states that in Reading, “*tall buildings are defined as 10 storeys of commercial floorspace or 12 storeys of residential (equating to 36 metres tall) or above*”.
- 3.8 Notwithstanding, the proposed scale of development is taller than some parts of the immediate built environment surrounding the Site and we have therefore been mindful of the criteria set within CR10 in preparing this HTVIA. The Tall Building Strategy identified the Site in Character Area 6: St Lawrence and Market Place. The Strategy states “*there is no capacity to develop tall structures in this character area as a result of the fine grained, small scale nature of the built form and the low rise, open skyline above the buildings which is a fundamental element of the historic character*”.
- 3.9 The Site has a unique set of characteristics that differentiates it from the existing development within the core of Character Area 6, discussed in the proceeding sections of this HTVIA. Of note, the eastern boundary of the Site abuts the Eastern Tall Building Cluster (**Figure 3.1**). Moreover, the Site is located on the frontage of the River Kennet and at a point of local townscape significance where High Bridge traverses the river.

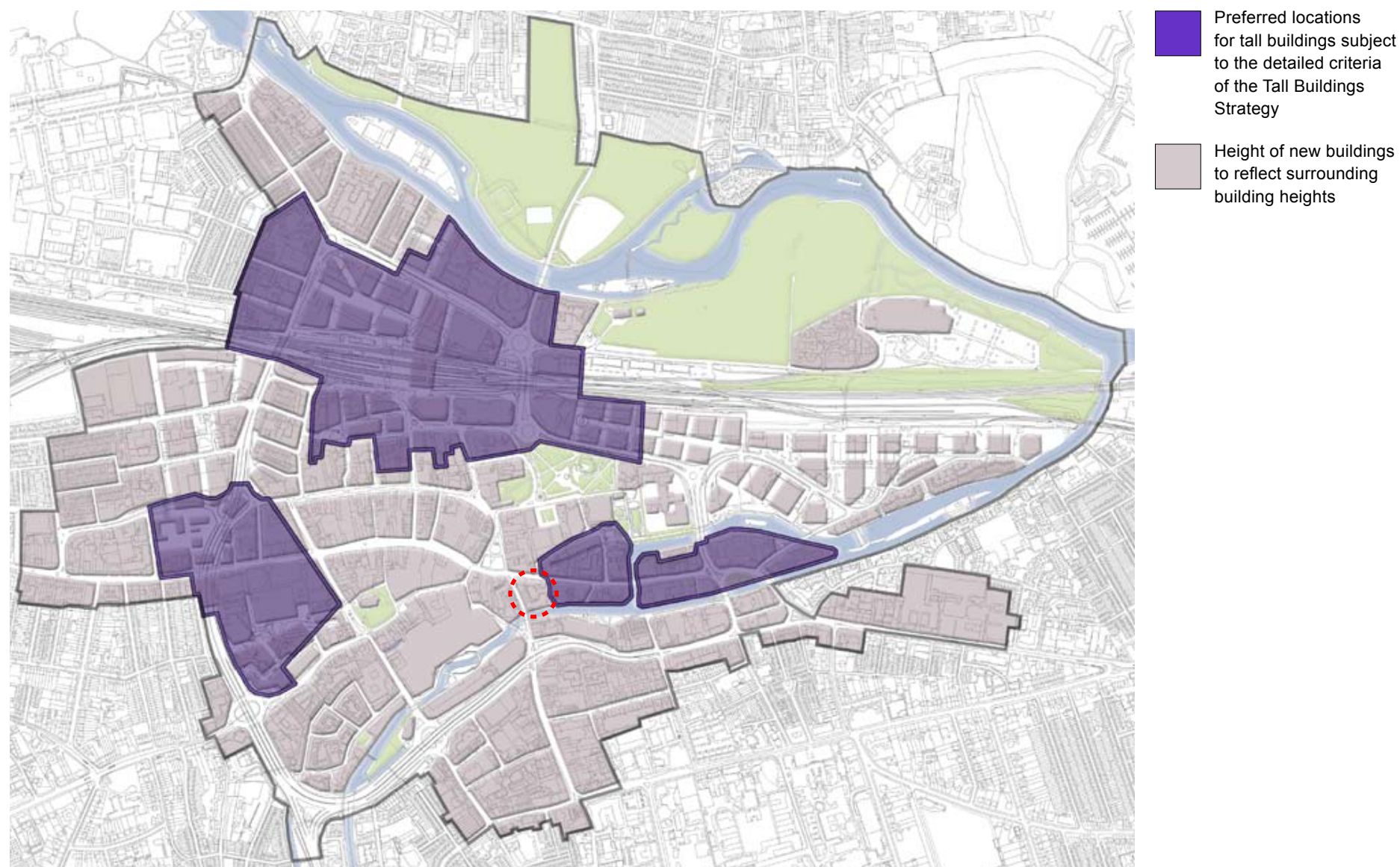


Figure 3.1 Preferred Locations for Tall Buildings (Site location circled). Source: City Centre Framework (2008).

3.10 The Proposed Development has evolved mindful of this context. It does not comprise a tall building as defined by the Local Plan, but has a height that is commensurate to the Site location within a Conservation Area, but within close proximity to public transport modes, the Kennet waterfront and a threshold into the town centre. Moreover, it seeks to replace an existing building of poor townscape quality, comprising inactive frontages and low architectural quality that does not contribute positively to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

Views

3.11 Appendix 1 of the Tall Building Strategy (2008) identifies several strategic views for Reading. The location of the Site and scale of the Proposed Development is not likely to impact any identified views, with the exception of View J. The Strategy states views within the central area east and west along the Kennet river “have the potential to be improved by the inclusion of tall or very tall buildings”. The text within the Appendix states “the view has a low sensitivity to the introduction of tall buildings. A key characteristic of the view is the manner in which it is framed by tall buildings with a large block size; further tall buildings would enhance this characteristic” (Figure 3.2). We have included an assessment of view J as part of this HTVIA at Section 7.0.

Heritage

3.12 This HTVIA provides an assessment of the significance of the heritage assets, the contribution of setting to that significance, and the impact of the Proposed Development upon setting and therein significance.

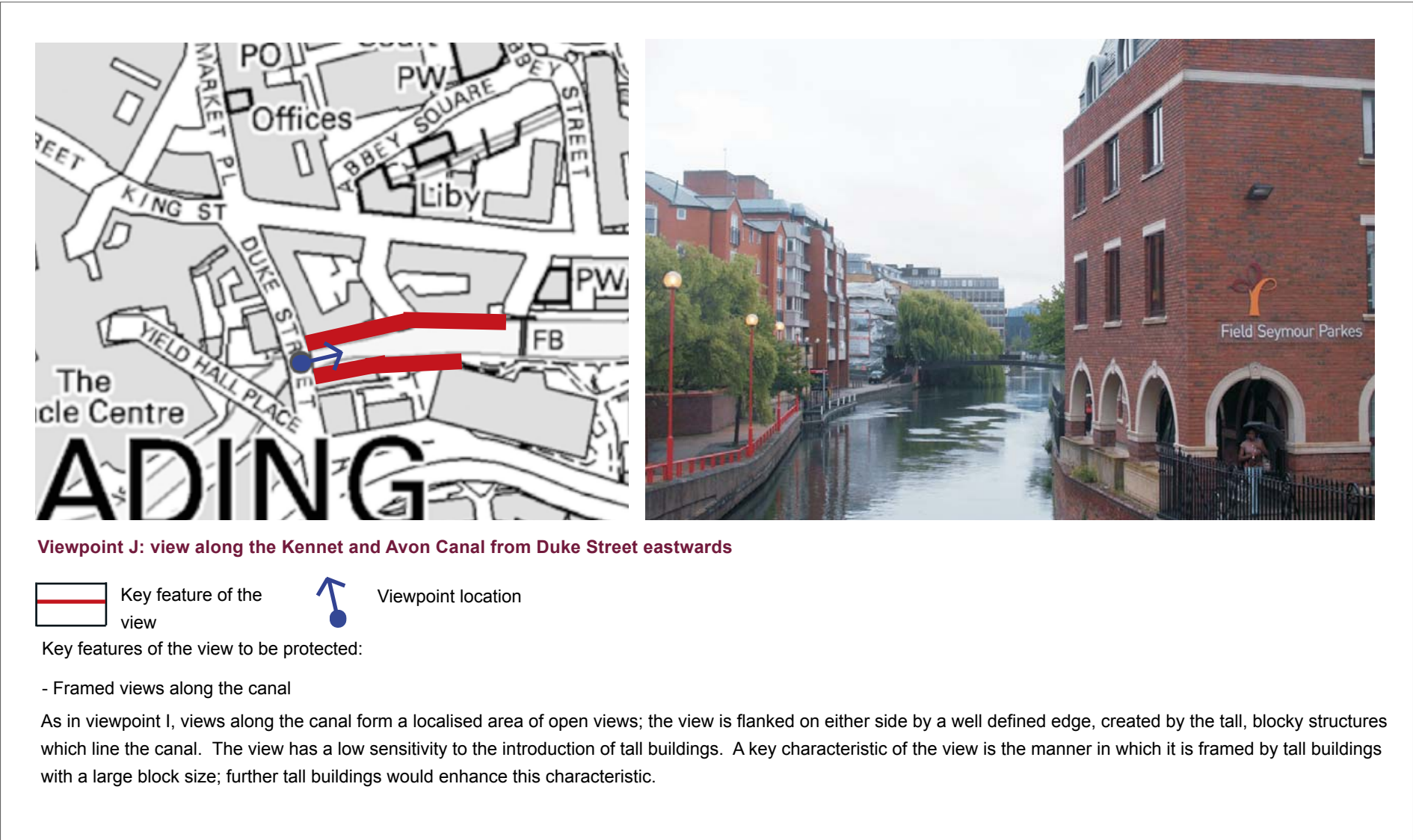


Figure 3.2 View J: view along the Kennet and Avon Canal from Duke Street eastwards.

4.0

// DUKESBRIDGE HOUSE, READING



Historic Development

4.0 HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1 This section provides a description of the historic development of the Site and that of the surrounding area. The following secondary sources have been used to inform the assessment:
- Berkshire (Pevsner Architectural Guides: Buildings of England), Pevsner, Bradley and Tyack (2010);
 - 'The Borough of Reading: Manors', in A History of the County of Berkshire: Volume 3, ed. PH Ditchfield and William Page (1923), accessed via British History Online; and
 - Market Place/ London Street Conservation Area Appraisal (2007).

Early History

- 4.2 Reading Abbey was founded in 1121 by Henry I (c.1068-1135) on the site of what is now Forbury Garden and Abbots' Walk. It became a prosperous mediaeval town with thriving silk weaving, leather goods and woollen cloth industries supported by its location close to two rivers, the Kennet and the Thames.
- 4.3 John Speed's Map of Reading (**Figure 4.1**) shows the town as it was arranged in 1611; the Abbey is shown towards the top right, and the River Kennet runs through the town from east-west. A wooden earlier iteration of High Bridge, located to the immediate south of the Site, is identified as No.6 on the map.
- 4.4 From the mid-eighteenth century the town expanded due to its location on the main route between Bath and London. A number of famous coaching inns were established to meet the demand for stopping places; equally, it was at this point that Nos.2-4 London Street was constructed as a toll house at High Bridge; the current High Bridge was constructed in 1788.
- 4.5 The Kennet Canal was constructed in 1723 and the Kennet and Avon Canal in 1810, which linked London and Bristol by water. The importance of the town continued to grow and was supported by new industries associated with the waterfront access, including boat building and timber yards.
- 4.6 The Great Western Railway reached Reading in 1840, and the improved transport links led to a significant growth in local industry.

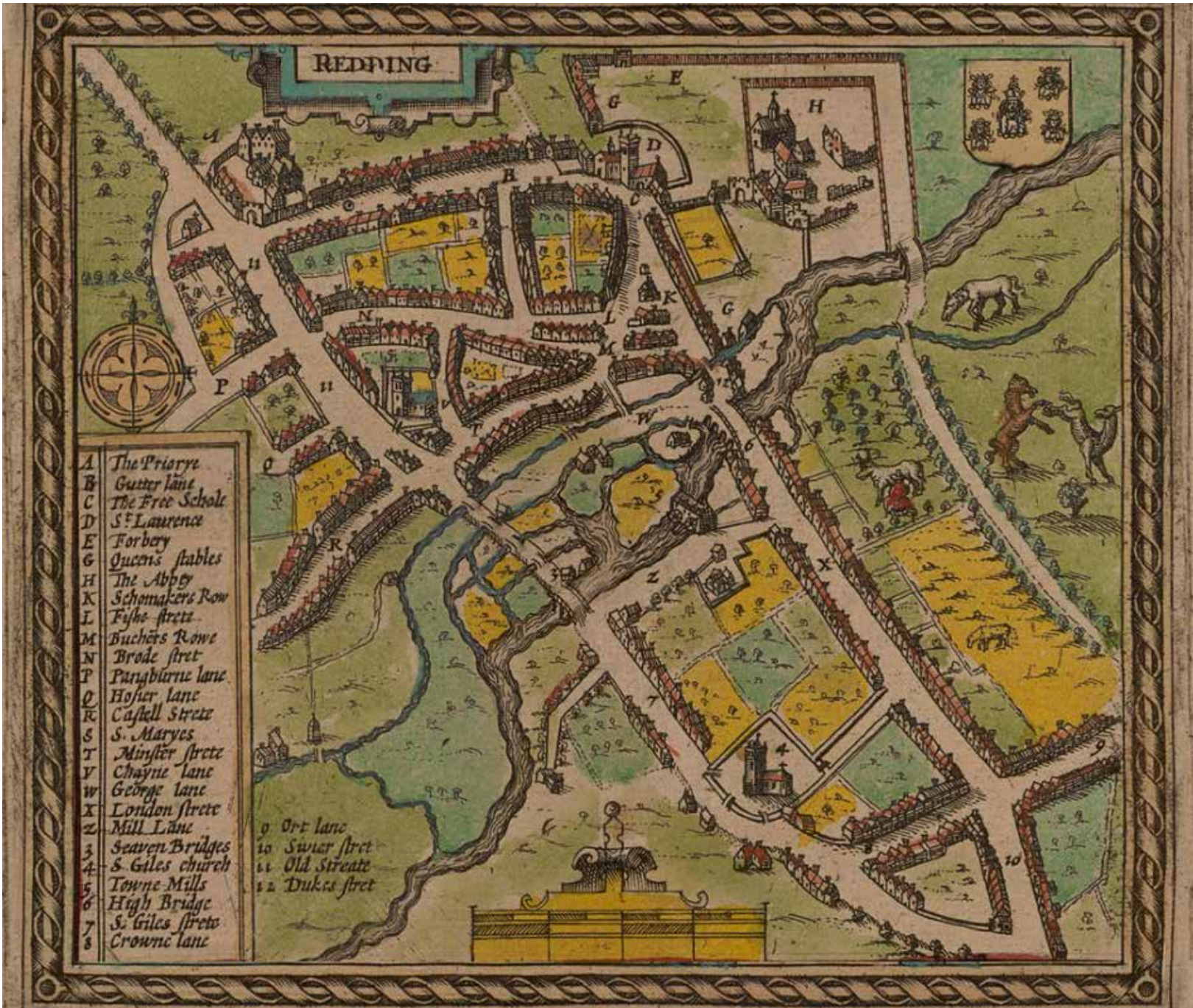


Figure 4.1 John Speed's Map of Reading, 1611

- 4.7 The 1879 OS map at **Figure 4.2** shows the extent of urban development following the implementation of the water and rail transport networks. The whole of the town centre comprises built development, which is generally fine grain with narrow plots.
- 4.8 To the immediate south of the Site the OS map identifies the 'Borough Police Station'. The police court building was constructed in 1862 in a 'Venetian Gothic' style mixing gothic and classical forms. It was later adapted to a coroner's court and is now Grade II listed. To the west of the Site is the Lower Ship Inn, which is currently vacant.
- 4.9 The OS map shows the buildings at the Site had a distinctive curved face to the junction between Duke Street and King Street, with small, irregular plots to the north and larger buildings with wider frontages along Duke Street.

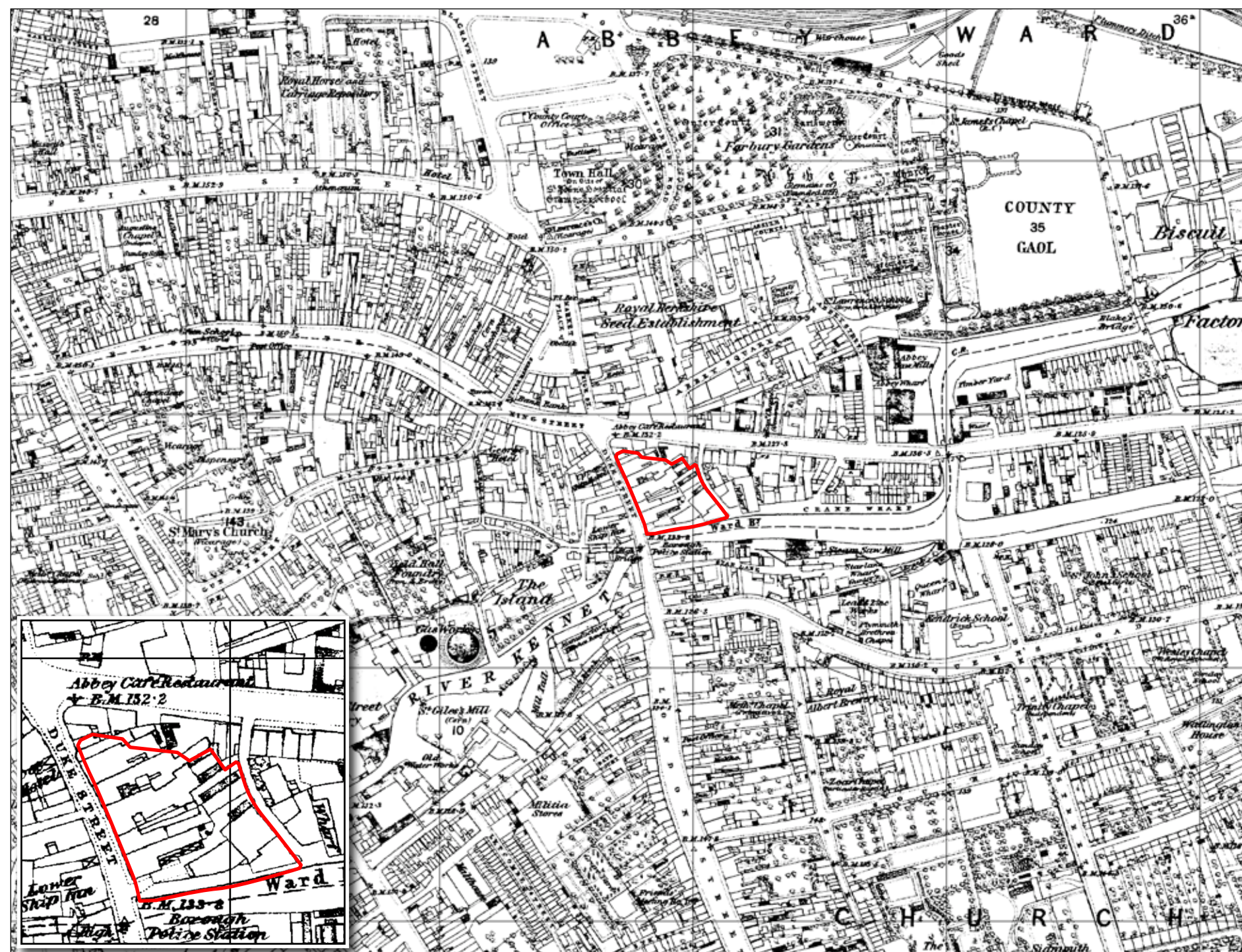


Figure 4.2 1879 OS of the Site and locality

- 4.10 The 1895 Goad Map at **Figure 4.3** provides more information about the use of the buildings in the environs of the Site. Nos. 3-15 (odd) located in the Site boundary include two hardware stores, a Chandler, decorator and piano workshop along Duke Street. At the centre of the Site, a small yard accommodated stores, a cabinet factory, stables and a smithy.
- 4.11 The numbers, colours and letters on the buildings in the map denote that the Duke Street buildings ranged between three and four storeys in height with a tiled roof and constructed of brick or stone. The courtyard buildings ranged between one and two storeys with a metal or slate roof, some constructed of wood.
- 4.12 To the east of the Site, an 18th century house is indicated as being vacant, set within its garden at an angle to the road. The building is of three storeys and constructed of brick or stone, as currently.

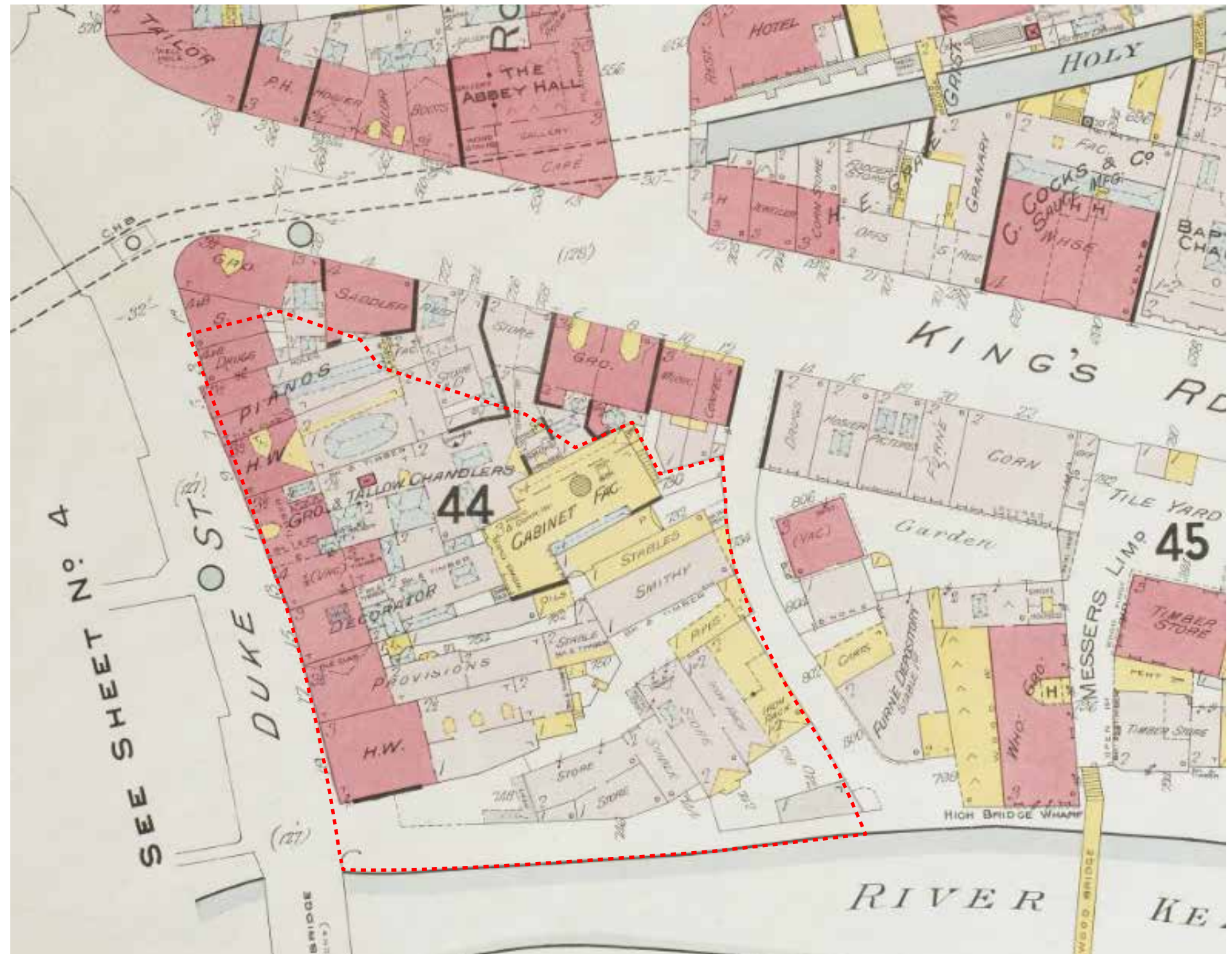


Figure 4.3 1895 Goad Plan of the Site

4.13 In 1912, the arrangement of the city centre remained largely unaltered (Figure 4.5). At the Site, the arrangement of wider buildings extending to the east of Duke Street continued. Figure 4.4 comprises a postcard showing boys from St Giles School walking over High Bridge in to Duke Street. In the background is London Street including the Coroner's Court (left) and a hairdressers at 2-4 London Street (right).



Figure 4.4 1910 to 1913 view looking south over High Bridge towards 2-4 London Street.

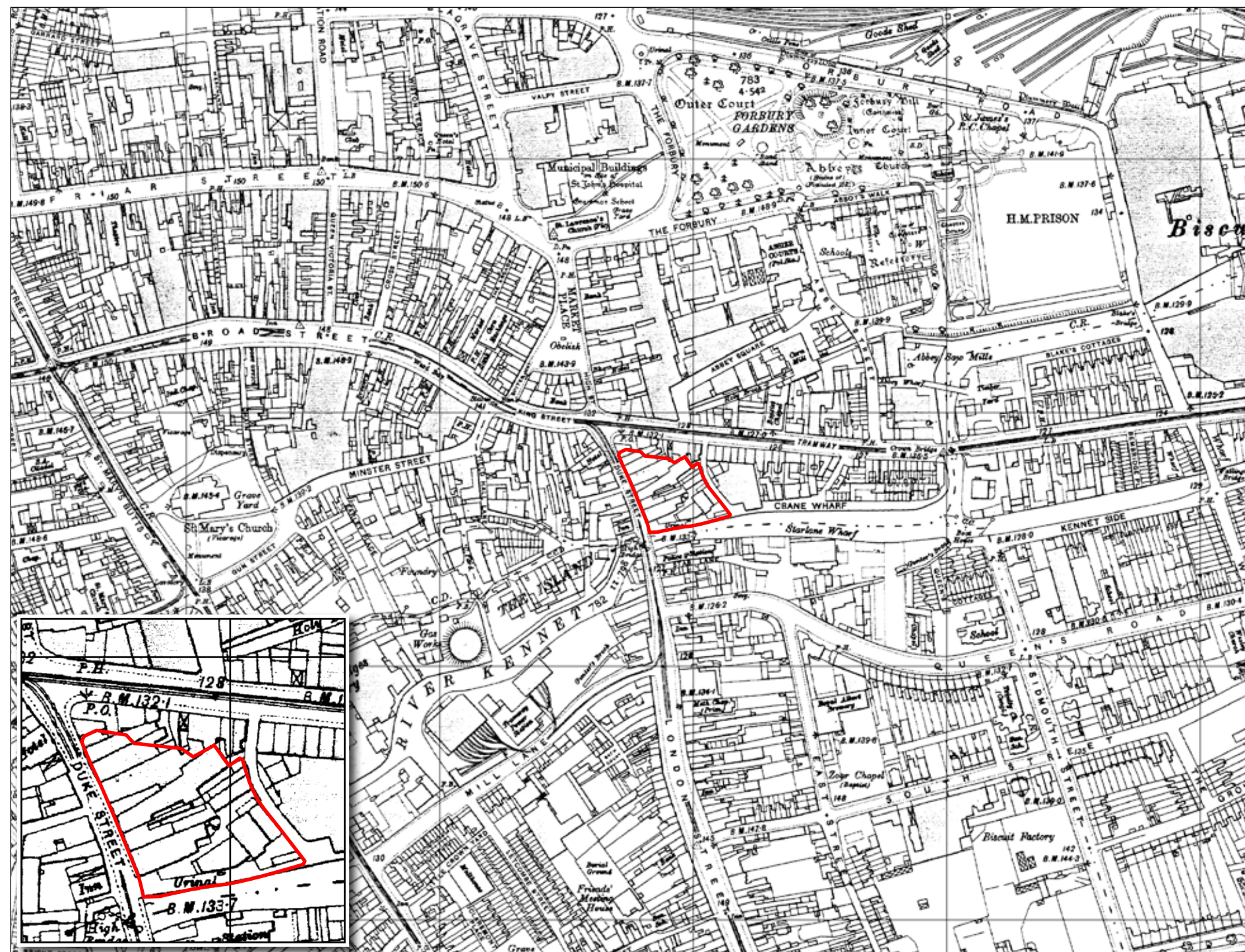


Figure 4.5 1912 OS of the Site and locality