

6-8 Market Place Reading

Design & Access Statement

on behalf of Castleforge Partners

June 2020





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The Project Team

This Statement has been prepared by tp bennett with input from the following professional team:

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Architect: tp bennett

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Planning, Sustainability & Heritage: Turley

Service Design: Lehdring Service Design

Structures: London Structures Lab

Project Manager: Faithful + Gould

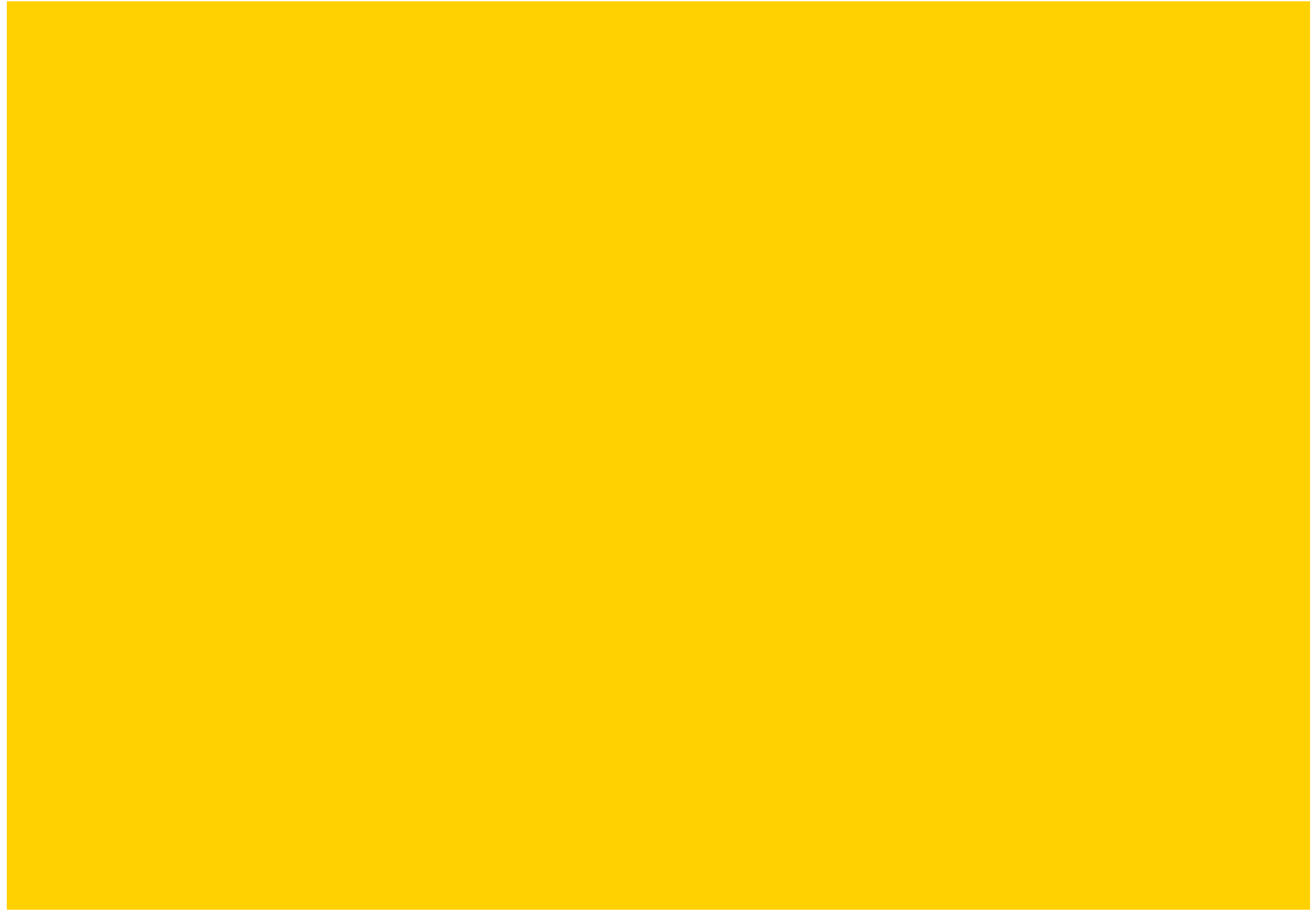
Cost Planning: Linesight

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Left, Market Place, Reading, with the site (nos. 6-8) on the left of the picture



01 Introduction

1.1 Introduction & purpose of this document

This statement has been prepared by tp bennett in support of a full planning application for proposed refurbishment of and additions and alterations to an existing office and retail building at 6-8 Market Place, Reading.

The applicant is Castleforge Partners and they are aiming to bring to Reading their Clockwise brand of co-working and individual offices for small businesses and start- ups. This is a sustainable small business community focussed on a flexible business space model.

Internal alterations are proposed which will transform the building interior to provide attractive contemporary flexible workspace for predominantly local, small and growing businesses. Some additional floorspace will be created at current roof level. Amenity space in the form of roof terraces and internal communal space is to be provided in order that small and start-up businesses can meet, collaborate and thrive.

Existing retail space fronting Market Place is retained, but an increased presence on the street from the office reception area will enhance the active frontage in Market Place and create a new, more dynamic and welcoming arrival experience for the workspace.

At the same time, the opportunity has been taken to improve the appearance of the building exterior on the main facades to surrounding streets, including Market Place. A more sympathetic architectural treatment is proposed which integrates the building better with its Conservation Area setting.

This statement describes the Site and its surroundings, the adopted design approach and how an investigation of the heritage significance of the site setting has influenced issues of design and access.

The document has been prepared in line with the requirements of Section 9 of the Town & Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 (as amended), which provides advice on the appropriate content of Design & Access Statements.

This document is informed by the application supporting material and should be read in conjunction with all the submitted information that includes:

- Application Forms and Certificates
- Application Plans and Drawings prepared by tp bennett
- Planning & Transport Statement by Turley
- Covering Letter prepared by Turley
- Archaeology Report prepared by Orion
- Daylight and Sunlight Report prepared by XCO2
- Energy Statement prepared by The Design Collective
- Heritage Statement prepared by Turley Heritage
- Sustainability Statement prepared by Turley Sustainability



Site location

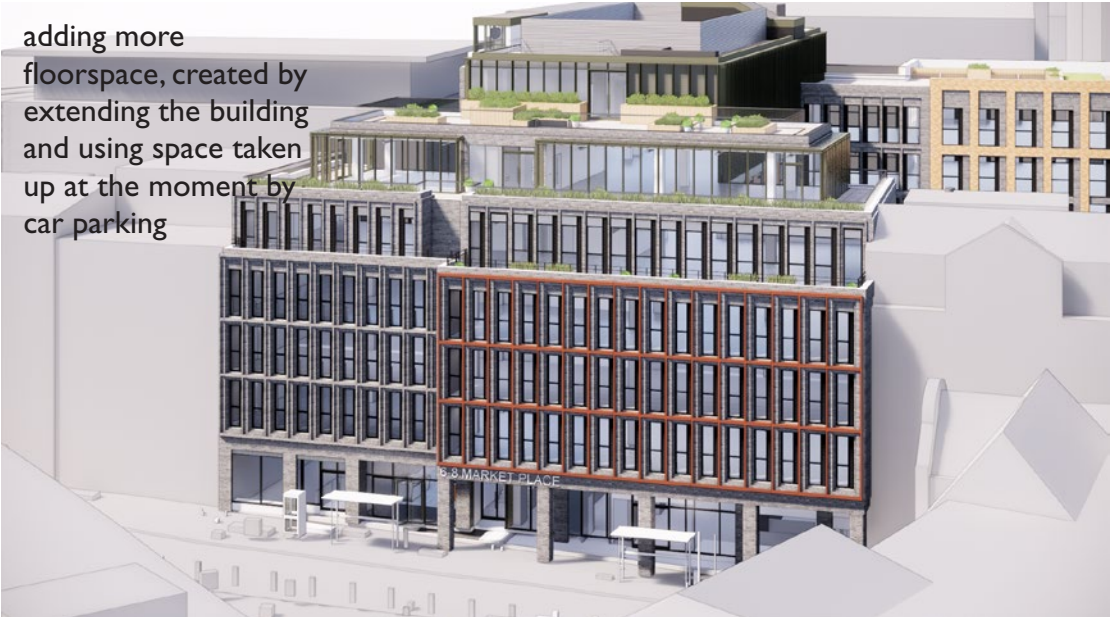
1.2 Summary of the design & access proposals



a new architectural treatment for the building with works to improve the outdated exterior



new landscaping at rooftop level in a series of new terraces



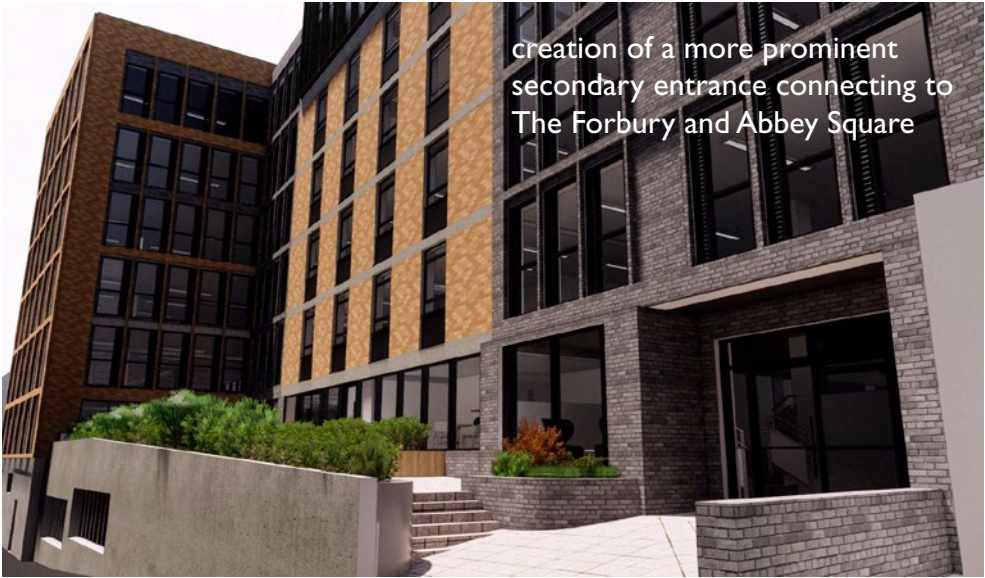
adding more floorspace, created by extending the building and using space taken up at the moment by car parking



changes to circulation inside the building, including a new lift core

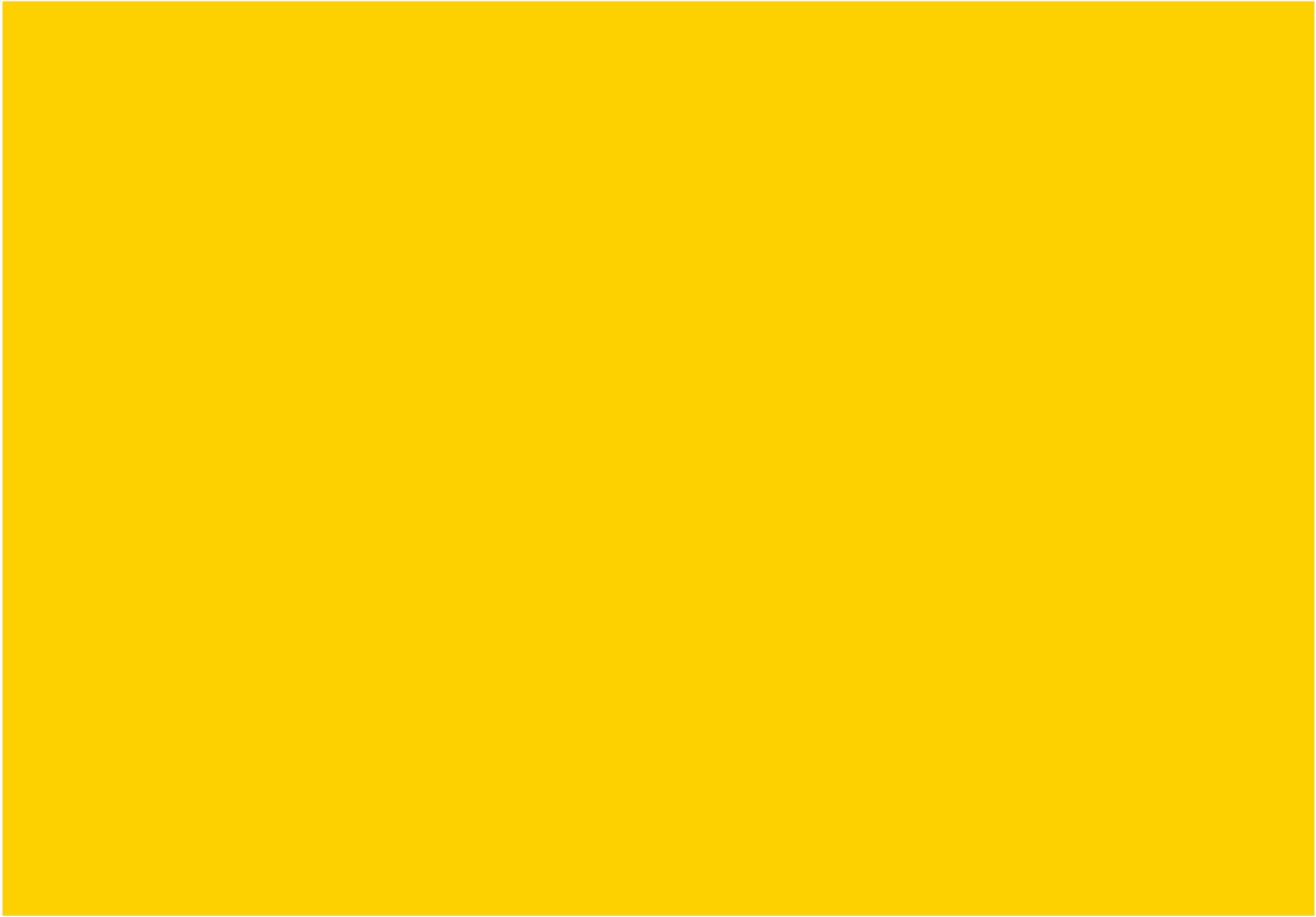


re-formatting office floors to create a flexible workspace and a cafe space at ground floor



creation of a more prominent secondary entrance connecting to The Forbury and Abbey Square





02 The site & the design brief

2.1 The Site & its surroundings

Site location
6-8 Market Place is situated in a highly accessible location in Central Reading and benefits from access to a range of sustainable modes of transport. Reading train station is located approximately 300m north west of the site. A number of bus stops are located along Market Place including one directly in front of the Site.

Traffic circulation is closely managed in the town centre within a network of streets that, surrounding the site, are pedestrian friendly. Vehicle traffic is restricted to one way travel (southbound) in Market Place. Deliveries during the day to adjacent commercial premises are commonplace and occur from rear access to the east.

Market Place runs between Town Hall Square to the north and King Street to the south. The Site overlooks the town’s historic Market Place to the west containing a variety of architectural styles, generally comprising a ground floor and three floors above, with rooftop accommodation and outdoor terraces in some cases.

To the east, the Site has a frontage with Abbey Square and a service access road that runs south from The Forbury.

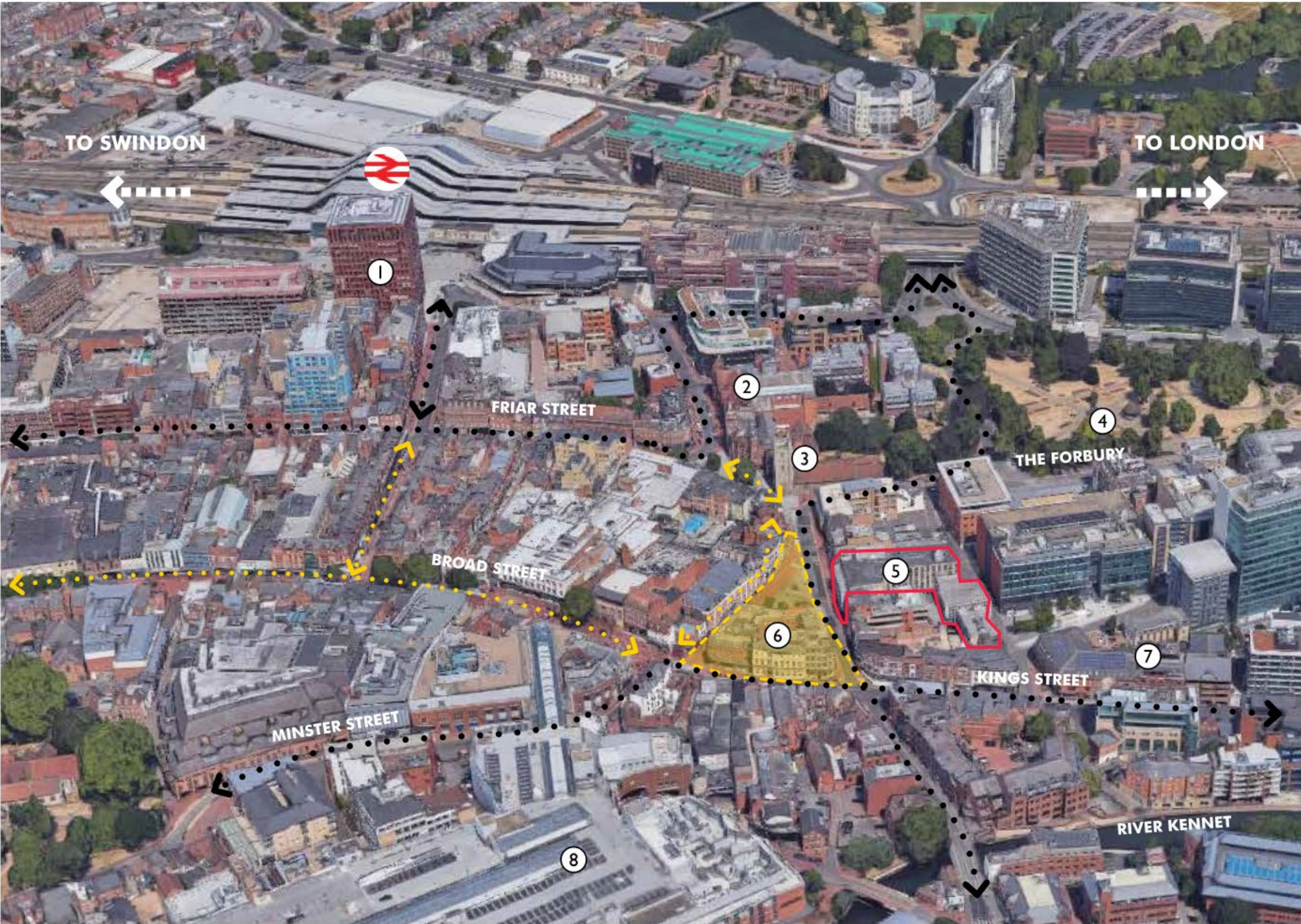
The urban block that the Site is located within marks the point of transition within the town centre where shops and services meet with the civic and office district.

To the west is the retail core of the town, concentrated around Broad Street which is a traditional albeit pedestrianised ‘high street’. The enclosed Oracle centre lies to the south west of the site and tertiary retail and commerce areas are to the north west, up to and around the station.

To the east is the town’s business district, between the river and railway, containing a number of offices for financial, legal and corporate HQs interspersed with some of the town’s civic facilities such as the Central Library, Crown Court and, further east, the prison.

The Town Hall and church of St Laurence’s sit side by side to the north of the Site behind which to the east is the town centre’s largest public open space, Forbury Gardens. The close proximity of attractive historic townscape, urban greenspace and riverside walks are key amenity assets of the location.

Being one of the oldest parts of the centre of Reading, the area has a long history. A detailed appraisal of the site and its heritage significance is included in the Heritage Statement that accompanies this planning application. A context and character appraisal informed by the Heritage Statement is included here.



- ① Thames Tower

② Town Hall

③ St Laurence Church

④ Forbury Gardens

⑤ Soane Point

⑥ Market Place

⑦ Central Library

⑧ Oracle Shopping Centre
- pedestrian route

vehicular route

Oblique aerial view of the site and its surroundings

Urban character

The area has a variety of building types set within a street network that has retained it's historic pattern.

The Site is on higher sloping ground generally falling towards the river to the south. Across the Site there is a storey's height difference between Market Place and Abbey Square.

A broad mix of town centre uses occupy buildings in the area, with shops, restaurants, cafes, bars and financial and other services being commonly found at street level.

These tend to have active frontages tor shopfronts facing the street. Friar Street, Broad Street, Kings Road and Market Place itself have a traditional 'high street' character. There is a sense of intimacy and enclosure created by the street frontages that include 6-8 Market Place.

To the east, there are taller and bulkier modern commercial office and civic buildings on large plots, set back further from the back edge of pavements.



Site context in images

A varied sense of scale is also found within a few blocks around the Site, with notable commercial, civic and modern retail and leisure buildings being significantly greater in bulk and prominence, such as the Town Hall, the church, the Oracle Centre and modern commercial offices and courts to the east, increasing in footprint and height.

Within this setting, the building currently occupying the Site is neither prominent in position or scale compared with what surrounds it, although it does form a broad frontage to Abbey Square when approached from the east.

In appearance, however, it offers a marked contrast in grain to the traditional forms of older buildings, having a modular and unadorned grid-like facade across a broader plot width that has an overall horizontal visual emphasis. This sits uncomfortably alongside the finer grain vertical emphasis on narrower plot widths of historic buildings surrounding the Site.

There is, however, no dominant architectural style or material. Plot by plot, there is variety in form and appearance within Market Place. Red brick is common, but so too are other colours of brick. There are examples of white painted stucco, ashlar, stone, painted render and exposed concrete within view of the Site and steel, glass and panelised rainscreen commonly found to the east looking from Abbey Square.

The public realm is attractively landscaped, paved in muted natural materials that complement the variety of buildings, and has a pleasant buzz on market days.



1. Market Place Square looking towards the site from Butter Market



2. Market Place Square as seen from the church of St Laurence's



3. An overhead view of Market Place Square viewed from the building



4. The building occupying the Site and its frontage with Market Place



Key



5. View north from the junction of London Road and Duke Street



6. The rear of the building as seen from Abbey Square



7. View of the Site from The Forbury



8. Abbey Square with the Site in the background



Town Hall Square and the front of St Laurence's Church looking towards the Site

The heritage environment

Market Place is home to a number of listed buildings and this space, the Site and its surroundings are located in the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area. The diagram on the right shows the location of heritage assets close to the Site.

A number of Grade II Listed Buildings are located in proximity to the Site including 1 & 2 Market Place located directly south of the Site, the former National Westminster Bank at 13 -16 Market Place to the north of the Site and the Grade II* Simeon Monument directly opposite.

The Church of St Laurence's to the north of the site is one of only a few Grade I listed buildings in Reading and its setting and any impact will be of paramount importance to the design. The Council's Conservation Area appraisal document describes the market square as follows:

"This open space, based on the medieval market place and forecourt of a former gateway to the Abbey, provides a good setting for the area's historic buildings especially St Laurence's Church, the Town Hall and a row of listed buildings (nos. 23 to 34) on the north-east of Market Place."

The site is also located within an area of archaeological potential and the designated 'Abbey Quarter'.

The Site itself contains no designated heritage assets. It is of no special historic or architectural merit and is identified in the Council's Conservation Area appraisal document as modern architecture that fails to respect its historic setting, having a negative impact on the townscape around it.

The current day setting of the Site retains some of the fine urban grain of the past (see pictures on opposite page). The street network surrounding the Site retains its historic pattern, albeit now partly pedestrianised. The spaces have retained their integrity and alignment within an irregular urban block arrangement with clearly defined fronts and backs.

Key views representing the best of the town's historic character in which the Site appears as a component have been identified in discussion with Council officers and these have been used as part of the basis of assessing the proposals and their potential impact on townscape and the protection and enhancement of this historic setting.



Above: Site Location showing the heritage assets identified within the vicinity of the subject site
Left: Historic buildings close to the Site, including the Town Hall (bottom left) display a distinctive palette of materials, ornate detail and fine grain elevational proportion in comparison to the brutalist character of more modern late 20th Century architecture in Market Place Square.

- CONSERVATION AREA
- VIEWS
- LISTED BUILDINGS
- BUILDINGS OF TOWNSCAPE MERIT
- SITE
- OPEN SPACE



Photograph of the Site at the end of the 19th Century



An overhead view of Market Place viewed from the east in 1928 (credit Britain from Above EPW022684)



*Left and above: Photographs of the building under construction in the 1960s
Right: An overhead view of the church and Market Place in 1951 (credit Britain from Above EAW034974)*

