



Broad Street Mall Masterplan

Environmental Impact Assessment

Volume 2: Townscape, Built Heritage and Visual Impact Assessment

ES Volume

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Townscape, Built Heritage and Visual Impact Assessment

Broad Street Mall

Reading, RG1

**Townscape, Built Heritage & Visual
Impact Assessment
Environmental Impact Assessment**

January 2019

Consultancy for the
Historic Built Environment

KMHHeritage

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 This report presents the assessment of the heritage townscape and visual impact of the proposed Broad Street Mall development, with particular emphasis on the effects on views, built heritage and cultural heritage assets and also forms part of the Environmental Impact Assessment.

Author

- 1.2 The drafting of this statement was undertaken by Nick Collins BSc (Hons) MSc MRICS IHBC. Nick has been a Principal Inspector of Historic Buildings & Areas in the London Region of Historic England. Most recently he was a Director of Conservation at Alan Baxter & Associates. Nick has extensive experience in dealing with proposals that affect the historic environment and also has a background in research, in policy analysis and in understanding historic buildings and places

Assessment Approach and Methods

- 1.3 Following the collation of information about the site in terms of history and urban development, an assessment has been made of the townscape and heritage value of the area which would be influenced by the development proposal.
- 1.4 The visual assessment of the likely effect of the development is undertaken primarily based on a series of viewpoints selected to illustrate the views from which the Proposed Development will have the most significant effect. This list of views has been drawn up in consultation with the local planning authority. The viewpoint photographs have been surveyed and superimposed with an accurate computer model to show the size and form of the development in relation to its surroundings. An assessment has been made on the outcome of the effect.

Proposed Development

- 1.5 Planning permission is sought for the construction of three residential buildings (Use Class C3) ranging in height from 5 to 22 storeys above Broad Street Mall and provision of podium level amenity area; Construction of an 18 storey building on South Court comprising ground and first floor retail (use Class A1/A2/A3) and residential over upper floors (Use Class C3); Change of use and extension of Quadrant House to form a 3 storey residential building (Use Class C3); Creation of three ground floor retail units (Use Class A1/A2/A3) fronting Dusseldorf Way and Queens Walk; All necessary enabling and alteration works required within the existing Broad Street Mall basement, ground and upper floors; Associated car park alterations, provision of servicing and refuse storage, cycle parking, public realm, landscape, and other works incidental to the phased development.
- 1.6 The application is formed of five main sites:
- 1.7 Sites A & B – Dusseldorf Way: Partial demolition of the existing Broad Street Mall and the construction of 172 and 139 residential homes respectively, with amenity space and retail unit reconfiguration at ground floor level and ancillary space at basement level.
- 1.8 Site C - Dusseldorf Way/Hosier Street: Construction of 99 residential homes and new retail unit with ancillary space at basement level.
- 1.9 Site D – Quadrant House: Refurbishment of existing office into 31 residential homes
- 1.10 Site E – Oxford Road: Partial demolition of the existing centre, loss of one retail unit at ground floor to facilitate the construction of 52 residential homes above the existing shopping mall, with ancillary space at basement level.
- 1.11 The scheme is being split into two phases, the first phase of which consists of sites A, B and C. The second phase covers sites D (Quadrant House) and E (Oxford Road).

2 The Site and Baseline Conditions

Historic Context

- 2.1 The first mention of Reading is in 870. The Domesday Book records a borough, with one church. The town occupied high ground at a crossing of the River Kennet just west of its marshy confluence with the Thames, which runs to the north. It is also located at the point where the main post-Roman road from London to Bath crossed a key North-South route from Oxford to Southampton and Winchester.
- 2.2 The town became a prosperous centre for cloth-making during the medieval period. During the Civil War Reading changed hands three times in as many years, however in 1725 Daniel Defoe still found the town ‘very large and wealthy’ and ‘handsomely built’. The big timber framed houses he would have seen are now rare; as early as 1813 Reading was described as chiefly of brick. That was just after the Kennet and Avon Canal began to ship in Bath stone. Later, from 1840, materials and prosperity came with the arrival of the Great Western Railway.
- 2.3 This expanding late Georgian town is seen at its best on the approach roads and inner suburbs. King’s Road and Queens Road, of the 1830s have further interest as amendments to the medieval town plan, for a more direct approach from London.
- 2.4 The great Victorian employers were breweries, Huntley & Palmer’s biscuit factory, and Sutton’s seeds. Philanthropic gifts excepted, their buildings have almost gone, but districts of terraced housing complete with red brick Board Schools remain to the east and south. These are good places to see how vigorously the local brick makers exploited the Thames Valley earths and clays for their coloured bricks, tiles and terracotta. During this period Caversham, to the north of the River Thames, became an overspill suburb and in 1892 the forerunner to the

University was founded, though architecturally this did not come into its own until after 1945.

- 2.5 Following the second world war development pressure exceeded what had been predicted and the town became popular for white-collar employment and London overspill such that many streets are not entirely filled by office blocks in the town centre. The ring road – the proposals for which were first adopted in 1966 – was completed in two phases – the first up to 1971 and the second after 1978 on a slightly less destructive route.
- 2.6 Otherwise, much of the post-war development of Reading focused on new housing, including tower blocks.
- 2.7 The application site currently comprises the Broad Street Mall, which is located to the south west of Oxford Road and St Mary's Butts.
- 2.8 Broad Street Mall is a large indoor shopping centre which also incorporates a large multi-storey car park with direct access to the first floor of the centre.
- 2.9 The shopping centre was first planned in 1956, however it took more than a decade to find a suitable site and was not opened until 1971. Originally it was known as the Butts Centre after the adjacent St Mary's Butts.
- 2.10 Quadrant House and Fountain House, which form part of the site, provide office accommodation.
- 2.11 Although punctuated by a number of glass openings above the predominantly retail ground floor, along Oxford Road and St Mary's Butts, the shopping centre presents an otherwise monolithic presence at the junction and along both roads.
- 2.12 Looking to the west, Fountain House rises up at the rear of the shopping centre from north to south.
- 2.13 To the south, the complex steps out a number of times to reflect the slight angle to the road, presenting a series of blank side elevations as the shops and accommodation above step out.

3 The heritage significance of the site and its context

- 3.1 This section of the report describes the heritage significance of the site and its surroundings.

The heritage context of the site

- 3.2 The site does not lie within a conservation area, however it is close to the St Marys Butts/Castle Street Conservation Area.
- 3.3 The conservation area contains a large number of statutory listed buildings particularly along Castle Street, however those in the immediate vicinity include:
- 3.4 Church of St Mary (Reading Minster) – Grade I
- 3.5 Church of St Mary, Castle Street – Grade II*
- 3.6 Sun Inn, Castle Street – Grade II
- 3.7 Former Cottage at rear of No.8 Castle Street- Grade II
- 3.8 8,10 & 12 Castle Street – Grade II
- 3.9 The Allied Arms Inn – Grade II
- 3.10 55 & 55A St Mary’s Butts
- 3.11 Queen Victoria Jubilee Fountain – Grade II
- 3.12 Jubilee Cross – Grade II

The heritage significance of the site and its context

The relevant heritage assets

- 3.13 In terms of the assessment of the proposals for the site, the heritage assets within Reading most relevant to considering the effect of the scheme are the nearby conservation area and statutory listed buildings.
- 3.14 The effect of the proposed scheme on these assets will need to be considered.

Assessing heritage significance

- 3.15 St Mary’s Butts/Castle Street Conservation Area and the nearby listed buildings are ‘designated heritage assets’, as

defined by the National Planning Policy Framework (the NPPF). Other buildings and structures that make a positive contribution to the conservation area - such as unlisted buildings of merit - can be considered as 'non-designated heritage assets'.

- 3.16 'Significance' is defined in the NPPF 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'. The Historic England 'Planning for the Historic Environment Practice Guide' puts it slightly differently – as 'the sum of its architectural, historic, artistic or archaeological interest'.
- 3.17 'Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance for the sustainable management of the historic environment' (Historic England, April 2008) describes a number of 'heritage values' that may be present in a 'significant place'. These are evidential, historical, aesthetic and communal value.
- 3.18 Historical value is described as being illustrative or associative. 'Conservation Principles' says that:
- 3.19 Illustration depends on visibility in a way that evidential value (for example, of buried remains) does not. Places with illustrative value will normally also have evidential value, but it may be of a different order of importance... The illustrative value of places tends to be greater if they incorporate the first, or only surviving, example of an innovation of consequence, whether related to design, technology or social organisation.
- 3.20 The site, the listed and unlisted buildings nearby, and their relationship to one another and the Conservation Area collectively illustrate the development of this part of Reading. They all sit within a part of the town centre that has played a significant part in the history of the town for nearly one thousand years.
- 3.21 In terms of Historic England's 'Conservation Principles' the listed buildings and conservation area provide us with 'evidence about past human activity' and, by means of

their fabric, design and appearance, communicate information about its past. Subsequent alteration, demolition and redevelopment has removed the ability to read some of the older townscape but the Conservation Area clearly retains sufficient historic character and appearance to convey the area's historical ethos.

3.22 It is clear that many of the buildings within the Conservation Area have 'architectural' and 'artistic interest' (NPPF) or 'aesthetic value' ('Conservation Principles'). In respect of design, 'Conservation Principles' says that 'design value... embraces composition (form, proportions, massing, silhouette, views and vistas, circulation) and usually materials or planting, decoration or detailing, and craftsmanship'.

3.23 The significance of the Conservation Area is identified within the Council's Conservation Area Appraisal. In summary this states:

- The special interest which justifies designation of the St Mary's Butts/Castle Street Conservation Area derives from the following features:
- Its position at the Saxon centre of Reading at a cross-roads of the main east-west and north-south routes through the town, just north of an original crossing point across the River Kennet, upon which river the town grew.
- The Grade I listed Church of St Mary in St Mary's Butts, a Reading landmark, originally Norman, and mentioned in the Domesday Book, but now mostly Medieval in origin which is the focal building of the Conservation Area.
- St Mary's Churchyard, an important open space in the centre of town.
- Other important landmark buildings including the Grade II* listed St Mary's Church in Castle Street.
- The architectural and historic interest of the area's other buildings, with examples dating from the sixteenth century to the present day, but the majority

of which show a coherence of scale within their various architectural styles.

- The presence of some of the oldest surviving buildings in Reading, including 3 existing public houses (The Allied Arms, The Horn and The Sun) dating from the 16th and 17th centuries, and the former Shades public house at 15 Gun Street dating from the 17th century. The Sun is also reputed to be on the site of the former Reading Gaol.
- Important Grade II* listed buildings at 15 and 17 Castle Street (both 16th century), 19 Castle Street (early 18th century), 63 Castle Street (circa 1750) and the Church of St Mary, Castle Street (1798).
- 35-37 St Mary's Butts (County Delicacies) and 57 St Mary's Butts 9The Allied Arms) which also date from the 16th century.
- The Queen Victoria Jubilee Fountain in St Mary's Butts, a local landmark.
- The Grade II* listed Holy Brook Culvert to the rear of numbers 1-31 (odd) Castle Street, plus the remainder of the Holy Brook which links the rear of the properties on the south side of the conservation area.
- A high percentage of listed buildings, listed individually and for their group value, dating from before 1875.

3.24 Each of the individually listed buildings, as well as those that make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area have their own individual significance in terms of their historical and architectural interest as well as their overall contribution to the evolution of the area.

3.25 The character of the conservation area is made up of both urban and open spaces, with churchyard around Reading Minster not only providing a setting to the church, but also the adjacent historic buildings, and a focal point to the historic crossroads with St Mary's Butts, Castle Street and Gun Street.

- 3.26 The character of Castle Street from The Sun Inn and towards the west is one of an enclosed street with a continuous run of historic buildings, of differing ages, where in particular it is their front elevations that provide the character. Views are enclosed until they open up for the church yard at the junction with St Mary's Butts.
- 3.27 Whilst geographically close to the conservation area and a number of these assets, in reality the proposals site sits visually and physically separately and does not relate directly to the majority of them.
- 3.28 The Broad Street Mall is not regarded as being a structure of any special quality and of no local interest. When viewed from the south, the angle of the shopping centre means that its northern elevations can be seen obliquely. Whilst at ground floor some of the retail units present a narrower scale, the overall mass of the building at first floor and above means that the shopping centre gives a large monolithic impression, in direct contrast to the individual buildings that make up the eastern side of St Mary Butts.
- 3.29 The significant views identified in the Conservation Area Appraisal focus primarily on views along Castle Street and towards St Mary's Church (Reading Minster).

4 The policy context

- 4.1 This section of the report briefly sets out the range of national and local policy and guidance relevant to the consideration of change in the historic built environment.

Legislation

- 4.2 The legislation governing listed buildings and conservation areas is the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Section 66 (1) of the Act requires decision makers to ‘have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses’ when determining applications which affect a listed building or its setting. Section 72(1) of the Act requires decision makers with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area to pay ‘special attention...to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area’.

The National Planning Policy Framework

- 4.3 The revised version of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published on 24 July 2018.
- 4.4 Chapter 12. of the National Planning Policy Framework deals with design: Achieving well-designed places. It begins
- ‘The creation of high quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities. Being clear about design expectations, and how these will be tested, is essential for achieving this. So too is effective engagement between applicants, communities, local planning authorities and other interests throughout the process’ (paragraph 124).

- 4.5 Paragraph 127 advises that ‘planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:
- a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;
 - b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;
 - c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);
 - d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;
 - e) optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and
 - f) create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.
- 4.6 Chapter 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework: ‘Conserving and enhancing the historic environment’ deals with Heritage Assets describing them as ‘an irreplaceable resource’ that ‘should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can

be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations.’¹

Proposals affecting heritage assets

- 4.7 Paragraph 189 brings the NPPF in line with statute and case law on listed buildings and conservation areas. It says that:

‘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.’

- 4.8 In terms of the local authority, paragraph 190 requires that they ‘identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset’s conservation and any aspect of the proposal.’
- 4.9 Further, ‘Where there is evidence of deliberate neglect of, or damage to, a heritage asset, the deteriorated state of the heritage asset should not be taken into account in any decision (paragraph 191).
- 4.10 Paragraph 192. In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of:
- a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;

¹ The policies set out in this chapter relate, as applicable, to the heritage-related consent regimes for which local planning authorities are responsible under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, as well as to plan-making and decision-making.

- b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and
- c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

Considering potential impacts

- 4.11 Paragraph 193 advises local planning authorities that ‘When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.
- 4.12 Paragraph 194 continues, ‘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. Substantial harm to or loss of:
 - a) grade II listed buildings, or grade II registered parks or gardens, should be exceptional;
 - b) assets of the highest significance, notably scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, registered battlefields, grade I and II* listed buildings, grade I and II* registered parks and gardens, and World Heritage Sites, should be wholly exceptional.²
- 4.13 In terms of proposed development that will lead to substantial harm to (or total loss of significance of) a designated heritage asset, paragraph 195 states that ‘local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or total loss is

² Non-designated heritage assets of archaeological interest, which are demonstrably of equivalent significance to scheduled monuments, should be considered subject to the policies for designated heritage assets.

necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss, or all of the following apply:

- a) the nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable uses of the site; and
- b) no viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation; and
- c) conservation by grant-funding or some form of not for profit, charitable or public ownership is demonstrably not possible; and
- d) the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use’.

- 4.14 It continues ‘where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use’ (paragraph 196).
- 4.15 In taking into account the effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset the local authority should employ a ‘a balanced judgement’ in regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset (paragraph 197).
- 4.16 The NPPF introduces the requirement that ‘Local planning authorities should not permit the loss of the whole or part of a heritage asset without taking all reasonable steps to ensure the new development will proceed after the loss has occurred (paragraph 198).
- 4.17 Where a heritage asset is to be lost, the developer will be required to ‘record and advance understanding of the significance of any heritage assets to be lost (wholly or in part) in a manner proportionate to their importance and the impact, and to make this evidence (and any archive generated) publicly accessible’ (paragraph 199).³

³ Copies of evidence should be deposited with the relevant historic environment record, and any archives with a local museum or other public depository.

- 4.18 In terms of enhancing the setting of heritage assets the NPPF states that 'local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas and World Heritage Sites, and within the setting of heritage assets, to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset (or which better reveal its significance) should be treated favourably. (paragraph 200).
- 4.19 It goes on however that 'Loss of a building (or other element) which makes a positive contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area or World Heritage Site should be treated either as substantial harm under paragraph 195 or less than substantial harm under paragraph 196, as appropriate, taking into account the relative significance of the element affected and its contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area or World Heritage Site as a whole' (paragraph 201).
- 4.20 Finally, paragraph 202 requires that the onus will be on local planning authorities to 'assess whether the benefits of a proposal for enabling development, which would otherwise conflict with planning policies but which would secure the future conservation of a heritage asset, outweigh the disbenefits of departing from those policies'.

Planning Practice Guidance

- 4.21 Planning Practice Guidance provides streamlined guidance for the National Planning Policy Framework and the planning system. It includes guidance on matters relating to protecting the historic environment in the section entitled 'Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment'. It is subdivided into sections giving specific advice in the following areas:
- Historic Environment Policy and Legislation
 - Heritage in Local Plans

- Decision-taking: Historic Environment
- Designated Heritage Assets
- Non-Designated Assets
- Heritage Consent Processes and
- Consultation Requirements

Reading's Local Plan

- 4.22 Local policy regarding the determination of planning applications is contained in a series of documents including the Core Strategy (2008, amended 2015) and the Sites and Detailed Policies document (2012, amended 2015).
- 4.23 The Council has made specific reference to the following policies in the decision notice.
- 4.24 Policy CS7 deals with 'Design and the Public Realm', and states:

All development must be of high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located. The various components of development form, including:

- Layout: urban structure and urban grain;
- Landscape;
- Density and mix;
- Scale: height and massing; and
- Architectural detail and materials

will be assessed to ensure that the development proposed makes a positive contribution to the following urban design objectives:

- Character - a place with its own identity and sense of place
- Continuity and enclosure
- Quality of the public realm
- Ease of movement and permeability
- Legibility - clear image and easy to understand

- Adaptability – capable of adaptation over time
- Diversity – meets a wide range of needs.

Developments will also be assessed to ensure that they:

- Respond positively to their local context and create or reinforce local character and distinctiveness, including protecting and enhancing the historic environment of the Borough and providing value to the public realm;
- Create safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder or fear of crime does not undermine quality of life or community cohesion;
- Address the needs of all in society and are accessible, usable and easy to understand by them; and
- Are visually attractive as a result of good high quality built forms and spaces, the inclusion of public art and appropriate materials and landscaping.

Applications for major and minor developments should be accompanied by a design and access statement that deal with all the above matters.

4.25 Policy CS33 deals with ‘Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment’, and says:

Historic features and areas of historic importance and other elements of the historic environment, including their settings, will be protected and where appropriate enhanced. This will include:

- Listed Buildings;
- Conservation Areas;
- Other features with local or national designation, such as sites and features of archaeological importance, and historic parks and gardens

Planning permission will only be granted where development has no adverse impact on historic assets and their settings.

All proposals will be expected to protect and where appropriate enhance the character and appearance of the area in which they are located.

4.26 Policy DM4 deals with ‘Safeguarding Amenity’ and states:

Development will not cause a significant detrimental impact to the living environment of existing or new residential properties, in terms of:

- Privacy and overlooking;
- Access to sunlight and daylight;
- Visual dominance and overbearing effects of a development;
- Noise and disturbance;
- Artificial lighting;
- Vibration;
- Dust and fumes;
- Smell; or
- Crime and safety.

The position of habitable rooms, windows and outdoor living spaces will be particularly important. 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.

As well as immediate impacts, other aspects to which this policy applies will include matters such as hours of operation of businesses, and effects of traffic movements, particularly of heavy goods vehicles (HGVs). Proposals which would generate regular movements of HGVs on residential roads will not be acceptable.

4.27 Where an otherwise acceptable development could change its character to a use that would have a greater impact on amenity without needing planning permission, conditions will be applied to restrict such changes.

4.28 The Emerging Draft Local Plan (March 2018) also contains a number of policies for the Built Environment. Those relevant are EN1: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment; EN3: Enhancement of Conservation Areas; EN4: Locally Important Heritage Assets; EN6: New Development in a Historic Context

Hosier Street Area Development Framework

4.29 The site sits within the Outline Hosier Street Area Development Framework. This clearly sets out a vision of the area as:

- 4.30 “A distinctive and high quality, high density, mixed use area within Reading’s Central Core. The area will portray a unique character and sense of place retaining the historical associations of the area and providing high quality public realm, both through the enhancement of existing public spaces adjacent to the site and the provision of new spaces that provide a setting and focus for new development”.

Reading Tall Buildings Strategy

- 4.31 The specific area of the Broad Street Mall/Hosier Street area has been identified as part of the Western Cluster of tall buildings, as set out in planning policy.
- 4.32 The Strategy recommends that a cluster of tall buildings is the most appropriate development in this area: “up to three tall buildings would be appropriate, focused along the line of the IDR, to mark the area as the civic heart of Reading and a gateway to the centre.
- 4.33 The site falls within Character Area 15 of the Strategy: Chatham Place. This states that ‘existing built form is large scale and blocky, ensuring that tall buildings would not result in a significant change to the urban grain. The absence of notable townscape features ensure a suitability for re-development. However careful consideration should be given on a case by case basis to how tall buildings would impact upon key views along West Street to Greyfriar’s Church and to how they would be viewed from, or impact upon views of St Mary’s Church. It is proposed that new buildings directly abutting St Mary’s Butts should not be tall structures. Any tall buildings should be set back from this road and the Conservation Area.
- 4.34 The area is identified as highly suitable for tall buildings.

5 The proposed scheme and its effect

- 5.1 This section of the report briefly describes the proposed scheme and its effect on the heritage significance described earlier. The proposed scheme is illustrated and described in detail in the drawings and Design & Access Statement prepared by Corstorphine & Wright Architects.

The proposed scheme and its effect on heritage significance

- 5.2 As described earlier in the report, planning permission is sought for the construction of three residential buildings (Use Class C3) ranging in height from 5 to 22 storeys above Broad Street Mall and provision of podium level amenity area; Construction of an 18 storey building on South Court comprising ground and first floor retail (use Class A1/A2/A3) and residential over upper floors (Use Class C3); Change of use and extension of Quadrant House to form a 3 storey residential building (Use Class C3); Creation of three ground floor retail units (Use Class A1/A2/A3) fronting Dusseldorf Way and Queens Walk; All necessary enabling and alteration works required within the existing Broad Street Mall basement, ground and upper floors; Associated car park alterations, provision of servicing and refuse storage, cycle parking, public realm, landscape, and other works incidental to the phased development.
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- 5.5 Site C - Dusseldorf Way/Hosier Street: Construction of 99 residential homes and new retail unit with ancillary space at basement level.

- 5.6 Site D – Quadrant House: Refurbishment of existing office into 31 residential homes
- 5.7 Site E – Oxford Road: Partial demolition of the existing centre, loss of one retail unit at ground floor to facilitate the construction of 52 residential homes above the existing shopping mall, with ancillary space at basement level.
- 5.8 A considerable amount of design analysis has been carried out by the architects and this is detailed in their Design & Access Statement. This analysis has not only had full regard for the aspirations of the Council in terms of location, density, and use of new development but also in terms of the design and its impact on the wider environment around the existing Site.
- 5.9 Some key principles have been adopted that have steered the design process.
- Improving the vistas along Dusseldorf Way from the Hexagon through to the Reading Minster and the conservation area;
 - Developing an architectural approach that responds to the modernist 1970s architecture of Broad Street Mall but is also sensitive to the adjacent conservation area;
 - Ensure where possible that the new development has an active outward looking aspect both at street level and upper level
 - Ensure that the development aligns with the principles set out in the Hosier Street Area Development Framework
 - Evolve an architectural strategy that responds to the design guidance set out in the tall buildings guidance.
 - Ensure good quality design and architecture.

Sites A-C

- 5.10 The development has been carefully orientated so that the three main towers step down, from a highest point at Site A to the west, 129m, to Site C to the east, 104m. This

transition aims to reflect the increasing sensitivity towards St Mary Butts and Reading Minster to the east. It also recognises the sensitivity of the setting of the listed buildings on Castle Street.

- 5.11 Within the Conservation Area Appraisal, views to the east, towards Reading Minster are regarded as significant from Hosier Street. The main scale of the proposed development sits to the east of this, behind the Hosier Street hotel development proposal.
- 5.12 The proposal provides an opportunity to activate the street frontage and enhance the east-west route – by increased footfall and improved landscaping. There will also be increased surveillance by the presence of activity on the Amenity Deck. Entrances will be retained to the retail units at ground floor as well as access to the residential accommodation above.
- 5.13 The choice of materials for the three main towers, A, B & C have been chosen to emphasise their slender verticality.
- 5.14 For Sites A & B a terracotta cladding material has been chosen for both its durability and quality and the ability to vary its colour to provide both variety and also tonality. There is also a tradition of terracotta and brick that can be found throughout Reading Town Centre.
- 5.15 The materiality of the towers has been conceived to appear as a family of buildings rather than being repetitive. Site B, also clad in terracotta but in a darker tone to Site A. With both sites, the elevational treatment is split to help visually alleviate the width of the building.
- 5.16 Site C, which is the tower closest to St Mary Butts, sits on a currently empty site and will also form an entrance to the Broad Street Mall. Therefore at ground level it will provide a much more active and inviting double height elevation to the street than is currently the situation.
- 5.17 The tower will be clad in brick to reflect both the choice of material for the proposed Hosier Street hotel immediately to its east, and also the increased sensitivity of the site as it moves to the east and closer to the conservation area and

Reading Minster. As described in the previous section, brick is a predominant material within both Reading and also the conservation area so this is key to the contextual approach being pursued. It is also closely associated with terracotta and will therefore sit comfortably as part of the 'family' of towers.

Site D

- 5.18 Along St Mary Butts on its western side it is proposed that a two storey extension is added to Quadrant House. This will be set back from the existing building edge to ensure that it appears recessive in views to the north and in the context of the conservation area opposite.
- 5.19 The choice of brick cladding should help to unify the two sides of the street with a material that is far more contextual than the existing shopping centre.
- 5.20 An improved glazing and window system above the retail units will also significantly enhance the appearance of the Broad Street Mall along St Mary Butts.

Site E

- 5.21 Site E provides for an additional 52 units above the Oxford Road entrance to the Broad Street Mall. This will sit parallel to, but lower than, Fountain House to its west.
- 5.22 The orientation of the building means that the additional height does not overwhelm Oxford Road, or the buildings on the northern side of the road, and the use of a brick both reflects the brick tradition of Reading and also the McIlroys Building to the north. The use of a buff brick provides a contextual contrast.

The effect on heritage significance

- 5.23 The primary impact of the proposals would be on the St Marys Butts/Castle Street conservation area and those listed buildings found within that conservation area.
- 5.24 In terms of the conservation area it is recognised that this forms the historic core of the town centre. Whilst the buildings that make up the area are eclectic in their age

and style, there is a predominant palette of materials, including brick, tile and render.

- 5.25 Whilst the scale of the proposed development is considerably greater than that which makes up the conservation area, because of the careful consideration that has been given to its materiality and form it enables it to sit more comfortably in the back drop.
- 5.26 Any impact has been further mitigated by the stepping down of the towers towards the conservation area and Reading Minster.
- 5.27 In line with the Tall Buildings Strategy, the proposed development fronting St Mary's Butts is set back and considerably lower than Sites A-C.
- 5.28 In terms of the setting of listed buildings, the same approach is also valid - the palette of materials, and the paler colours that have been chosen ensure that when the proposed development is seen in the context of any of the listed buildings, it is the robust materials and colours of the buildings in the foreground that are the dominant feature in the view. This allows the special architectural and historical interest of each building to be clearly appreciated.
- 5.29 Wider improvements to Hosier Street and Dusseldorf Way also have the potential to improve the setting of the rear of many of the listed buildings along the northern side of Castle Street and views to the west along Hosier Street, from outside Reading Minster, will be enhanced.
- 5.30 With regard to both the conservation area and the setting of listed buildings, the existing Broad Street Mall cannot be regarded as forming a good setting to either, so the introduction of high quality architecture to the backdrop should be regarded as an improvement.

6 Compliance with policy and guidance

- 6.1 This report has provided a description and analysis of the significance of the site and its heritage context, as required by Paragraph 189 of the National Planning Policy Framework. In addition, the report also describes how the proposed scheme will affect that heritage significance. The effect is positive, and for that reason, the scheme complies with policy and guidance.

The level of ‘harm’ caused by the proposed scheme

- 6.2 As outlined in Section 4, the NPPF identifies two levels of potential ‘harm’ that might be caused to a heritage asset by a development: ‘substantial harm...or total loss of significance’ or ‘less than substantial’. Both levels of harm must be caused to a *designated* heritage asset – in this instance, the Conservation Area and the setting of nearby listed buildings.
- 6.3 The proposed scheme, in our considered view, preserves the setting and therefore character and appearance of the Conservation Area and the setting of nearby listed buildings and thus complies with S.66(1) and S.72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. It does not lead to ‘substantial’ harm or any meaningful level of ‘less than substantial’ harm to any heritage assets.

The National Planning Policy Framework

- 6.4 In respect of Paragraph 192 of the NPPF, the proposed scheme can certainly be described as ‘sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation’ providing a building, with a use, that reflects Reading’s historical role as an important town centre. The proposed new development will make ‘a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness’ through its contextual

architectural approach, in particular the palette of materials.

- 6.5 The proposed scheme complies with Paragraph 195 of the NPPF - it certainly does not lead to 'substantial harm to or total loss of significance of a designated heritage asset'. It also complies with Paragraph 196 for the reasons given in detail earlier in this report – the scheme cannot be considered to harm the setting and thus character and appearance of the conservation area or the nearby listed building, but rather alters it in a fashion that enhances its setting. The use of traditional materials with detailing that recognises the historical importance of both Reading, and in particular Reading Minster will have a positive impact on the surrounding heritage assets.

Reading's Local Plan

- 6.6 In positively addressing the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework, the works also meet the policy requirements of the Reading Borough Council Local Plan relevant to the historic built environment.
- 6.7 In terms of Policy CS7, the proposals have had full regard for 'the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located' and this is reflected in the form, scale and materials used to articulate the new building.
- 6.8 The proposals will also contribute to an enhancement of the Hosier Street and Dusseldorf Way in terms of providing active frontage and an enhanced urban frontage in close proximity to St Mary's Butts further creating a 'safe and accessible environment' and improving legibility to this part of the town centre.
- 6.9 With regard to Policy CS33, the previous sections have identified as how the proposals have had full regard for the nearby heritage assets and will ensure that the building preserves the setting of the nearby listed buildings and conservation area.
- 6.10 Considering also the emerging Draft Reading Borough Local Plan the proposals have had regard for the policies it

contains relating to the historic built environment. In particular regarding EN6: New Development in a Historic Context. The proposals have been borne out of an understanding of the historic context of central Reading, as well as the Council's aspirations for its future.

6.11 The proposals aim to make a positive contribution to the existing historic townscape by helping to reactivate Hosier Street – both in terms of the activity within the building but also improving the street and providing a much more positive view from St Mary Butts and helping to promote and improve access and connectivity.

6.12 The design reflects the borough-wide contribution that terracotta and brick make to local distinctiveness – and particularly in the context of the church

Hosier Street Development Framework

6.13 The proposals clearly offer a 'distinctive and high quality, high density, mixed use' development within Reading's Central Core. The improved links to Hosier Street will connect the Broad Street Mall better into its historical context, making this part of the town centre more legible.

Reading Tall Buildings Strategy

6.14 The development forms part of the identified Western Cluster 'up to three tall buildings, focused along the line of the IDR, to mark the area as the civic heart of Reading and a gateway to the centre'.

6.15 The proposals also have full regard for the Character Area and its sensitivity as described in the Strategy.

7 Assessment Methods and Significance Criteria

- 7.1 As with all aspects of EIA, the key elements of this townscape and visual assessment are:
- Appraisal of the existing (baseline) conditions;
 - Assessment of likely significant effects of the Proposed Development on the baseline; and
 - Consideration of potential mitigation measures, where necessary
- 7.2 The impact assessment is primarily based on an appraisal of the massing proposals, followed by consideration of the nature of façade materials and design features that would influence the appearance of the buildings being made by reference to photomontages. The architecture should be considered as the main approach to mitigation in respect of developments of this type.

Approach to Baseline Assessment

- 7.3 The analysis set out in Chapter 5 of this Volume has been used as the baseline for assessing how the proposals may be seen to change the condition, value or perception of the study area, as set out in subsequent sections. Best practice guidance aims to promote a comprehensive view of the many ways in which landscapes, including townscapes may be used, viewed or valued and then identify the ways in which changes may occur, in a systematic manner.
- 7.4 Landscape is not simply a rural phenomenon. It encompasses the whole of the external environment, including urban areas. Within an urban setting the quality, character or value of the environment may be defined by either a combination of the built townscape or landscape of the area. The condition and character of both the built townscape and the landscape resources have been considered for this assessment. The term

‘townscape’ is used in this assessment to cover specifically the urban environment; landscape’ is used more in relation to open spaces or vegetation cover and other aspects of the purely external environment.

- 7.5 The historic character and fabric of the Site are important considerations for assessment, as represented by the listed buildings that are close to the Site as well as the conservation areas from wherein the Proposed Development may affect views or from which it may be visible.

The Selection of Views

- 7.6 Viewpoints for assessment, based on Visually Verified Images were agreed with the local planning authority. The visibility of the site is determined largely by the surrounding land-form and the urban form. Views are influenced not only by the precise location of receptors, but also by their movement. Many of those viewing the Proposed Development will be commuters and shoppers and thus many viewers will be in transit.
- 7.7 Because of the interplay between buildings, spaces and receptors, a definitive Zone of Visual Influence is very difficult to define and is of limited use for assessment purposes in urban locations. Rather, a range of specific and generic views can be identified, which are representative of the overall visibility of the Site. In selecting views, the approach adopted has been to choose views of known sensitivity, due to the sensitivity of the townscape or of edifices in the view (ie listed buildings) and locations from where the development would be most visible.

Presentation of Assessment

- 7.8 A commentary accompanies the images. This sets out an appraisal of the significance of each view and describes the visibility of the development in each case. The commentary then evaluates the significance and impact of the building (both beneficial and adverse). Although this

process involves an element of subjective judgment, the main emphasis has been on providing objectivity derived images to enable those readers viewing the images to make judgments.

Assessment of Significance of Effects

7.9 The assessment of effects has followed, where appropriate to the urban setting of the Site and the guidance of the Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management Assessment. The assessment involved the following elements:

- Determination of the magnitude of impacts, which reflects the visibility and scale of the Proposed Development as seen by a viewer as it affects a townscape or landscape resource;
- Assessment of the significance of the effect, which relates to the sensitivity of the townscape, landscape or visual amenity resource affected; and
- Evaluation of the character of the impact, as to whether it is beneficial, neutral or adverse.

7.10 The following subsections set out the main elements of the assessment method adopted.

Classification of the magnitude of Impacts

7.11 Impacts are classified as low, medium or major on the basis of the criteria summarised in Table 7.1. The term impact refers to the scale of change to the view, whether adverse or beneficial. It does not infer any significance level to the overall townscape and visual effect of the impact of the Proposed Development.

7.12 Table 7.1: Magnitude of Impacts

Resource/ Receptor	Low Impact	Medium Impact	Major Impact
Townscape or landscape character	Slight change; baseline character largely unaffected.	Major change, partially affecting baseline character.	Large-scale or highly visible change; baseline character altered fundamentally.
Views	Negligible change; character of view largely unaffected.	Major change; character of view visibly altered.	Prominent change, with new view opened up or existing view obstructed.
Visual Amenity	Little perceptible change.	Some perceptible change, capable of affecting overall amenity.	Existing level of amenity changed fundamentally.
Setting of an historic building.	Small-scale change; integrity of building largely unaffected.	Major change, potentially visible from building, but probably not critical to its integrity.	Large-scale change capable of affecting building's integrity.

Determination of the Significance of Effects

- 7.13 The significance of effects is derived from the interaction between the magnitude of impact and:
- The sensitivity or aesthetic value of the townscape;
 - The importance of specific views;
 - The number and visual sensitivity of people likely to experience change to their views; and
 - the character and importance of historic buildings.
- 7.14 Table 3.2 illustrates these interactions in the form of a matrix.
- 7.15 The shaded cells in Table 3.2 represent effects considered to be moderate (where significance needs to be judged on a case-by-case basis) or substantial (ie the effect could be material to the decision-making process).

7.16 Table 7.2: Matrix of Significant Effects

Sensitivity or Importance of Townscape/View/ Receptors/Historic Building	Magnitude of Effect		
	Low	Medium	Major
Low	None - Negligible	Minor	Moderate
Medium	Minor	Minor- Moderate	Substantial
High	Moderate	Substantial	Substantial

Evaluation of Effects

7.17 The evaluation of effects in terms of whether they are beneficial or adverse is always problematic in visual assessment. This is because much depends on aesthetic judgment, which itself reflects the cultural values of the individual. Professional and lay observers will typically make very different judgments about the impact of new buildings. For this reason, accepted urban design criteria are used to provide an objective measure to evaluate effects. Effects are assessed as beneficial or adverse; for example in relationship between a historic buildings and its setting, or changes in the spatial character of streets and pedestrian precincts.

7.18 The impact on the settings and appearance of listed buildings and conservation areas is assessed having regard to the criteria set out in the National Planning Policy Framework.

Cumulative Effects

7.19 For the purposes of this assessment, the definition of cumulative impact described by Morris and Therivel (1995) *Methods of Environmental Assessment. The Natural and Built Environment Series 2* has been adopted as follows '... the sum of the project's impacts when added to those

of other past, present or future projects'. In turn, cumulative impacts can be described as:

- Additive, aggregate...namely the simple sum of all the impacts; or
- Synergistic, where impacts interact to produce an impact greater than the sum of the individual impacts; or
- Neutralising or antagonistic, where impacts counteract each other, reducing the overall impact'.

Climate Change

- 7.20 The likely effects of the proposed development are defined under the current climate conditions, which may alter under a future climate scenario. The EIA regulations (amended 2018) require that the change in impact magnitude and a receptor's 'vulnerability (ie susceptibility or resilience to change) are considered in respect of a future climate condition.

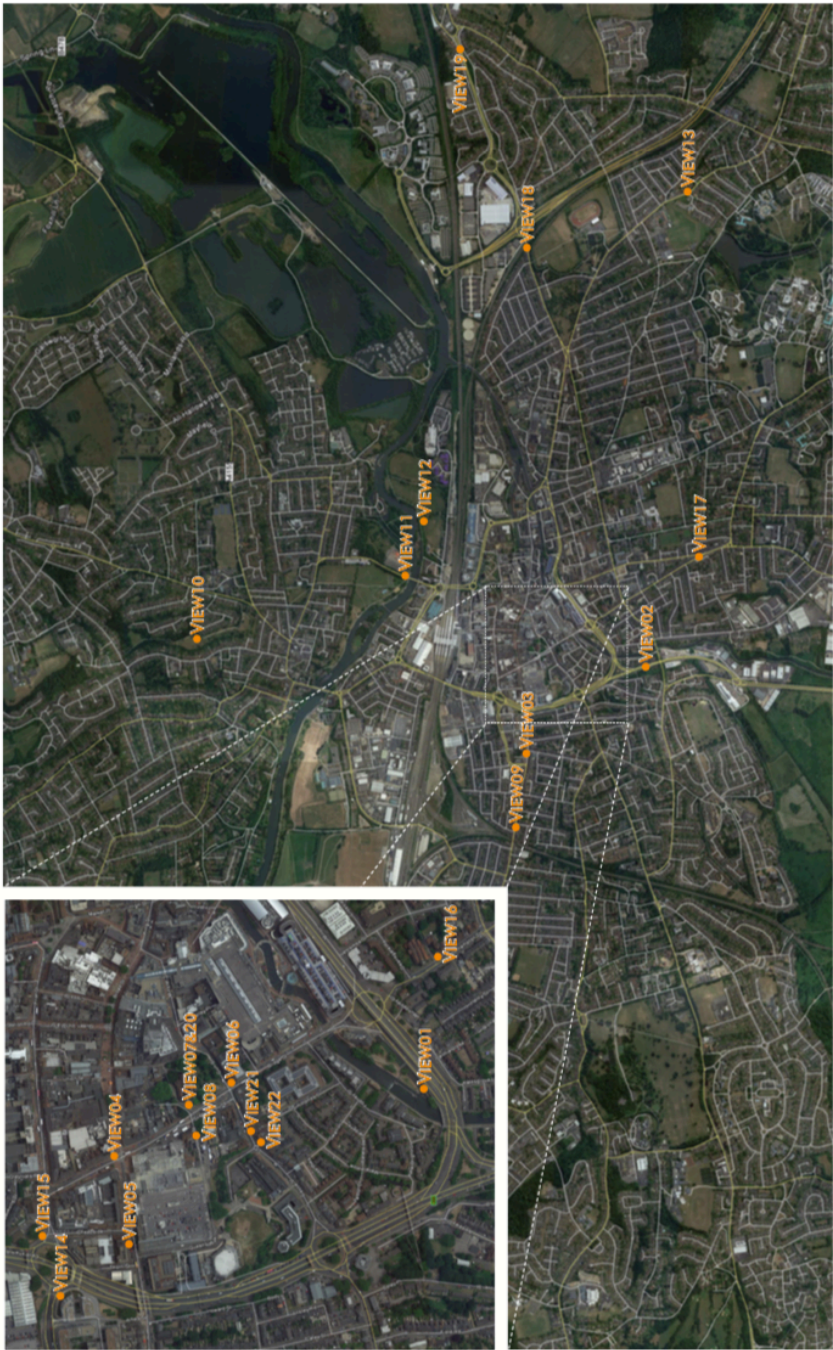
Evolution of the Baseline

- 7.21 The EIA regulations (amended 2018) require that the likely evolution of the baseline is considered in the event in the event that the Proposed Development were not to come forward.

8 The townscape and visual impact of the proposed scheme

- 8.1 The following section sets out the assessment of the effects of the Proposed Development on individual views.
- 8.2 The views are shown in a baseline condition, followed by an image showing the proposed development. A commentary of the existing and proposed townscape conditions is provided as well as an Assessment of Significance of Effect using the criteria highlighted in Section 5.
- 8.3 There are a number of schemes in Reading that have been identified as forming part of the cumulative evolution of Reading. In particular the adjacent Hosier Street Hotel site which will have an immediate impact on the proposal in a number of views and is identified below.

The Views



View 1

Existing



Proposed



8.4 Existing

This view is looking north west towards Broad Street Mall from the River Kennett.

The foreground of the view is filled with the river and canal lock whilst modern commercial development dominates the centre of the view on the northern bank of the river. The predominant materials are brick, render and slate.

8.5 Proposed

The proposed Development would be largely hidden by existing development in this view, however where it is glimpsed its scale is visually no higher than those buildings already in the view and the light grey terracotta elevation ensures that it does not jar with the surrounding existing urban context.

8.6 Assessment of Significance of Effect

The significance of effect would be beneficial but negligible. The development would be barely visible, the view is of low sensitivity and the magnitude of effect also low.

View 2

Existing



Proposed



8.7 Existing

This view is looking north west towards Broad Street Mall along the A33/A329.

The view is a hard, urban scene, dominated by the dual carriageway road. In the middle distance are modern residential apartments in red brick with buff brick detailing as is typical for Reading.

8.8 Proposed

The proposed Development would appear in the far distance to the left of the view, stepping down from left to right and towards the existing foreground development and acts as a marker for the town centre in the distance.

The choice of terracotta and brick for the elevations ensures that it does not dominate the view, with Site C, clad in brick, visually closest to the existing brick buildings in the view.

8.9 Assessment of Significance of Effect

The significance of effect would be beneficial but negligible. Whilst the development would be visible, the view is of low sensitivity and the magnitude of effect also low.

View 3

Existing



Proposed



8.10 Existing

This view is looking east along Oxford Road close to its junction with Russell Street.

The view is dominated by the main road. In the foreground to middle ground on the right hand side of the view stretching towards the town centre are buildings of predominantly two to three storeys in height, all of which lie within the Russell Street/Castle Hill Conservation Area.

Building materials are predominantly render and red brick.

Further towards the town centre in the middle distance the buildings tend to rise in height and the view is terminated by Fountain House that rises above.

8.11 Proposed

The proposed Development would appear in the backdrop to this view, to the right of Fountain House and clearly signalling the town centre. In reality the three main towers sit behind each other in this view and thus their impact is reduced. The light coloured terracotta ensures that whilst clearly visible in the view they are not dominant or oppressive in the context of the buildings or conservation area in the foreground.

8.12 Assessment of Significance of Effect

The significance of effect would be beneficial but minor. The view looks across a conservation area and is therefore of medium sensitivity, but the development is in the far distance sitting with other town centre development and is therefore low in magnitude. The proposed development helps to reinforce the town centre.

View 4

Existing



Proposed



8.13 Existing

This view is looking west along Oxford Road from West Street/Broad Street junction.

The view is dominated by the entire Oxford Road length of Broad Street Mall with Fountain House sitting to the right and behind.

The architecture, whilst updated some years ago, is nevertheless modernist and plain.

8.14 Proposed

The proposed Development would sit above and behind the Broad Street Mall in this view. The scale of the different elements has been carefully conceived to ensure that it sits comfortably within the context of the existing Fountain House and the use of high quality materials – brick and terracotta – ensures that the development would add considerable quality to the existing plain elevation of the Broad Street Mall and considerably enhance the view as a consequence.

8.15 Assessment of Significance of Effect

The significance of effect would be beneficial and moderate. The sensitivity of the view is low, containing no buildings or townscape of importance, but the magnitude of the effect would be major in this location. The quality of the architecture will ensure the effect is beneficial.

View 5

Existing



Proposed



8.16 Existing

This view is from the Oxford Road/Thorn Street junction.

A similar view of the Broad Street Mall to View 4, this view also highlights the linear modernist architecture of the Mall.

On the left hand side of the view the red brick/buff brick and terracotta buildings that typify the architectural tradition of Reading can be seen.

8.17 Proposed

Only Site E of the proposed development will be visible in this view and its scale will ensure that in this view it sits visually comfortably with the existing buildings on the north side of Oxford Road.

The use of buff brick for the proposed building also provides a better connection with the surrounding buildings than the existing Broad Street Mall, thus creating a more unified townscape.

8.18 Assessment of Significance of Effect

The significance of effect would be beneficial and minor. The sensitivity of the view is low, containing no buildings or townscape of importance, but the magnitude of the effect would be medium in this location. The quality of the architecture will ensure the effect is beneficial.

View 6

Existing



Proposed



8.19 Existing

This view is looking from the Gun Street/Bridge Street junction north west towards Broad Street Mall.

The viewing point is within the St Mary's Butts/Castle Street conservation area and whilst the foreground of the view is dominated by the road junction, many of the buildings in the middle foreground are listed – including The Horn public house and 35-37 St Mary's Butts. A number are half timbered with tiled roofs and prominent chimneys whilst the others are red brick or rendered.

To the right are mature trees that mark the open space adjacent to the entrance to Hosier Street. To the left the Grade II* Church of St Mary can be glimpsed.

In the distance to the right the modernist form of Broad Street Mall can be seen.

8.20 Proposed

The proposed towers on Sites A-C will appear in backdrop of the centre of the view behind the listed buildings fronting St Mary's Butts and the extension to Quadrant House (Site D) will appear above the Mall to the left of the view in the distance.

Whilst the towers on Sites A-C will be prominent, their impact is considerably mitigated by the quality of the architecture. The choice of materials ensures that there is a shared colour palette which means they sit harmoniously in the backdrop. The dark red tiles of the listed buildings retains its dominance in the view whilst the towers appear vertical and slender behind. Site D sits comfortably within its surrounding context and the existing scale of the Mall in this view.

8.21 Assessment of Significance of Effect

The significance of effect would be beneficial and substantial. The view is of high importance, containing listed buildings and across the conservation area. The magnitude would be major due to the proximity of the development in the backdrop. However, the quality of the

architecture will mitigate the impact and ensure that it is a beneficial one.

View 7

Existing



Proposed



8.22 Existing

This view is from in front of Reading Minster looking west directly towards 21-23 St Mary's Butts and the entrance to Hosier Street.

Prominent in the foreground, the Victorian building is in the Tudor/medieval style with multiple gables, tall chimneys and a half timbered façade with brick and render panels. None of the buildings are within a conservation area.

To the right is the edge of the Broad Street Mall and Quadrant House.

8.23 Proposed

The proposed Site C tower will rise in the background behind 21-23 St Mary's Butts. Whilst prominent in the view this is mitigated by the material palette of brick and the verticality of the architecture will contrast sufficiently with the foreground.

8.24 Assessment of Significance of Effect

The significance of effect will be beneficial and moderate. The sensitivity of the view is of low importance but the magnitude of impact will be major. The impact of the proposed development will be mitigated by the quality of the architecture across the conservation area.

View 8

Existing



Proposed



Cumulative



8.25 Existing

This view is looking west from Hosier Street. The St Mary's Butts/Castle Street conservation area is located to the left of the view.

In the foreground of the view is the Eva's nightclub site, which is currently under consideration for a new hotel development. Behind and to the right is the back of the Broad Street Mall and car park and Fountain House terminates the view to the rear.

The view presents a scene of poor quality public realm and urban landscape.

8.26 Proposed

The proposed Site C tower will dominate the foreground of the view with Sites A and B sat behind. The blank elevation of the lower element of Site C should only be temporary as new development is proposed for the immediate foreground and this will further change the urban context.

The proposed development will facilitate a much improved route along Hosier Street and Dusseldorf Way, improving connectivity and quality of public realm.

The high quality materials and architectural approach will ensure that whilst dominant the development will enhance the view.

8.27 Assessment of Significance of Effect

The significance of effect will be beneficial and moderate. The sensitivity of the view is of low importance but the magnitude of impact will be major. The impact of the proposed development will be mitigated by the quality of the architecture across the conservation area.

8.28 Proposed Development and Cumulative Development

The proposed new hotel development currently under consideration on Hosier Street would sit in front of the Proposed Development filling the foreground of the view.

The hotel would effectively lessen the impact of the Proposed Development on this view by providing an intermediately scaled development in the foreground.

The cumulative impact of the Proposed Development would remain beneficial and moderate.

View 9

Existing



Proposed



8.29 Existing

This view is looking east along Oxford Road close to the junction with Argyle Street.

To the left and right of the view, in the foreground, is residential development that epitomises the late Victorian/early 20th century use of red and buff brick to create patterned elevations typical of the town.

8.30 Proposed

In this view the proposed Development will be in the far distance sitting amongst the other taller buildings that signal the town centre.

In reality the development will be largely hidden by street trees and its impact will be negligible.

8.31 Assessment of Significance of Effect

The significance of effect will be none/negligible. The sensitivity of the view is low. The proposals are not visible behind existing mature street trees in this view and therefore the magnitude of impact is also low/none.

View 10

Existing



Proposed



8.32 Existing

This view is from Balmore Park, looking south.

This open space provides a good, open, vantage point to look across the Thames valley towards the town centre.

The view is primarily sylvan in character with the open space of the Park and its mature planting and trees dominating the fore and middle ground.

Reading town centre can be seen in the far distance, identified by the existing taller buildings on the horizon.

8.33 Proposed

The proposed Development would appear in this view along with the other existing buildings that already signal the town centre.

It is not visibly of a different scale to the other existing buildings and in reality nestles amongst the top of the established trees of the park. It is likely that within a few years the development will not be visible at all.

8.34 Assessment of Significance of Effect

The significance of effect will be beneficial and minor.

The view is from an open space with a good view across the town to the south so is of medium sensitivity, however the magnitude of effect is low, with the proposed development appearing far in the distance. As a signal of the town centre and through the quality of the architecture its effect is beneficial.

View 11

Existing



Proposed



8.35 Existing

This view is looking south from George Street (B3345) towards Reading Bridge with the town centre beyond.

The view is dominated in the foreground by the road approach to the bridge, with the modern Thames Water development the primary feature of the view.

In the distance is the 1990s Apex Plaza development that sits alongside Reading Station.

8.36 Proposed

The proposed Development would not be visible in this view.

8.37 Assessment of Significance of Effect

The significance of effect will be none/negligible. The sensitivity of the view is low. The proposals are not visible behind existing development and therefore the magnitude of impact is also low/none.

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View 12

Existing



Proposed



8.38 Existing

This view is from Kings Meadow looking south west. This is an area of open land to the north east of the town centre, and to the south of the River Thames.

The foreground of the view is filled by the open space of the recreation ground with low rise commercial development behind.

The backdrop of the view is filled with large commercial development, including the distinctive 'Blade' office building.

8.39 Proposed

The proposed Development would not be visible in this view.

8.40 Assessment of Significance of Effect

The significance of effect will be none/negligible. The sensitivity of the view is low. The proposals are not visible behind existing mature street development and therefore the magnitude of impact is also low/none.

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View 13

Existing



Proposed



8.41 Existing

This view is from Wokingham Road opposite Parkside Family Practice, looking north west.

At this point on Wokingham Road the sports pitches of WEA Reading are to the left and the road drops down into the Thames valley and the town centre.

The road fills the foreground of the road whilst a mature tree, the health centre and high hedge fill the middle ground. The town centre (which is beyond) is not visible in this view.

8.42 Proposed

The proposed Development would not appear in this view.

8.43 Assessment of Significance of Effect

The significance of effect will be none/negligible. The sensitivity of the view is low. The proposals are not visible behind existing mature planting and hedgerow in this view and therefore the magnitude of change is also low/none.

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View 14

Existing



Proposed



8.44 Existing

This view is from Chatham Place roundabout looking south east at the junction with Chatham Street.

The view is dominated by modern commercial development of varying scales, materials and architecture.

Materials are primarily brick and render.

To the immediate right, the new Chatham Place Tower can be glimpsed.

Fountain House appears to the rear of this view.

8.45 Proposed

The proposed Development would be visible in the backdrop to this view, behind Fountain House and the Travelodge building as part of the multi-layered nature of development within the town centre from this view point.

The view is filled entirely with modern buildings and the proposed development sits comfortably within this context.

The proposed architecture and materiality will ensure that the new development is a positive addition to the view.

8.46 Assessment of Significance of Effect

The significance of effect will be beneficial and minor.

The sensitivity of the view is low with only multi-layered modern development in the view and the magnitude of the proposed development is medium – appearing in the backdrop. The architectural quality of the proposal will ensure it is a beneficial impact.

View 15

Existing



Proposed



8.47 Existing

This view is from Greyfriars Church looking south along Cheapside, towards Broad Street Mall.

The foreground is dominated by the red brick modern job centre building to the right and an early 20th century former department building with stone elevations to the left.

Cheapside is in the middle of the street drawing the eye down to the Broad Street Mall in the far distance.

8.48 Proposed

The proposed Development would appear in the far distance behind Cheapside. Whilst appearing above the existing buildings on the street it will not appear visibly out of scale with the urban context but form part of the multi-layered town centre.

8.49 Assessment of Significance of Effect

The significance of effect will be beneficial and minor. The sensitivity of the view is low and the magnitude of impact medium – the proposed development will be visible but will have a beneficial impact on the view.

View 16

Existing



Proposed



8.50 Existing

This view is from Church of St Giles, looking north west along Southampton Street (A327).

The church lies within the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area and is listed Grade II. 26 and 28 Southampton Street are also listed Grade II.

The foreground of the view is dominated by the flint and stone tower of the church, with the listed 26&28 Southampton Street in the middle distance.

Beyond that the IDR flyover can be seen crossing the street with modern development within the town centre behind.

8.51 Proposed

The proposed Development would not appear in this view.

8.52 Assessment of Significance of Effect

The significance of effect will be none/negligible. Whilst the sensitivity of the view is high due to the presence of the listed church, the proposals will not be visible in this view.

View 17

Existing



Proposed



8.53 Existing

This view is from Mount Pleasant area along A327 looking north west towards Broad Street Mall.

From this point on Southampton Street the road falls down towards the town centre and the River Kennet.

The view is typified by 19th century residential housing on either side of the street, which draws the eye down towards the spire of the Church of St Giles in the far distance.

The top of the Chatham Place Tower is visible in the far distance.

8.54 Proposed

The proposed Development would appear in the far distance on the horizon just above the chimney stacks of the housing on the left hand side of the street.

The towers would not have any impact on the setting of the listed church which provides the key focus for this view and would only just be readable towards the town signalling the town centre in the distance.

8.55 Assessment of Significance of Effect

The significance of effect will be beneficial and minor.

The sensitivity of the view is medium, with the spire of the listed church in the distance, however the magnitude of effect low.

View 18

Existing



Proposed



8.56 Existing

This view is from London Road looking south west close to its intersection with the A3290.

To the left of the view are the mature trees that line the edge of Palmer Park giving the centre of the view a dense sylvan feel, whilst to the right typical Victorian terraced housing with traditional Reading brick detailing stretches from the foreground into the distance.

8.57 Proposed

The proposed Development would not appear in this view.

8.58 Assessment of Significance of Effect

The significance of effect will be none/negligible. The sensitivity of the view is low. The proposals are not visible in this view and therefore the magnitude of impact is also low/none.

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View 19

Existing



Proposed



8.59 Existing

This view is from London Road (Shepherd Hill), looking south west. This is a point of relative high ground to the east of Reading on the main A4 dual carriageway approach to the town.

The view is dominated by the dual carriageway, with mature planting to the left and 1930s housing to the right.

Reading town centre in the far distance with The Blade office tower visible on the horizon.

8.60 Proposed

The proposed Development would be visible on the horizon alongside The Blade, effectively signalling the town centre in the distance.

8.61 Assessment of Significance of Effect

The significance of effect will be none/negligible. The sensitivity of the view is low and the magnitude of effect is similarly low.

View 20

Existing



Proposed



8.62 Existing

This view is looking west from Reading Minster, showing a wider context than View 7, revealing the dominance of the mature trees to the left of the entrance to Hosier Street.

The view is from within the St Mary's Butts/Castle Street Conservation Area.

Still prominent in the foreground, the Victorian building is in the Tudor/medieval style with multiple gables, tall chimneys and a half timbered façade with brick and render panels.

To the right is the edge of the Broad Street Mall and Quadrant House

8.63 Proposed

The proposed Development would still appear in the backdrop of 21-23 St Mary's Butts, however this view demonstrates how, within this wider context it does not dominate the view but rather forms part of the urban landscape to the west.

The nature of the materials proposed ensures that the Victorian building and the tree in the foreground retain their dominance in the view.

To the far right, the extended Quadrant House sits comfortably and contextually above the Broad Street Mall.

8.64 Assessment of Significance of Effect

The significance of the effect is beneficial and moderate. The sensitivity of the view is low, incorporating no listed buildings or the conservation area but the magnitude of the effect would be major, appearing close behind 21-23 St Mary's Butts. The architectural quality would ensure the impact is beneficial.

View 21

Existing



Proposed



Cumulative



8.65 Existing

This view is from Castle Street, looking north between The Sun Inn and St Mary's Church.

The view is taken from within the St Mary's Butts/Castle Street Conservation Area. The Sun Inn is Grade II listed and St Mary's Church is Grade II* listed.

The view is dominated by the two historic buildings. The classically formal church is in a Bath stone whilst the Inn is of medieval origins, with a half timbered elevation and red tiled roof.

Between the two buildings the rear of the Broad Street Mall can be seen.

8.66 Proposed

The three towers that form Sites A-C of the proposed Development would appear behind the Sun Inn.

Whilst they will be prominent in the view, the architectural approach, to ensure they appear slender with a vertical emphasis, and the paler colour palette proposed, should ensure that the Inn will retain its prominence in the immediate street scene.

This is further mitigated by the contrast between the dark red tiles of the Inn which form a clear differentiation between the two.

8.67 Assessment of Significance of Effect

The significance of effect would be beneficial and substantial. The sensitivity of the view is high, including highly listed buildings and the conservation area. The magnitude of effect is major with the development appearing directly behind the listed Sun Inn. The impact of the proposals will be mitigated through the architectural consideration and should ensure that the impact is beneficial.

8.68 Proposed Development and Cumulative Development

The proposed new hotel development currently under consideration on Hosier Street would sit between the Sun Inn and the church below the eaves line of the Inn. Whilst it fills that gap in comparison to the current situation, it helps to connect the 'new' and the 'old' by providing an intermediately scaled development in the background.

The cumulative impact of the Proposed Development would remain beneficial and substantial.

View 22

Existing



Proposed



Cumulative



8.69 Existing

This view is looking north from the Castle Street roundabout.

The Sun Inn is listed Grade II and is within the St Mary's Butts/Castle Street Conservation Area, however the boundary runs tight along the left hand side of the Inn and therefore the majority of the view is not within the conservation area.

The view is dominated by the access road to The Hexagon, car parking and delivery zones.

To the left of the road is a mature street tree and the corner of the modern Magistrates Court.

The rear of the Broad Street Mall can be seen in the middle distance.

8.70 Proposed

The proposed Development would appear in the centre and to the left of the view away from the Sun Inn, its architectural design giving it a vertical elegance. The new entrance to the Mall is visible at the base of the Site C tower and ensures that the scene is no longer a 'back-of-

house' one, but a new entrance to the Mall and town centre.

8.71 Assessment of Significance of Effect

The significance of effect will be beneficial and substantial. The sensitivity of the view is of medium importance. It is not looking from the conservation area but does include a listed building. The magnitude of effect will be major due to its visibility in the backdrop, however it does not directly affect the setting of the listed building and the effect is mitigated in a beneficial way through the careful architectural design.

8.72 Proposed Development and Cumulative Development

The proposed new hotel development currently under consideration on Hosier Street would sit to the right of the Proposed Development, immediately adjacent to the Inn.

The hotel would not change the impact of the Proposed Development on this view other than by providing an intermediately scaled development in the background.

The cumulative impact of the Proposed Development would remain beneficial and substantial.

Summary

- 8.73 The following table summarises the effect and impact of the Proposed Development on the 22 identified views. The 'Scale of Effect' and 'Nature of Effect' together are the 'Effect Significance'.

Receptor Townscape Views	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change	Effect Significance	
			Scale of Effect	Nature of Effect
1	Low	Low	Negligible	Beneficial
2	Low	Low	Negligible	Beneficial
3	Medium	Low	Minor	Beneficial
4	Low	Major	Moderate	Beneficial
5	Low	Medium	Minor	Beneficial
6	High	Major	Substantial	Beneficial
7	Low	Major	Moderate	Beneficial
8	Low	Major	Moderate	Beneficial
9	Low	Low	None/Negli gible	Neutral

10	Medium	Low	Minor	Beneficial
11	Low	Low	None	Neutral
12	Low	Low	None	Neutral
13	Low	Low	None	Neutral
14	Low	Medium	Minor	Beneficial
15	Low	Medium	Minor	Beneficial
16	High	Low	None	Neutral
17	Medium	Low	Minor	Beneficial
18	Low	Low	None	Neutral
19	Low	Low	Negligible	Beneficial
20	Low	Major	Moderate	Beneficial
21	High	Major	Substantial	Beneficial
22	High	Major	Substantial	Beneficial

9 Summary and Conclusions

- 9.1 The Proposed Development has been carefully conceived to ensure that the development of this key site can positively and appropriately contribute to the regeneration of Reading Town Centre and its immediate environs. In particular special regard has been had to ensure that the scheme will be a contextual and appropriate neighbour to the nearby heritage assets.
- 9.2 The following sets out the conclusions of the assessment of the likely significant effects of the Proposed Development in relation to townscape and views:
- The visual effect of the Proposed Development would be overwhelmingly positive.
 - The proposal has been demonstrated to conform to those policies of Reading Borough Council that are designed to protect visual amenity and historic assets.
 - The effect of the Proposed Development in individual views are overwhelmingly positive, on account of the quality of the architecture, its careful massing and the variety of materiality and form that give, as appropriate, its verticality, sculptural and contextual qualities.
 - Those views where the scale of effect is ‘substantial’ are the ones where the effect will be most significant as in those views the proposed development will be seen in the context of both conservation area and listed buildings.
 - This relates primarily to views from the St Mary’s Butts/Castle Street Conservation Area where the visual intrusion represented by the proposal is justified by the quality of the architecture and the considered massing and forms.
 - The Proposed Development would preserve the setting of nearby listed buildings for the same reasons.

- Where the scale of effect is 'moderate' the effect will still be of some significance, but less than that where the effect is substantial, and in all cases is justified by the quality of the architecture and the considered massing and forms.

Mitigation and Residual Effects

Demolition and Construction

- 9.3 The effect of construction operations on perception/experience of heritage and townscape significance will be reduced by the preparation and use of an effective Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP).

Completed Development

- 9.4 No mitigation is considered necessary during the completed Proposed Development stage as it is built into the design process – the design has been refined through pre-application discussions. Accordingly, the residual effects of the completed Proposed Development on the significance of the heritage assets remain unchanged from those previously identified in the absence of mitigation measures.

Climate Change

- 9.5 There are no published, accepted quantifiable methods for considering climate change in terms of specifically heritage and townscape effects from development. However, it is likely that climatic factors will have relatively little influence in respect of the effect of the Proposed Development on heritage and townscape receptors. The magnitude of impact and resultant nature and scale of the effects of the Proposed Development during the demolition and construction phase, as well as when the Proposed Development is complete and operational, will not alter. No mitigation method is identifiable or necessary.

Cumulative Effect

- 9.6 A list of Cumulative Schemes was identified within the EIA Scoping Report. The impact of the most immediate of those schemes is shown in the townscape views with narrative and assessment identifying its effect on the impact of the Proposed Development.
- 9.7 The assessment has concluded that having regard for the cumulative effects in Views 8, 21 & 22 does not alter the Assessment of Significance of Effect for any of those views.

Evolution of Baseline

- 9.8 In terms of the evolution of the baseline, the site forms part of the identified Reading Central Core and within the Hosier Street Development Framework area both identified for intensification of development. It is therefore anticipated that even if *this* development does not take place, development will take place in the immediate area anyway. Given that so much of the evolution of the baseline for heritage townscape and visual receptors depends upon the particulars of the design, a separate assessment of the evolution of the baseline for the receptors identified in this assessment is not provided.

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