

Redevelopment of 43 and 43a London Street, Reading RG1 4PS

Design & Access Statement accompanying Planning Application for:-

'Part-demolition of existing London Street facade and internal works to building alongside demolition of two storey building to rear to enable residential-led mixed-use development comprising 48 sqm community use (Class D1) and 21no residential units (2 x studio, 7 x 1 bed, 9 x 2 two bed and 3 x 3 bed units) together with associated services enclosures, parking and landscaping'.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The proposal is for a well designed, high quality, discreet town centre residential development, formed by extending & converting 43 London Street together with replacing the poor quality and unfit for purpose annex building 43a situated in Sims Court at the rear, including the adjacent open car park area
- 1.2 This statement accompanies revised proposals prepared following the planning department's constructive response to pre-applications ref. 180670 and ref. 190364, together with consultation with and positive feedback from the advisory Architects Review Panel and Reading Civic Society. These pre-application consultations have established the principle of change of use and the appropriate form of redevelopment of the site. We set out the amendments to the proposals as a result of all the consultations and feedback in more detail below
- 1.3 The revised proposals that form this full planning application have not only taken on board the comments of all Consultees and responses from the planning department, but also the advice as set out in the accompanying reports with regard to noise, light, traffic, planning, heritage considerations and other consultants
- 1.4 This Design & Access Statement should be read in conjunction with the drawings as set out in the accompanying drawing register, together with consultants' reports

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2.0 Existing site and buildings

- 2.1** The site, which has a total area of about 750m², is located within Reading Central Area Action Plan and Market Place / London Street Conservation Area



Location plan



No. 43 and adjacent buildings in London Street

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- 2.2** No. 43 London Street is a two storey building with taller properties on either side, both of which are Grade II Listed. Together with Nos. 45 to 47 it is designated as a Building of Townscape Merit, however it is in poor condition and has been much altered from its original form as 'The Eagle Tavern'. The interior of the building is arranged on several different levels and the difficult access makes it unsuitable for community use. The building was last used as a dental surgery and has been vacant since 2016



The Eagle Tavern at No.43



43a Infill building

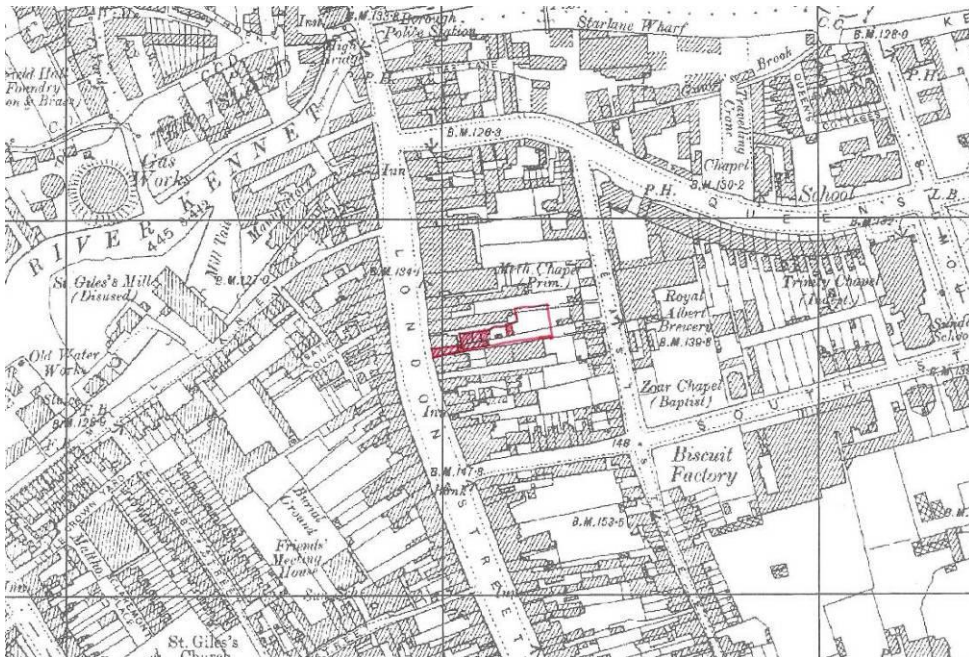
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- 2.3** No. 43a is a three storey infill building at the rear of 43 London Street, which consists of separately accessed office areas together with treatment rooms and ancillary space for the former dental practice



Sims Court (looking towards parking area) and 43a Infill building

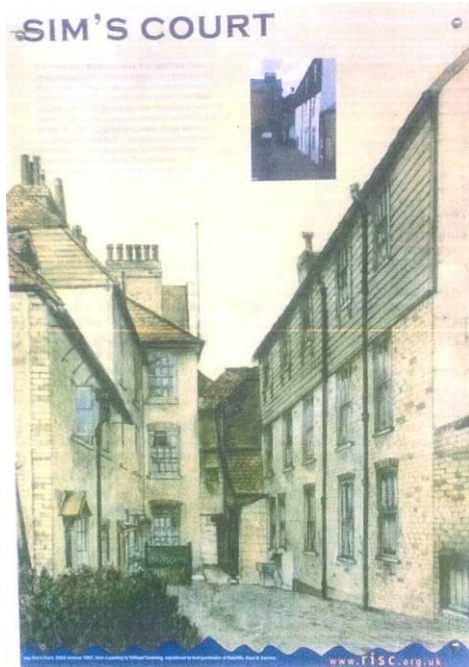
- 2.4** The brick walls to the treatment rooms on the lower floor alongside Sims Court are windowless with barbed wire surrounding the flat roof area. The office building above is in a poor state of repair and the windows are enclosed by security bars



Historical OS Map 1899 – Red hatching indicates buildings on site

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- 2.5** No. 43a has been built on an area originally occupied by houses which fronted onto Sims Court accessed by the covered passageway from London Street



Historical and current views of Sims Court



Parking area with rear of London Court and 43a London Street

- 2.6** To the rear of 43a London Street there is a private parking area bounded by the flank wall of London Court and rear of 35 – 39 London Street (RISC Cafe)

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Aerial view of the site – rear parking area, 43a and 43 London Street

- 2.7** The parking area is accessed from East Street via a steep ramp and there is also a large car park adjacent on the lower ground level. A planning application to redevelop this car park area for a 5 storey student housing scheme has recently been approved (Planning Ref. 182251)
- 2.8** The rear of the site is surrounded by large residential buildings; notably a 4-5 storey building on the south side of London Court and 5 storey buildings to the north of the site

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3.0 Scheme Proposal

- 3.1** Following the consultations, the proposal has been reduced overall from 24 units to 21. Also, as in the pre application submissions, it is proposed that No.43 London Street will be extended and converted but in this application, a D1 use will be retained at ground level with a new contemporary shop front, two Studio Flats and a one Bed flat above. Taking on board the planning officer's comments, the living areas of the first and second floor flats have been relocated to the rear, with glazed doors opening on to balconies, and the top floor flat will have a roof terrace set behind the front facade, to minimise its impact on the street



No. 43 as existing



No.43 as proposed

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- 3.2** Following consultation with the Planning Department and Design Review Panel the existing façade will be refurbished, removing the non original paint finish and repairing and making good the brickwork. The parapet will be slightly raised to allow for the new second floor but will be kept below the level of the adjoining Listed properties, so that their 'dominance' remains; the roof extension will also be set well back so as to be barely visible at street level. In addition and as suggested by the Conservation Officer, the non original shopfront joinery and 1st floor window will be removed and replaced with new timber framed sash style windows above a new shopfront. The proposal includes a 'green' balcony on the top level of the building, giving occupants desirable amenity space
- 3.3** At the rear of No.43 the existing, incongruous, and poor quality infill at 43A and the associated car park area, will be replaced with a new, high quality residential infill scheme



Site layout proposed in original pre-application ref.180670

- 3.4** In the original pre-application the proposal was for a building replacing No. 43A and a separate terraced building at the rear overlooking the adjacent car park; however, in this proposal, the latter is attached and forms an integrated part of the new building



Site layout proposed in further pre-application ref. 190364

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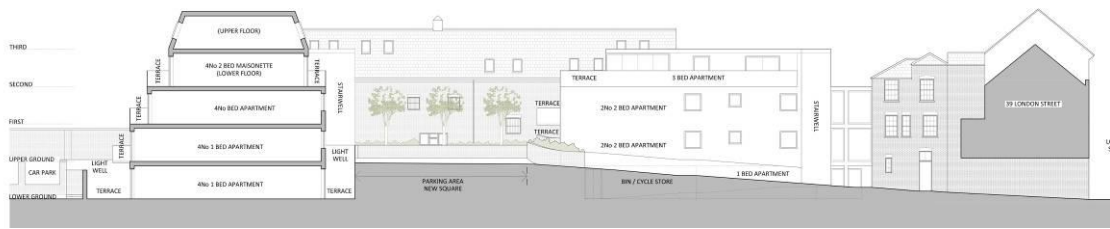
- 3.5** Following feedback on the original pre-application, the scheme has been arranged as a linear mews, continuing the pattern of houses that previously existed in Sims Court. As also suggested, the mews buildings are set behind the line of the houses that previously existed that were aligned with the side return of 41 London Street, to provide more space and light into Sims Court
- 3.6** Whilst the proposal seeks to reinstate the previous residential nature of Sims Court, it has been carefully designed to provide high quality, modern accommodation with each unit receiving adequate daylight, sunlight, amenity and privacy
- 3.7** The mews style housing will have front garden/terrace areas enclosed by brick walls to act as a buffer to the semi-public passageway of Sims Court. As discussed in consultation with the Planning Department, the frontage of the mews style housing will be articulated with projecting bays, a recessed glazed stairwell, and a 'slot' leading to a courtyard designed to take account of existing windows in the back wall of London Court



Revised site plan of Planning Application

- 3.8** Further to advice received in the pre-application, the proposed courtyard has been enlarged and landscaped, to provide improved aspect to the windows at the rear of London Court. These windows currently overlook the parking area and so frequently have cars parked right in front of them. If thought beneficial, translucent privacy screens could be provided in front of these windows to protect the privacy of neighbouring residents whilst retaining light and aspect. The courtyard will have gated access provide new security to London Court
- 3.9** Although not yet constructed, the design also takes account of the recently approved student housing scheme on the adjacent site. The north east corner of the application scheme will be set away from the site boundary, to reflect, and in a similar manner to, the student housing, the revised proposal also incorporates larger family size units on the lower ground floor to benefit from the adjacent student communal garden

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Pre-application section/elevation to Sims Court



Revised pre-application section/elevation to Sims Court

- 3.11** The scheme submitted with the further pre-application proposed a linear mews type of scheme with the apartment buildings designed to resemble the style of double fronted houses and this design approach was supported by the Consultees and therefore retained for this planning application. It is proposed that fenestration within the rendered panels will takes the form of tall French doors with 'Juliette' balconies to maximise light and ventilation to the interior and, together with glazed splayed returns to brick chimney panels, animate the frontage to Sims Court



Revised and agreed section/elevation to Sims Court

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- 3.12** In consultation with the Planning Department and their Design Review Panel the mews buildings have been lowered, so that the timber clad top floor aligns with the eaves of London Court and the previously fully glazed bays have been replaced with brick panels containing chimneys to provide greater privacy to both the occupants and to the RISC building opposite. Also as agreed, the eastern end of the scheme is taller to reflect the scale of the adjacent student housing scheme



View looking down Sims Court

- 3.13** Although the main frontage is set back from previous properties on the site, terraces and gardens along the front will take the line of the former buildings
- 3.14** Cycle and refuse stores sit beneath the terraces, in a brick plinth, that will also incorporate an access ramp and stairs to the upper ground floor entrances
- 3.15** As agreed with the Design Review Panel projecting bays between the rendered sections of the buildings, incorporating chimneys for focal fireplaces within the flats, will have glazed returns to allow views up and down Sims Court that will also bring improved security to the space simultaneously protecting privacy and amenity of RISC building opposite
- 3.16** The rendered façades and timber cladding of the mews style housing will reflect the detailing of the existing RISC building in Sims Court, whilst providing a lighter and brighter aspect to the passageway

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View looking up Sims Court

4.0 Materials

- 4.1** As the application site is set within a Conservation Area and adjacent to Grade II listed buildings, the materials used will seek to tie in with the existing streetscape, be in keeping with surroundings and generally be sympathetic to the neighbouring properties, wherever possible. The proposed palette will include brickwork, render and timber cladding to reflect the detailing of the surrounding buildings
- 4.2** The top storey of the housing will have dark timber-cladding to reflect the detailing of the existing RISC building in Sims Court
- 4.3** The base of the scheme, bays, and lift enclosure will be clad in brick to match local buildings

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5.0 Landscaping

- 5.1** There are currently no trees within the application site boundary but the proposal seeks to introduce planted terraces and green roofs to enrich and soften Sims Court
- 5.2** The scheme also incorporates a landscaped courtyard which will substantially improve the aspect of windows at the rear of London Court
- 5.3** Gardens and planting to Sims Court will link with the 'green oasis' of the RISC Cafe's roof terrace
- 5.4** The large, family size lower ground floor flats at the east end of the scheme, adjacent to the communal garden of the proposed student housing, will have landscaped private gardens
- 5.5** There are a few trees in the neighbouring car park that has been approved for student housing. However, it is likely that some of the trees may need to be removed to facilitate the construction of the student scheme with a new communal garden
- 5.6** A further 109m² of green roof will be provided at the rear of the site, adjacent to the communal garden of the proposed student housing

6.0 Cycles

- 6.1** Secure and well spaced storage for 15 cycles, which exceeds the requirement of 11 cycles for the proposed dwellings including No 43, will be located at lower ground floor level with direct access from Sims Court

7.0 Waste management

- 7.1** All accommodation will be provided with in-unit rubbish and recycling storage; easily accessible bins will be provided in a communal store at lower ground level close to London Street, within the same distance as currently located for collection
- 7.2** In addition, bin storage will be provided for the adjoining properties in order to provide a better environment to, and tidy up and improve the amenity of, Sims Court

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View from East End of London Court

8.0 Sustainability

- 8.1** It is proposed that the development will be constructed using sustainably sourced materials and the services installations will be designed to be highly energy efficient
- 8.2** Roof mounted photovoltaic panels will be provided on the rear roof slope of the mews buildings facing London Court
- 8.3** The top floor of the east building will have a low maintenance green roof
- 8.4** All dwellings are designed to have dual aspect and there are no north facing single aspect units
- 8.5** All the units will also have large windows to maximise natural light and ventilation

9.0 Access

- 9.1** At the east end of the scheme two, full width disabled parking spaces are provided as described in the accompanying transport statement
- 9.2** The upper ground floors of the new building will be entered at grade and will therefore be fully wheelchair accessible and a lift will be provided in the taller building at the end of Sims Court
- 9.3** London Street is provided with a variety of public transport options and the site is close to Reading Main Line Rail Station; there are also several bus routes that run along the main road

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10.0 Schedule of Accommodation

10.1 Following feedback from the Planning Department to the initial pre-application submission ref. 180670 the scheme has been reduced from 24 to 21 residential units with a mix of accommodation. The scheme now consists of one commercial unit and 2 Studio Flats, 7 One Bed Flats, 9 Two Bed Flats & 3 Three Bed Flats

10.2 The gross internal floor areas of the proposed units are:-

Unit 1:	48m ²	Commercial Unit
Unit 2:	46m ²	Studio Flat
Unit 3	45m ²	Studio Flat
Unit 4:	56m ²	One Bed Flat
Unit 5:	95m ²	Three Bed Maisonette
Unit 6:	62m ²	Two Bed Flat
Unit 7:	67m ²	Two Bed Flat
Unit 8:	62m ²	Two Bed Flat
Unit 9:	53m ²	One Bed Flat
Unit 10:	58m ²	One Bed Flat
Unit 11:	79m ²	Two Bed Flat
Unit 12:	55m ²	One Bed Flat
Unit 13:	73m ²	Two Bed Flat
Unit 14:	55m ²	One Bed Flat
Unit 15:	73m ²	Two Bed Flat
Unit 16:	63m ²	Two Bed Flat
Unit 17:	54m ²	One Bed Flat
Unit 18:	83m ²	Three Bed Flat
Unit 19:	68m ²	Two Bed Flat
Unit 20:	68m ²	Two Bed Flat
Unit 21:	55m ²	One Bed Flat
Unit 22:	80m ²	Three Bed Flat

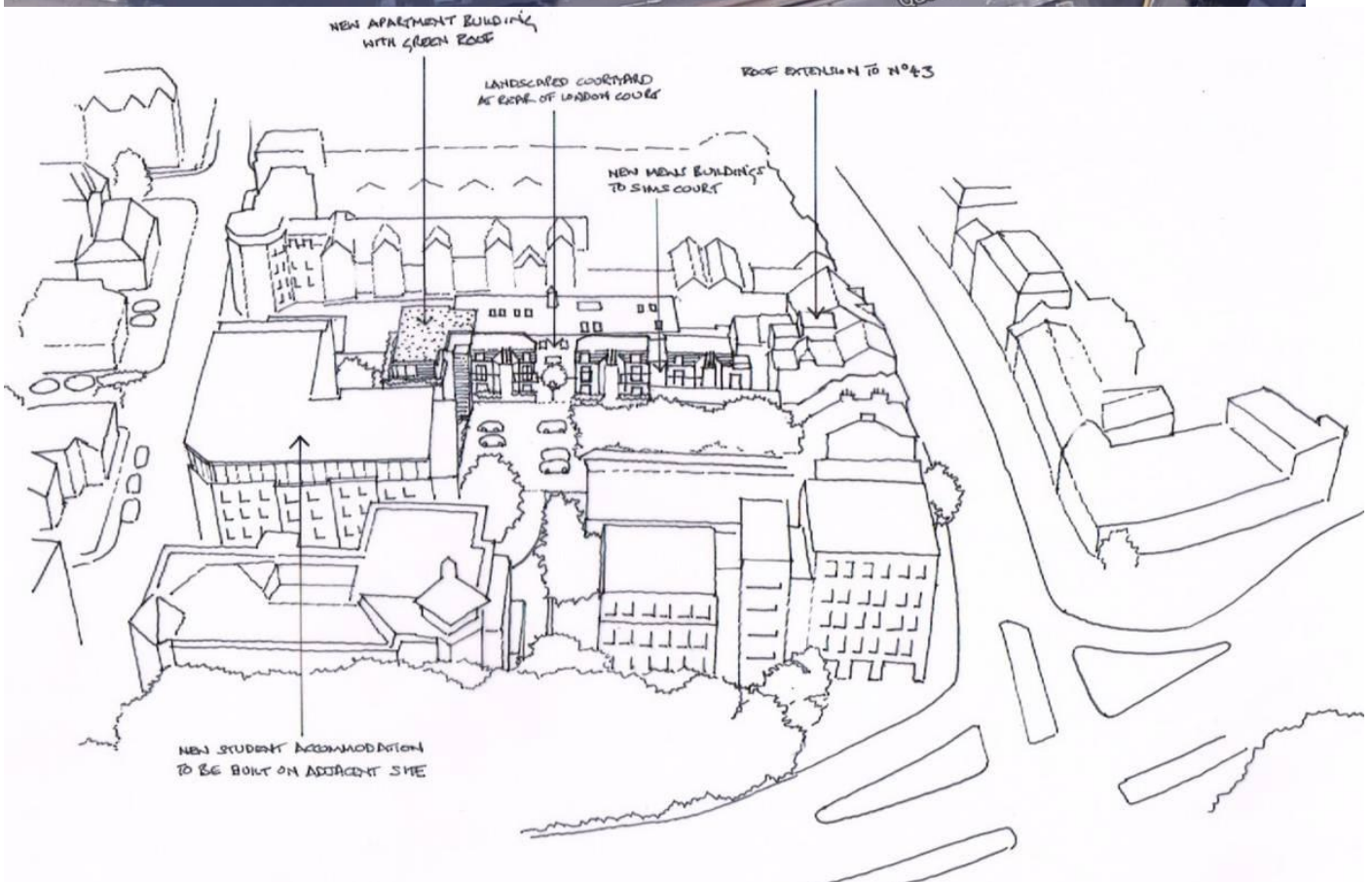
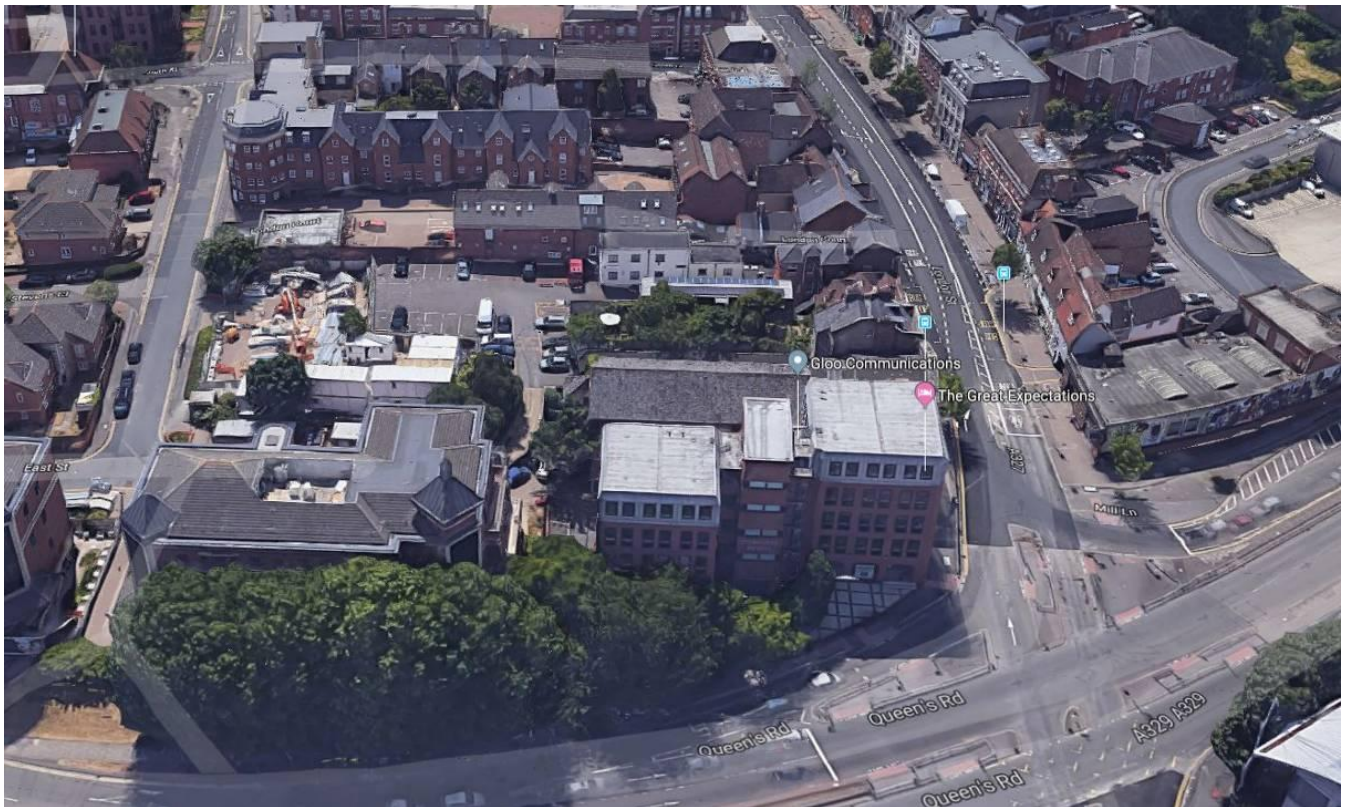
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11.0 Conclusion

The proposals address the issues raised by the planning officers in response to the pre –application as follows:-

- The development has a reduced number of units from 24 to 21 apartments
- The proposal has a greater mix of size and accommodation of units, including 3 three-bedroom family sized units
- The proposal retains No 43 London Road - extended and refurbished
- The proposal reinstates the residential character of Sims Court
- The design of the development is of a linear style as suggested by the planning officers
- The mews style apartment buildings are set back from the previously shown building line
- The proposal will provide high quality accommodation to modern standards
- The proposal will provide adequate amenity areas, day light and sunlight to all units
- The proposal will provide separate, secure bin and cycle stores
- The proposal provides development of this much under-used Brownfield site that can make a substantial contribution to Reading's urgent housing need
- The scheme will restore an unattractive site and meet the council's aim of reintroducing residential units into the city centre

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Existing and proposed aerial views of the site