

- 3.42 The area close to the southern Station entrance has been earmarked as the location for the tallest buildings. Height here will landmark the station as an important place; it will also be complementary to the topography of the area. The formation of a cluster of tall buildings here will form a dramatic skyline in views from higher ground and open space to the north, southeast and southwest.
- 3.43 The Station Area is situated close to the open space and nature of the Thames riverside. This area also has a unique built heritage, archaeological and architectural character. As a result the RSAF states that building heights “should have regard to the qualities of buildings and areas of architectural and historic interest and important views and prospects.” (Ref 1-10, p.35) The RSAF also requires a buffer zone between areas of particular historic value such as the core of the town and low-rise residential areas to the west and north. Here heights should step down so that they relate appropriately to surrounding development and residential areas.
- 3.44 The RSAF expects all new buildings, whether or not they are situated within a conservation area or not, “to make a positive contribution to the area and they should conserve and where appropriate enhance the character or appearance of Conservation Areas and conserve the setting of listed buildings.” (Ref 1-10, p.35)
- 3.45 Chapter 7 deals with Views around the Station Area and further afield, identifying key views and potential views. The views set out in this chapter are a combination of longer distance views, further than half a kilometre from the Station Area boundary, and shorter distance views. All of the views identified in this document were tested during the design process of the Proposed Development and a relevant short list agreed for assessment in this report with Planning Officers at RBC. These views are tabulated and assessed in section 6 below.
- 3.46 Chapter 8 sets out the Urban Design Framework based on planning policy context, specifically Core Strategy Policy CS7 summarised at 3.25 above and RCAAP Policy RC5 summarised at 3.35 above. The key principles are to transform the area by:
- “Integrating transport infrastructure with development;
 - Creating a mix of complementary land uses; and
 - Promoting high quality buildings, streets and spaces” (Ref 1-10, p.44)
- 3.47 Chapter 12 considers the area’s historic landmarks. There are six heritage assets in the area covered by Policy RC1 of the RCAAP. However these are situated largely in the south eastern corner along Friars Street and Station Road, an area not proposed for major redevelopment. The RSAF recognises the Grade II listed Station building as one of Reading’s most important historic buildings. The listed station and its setting have been altered and listed building consent was obtained as part of the Reading Station Upgrades.
- 3.48 The Site is not located within a conservation area; however Market Place Conservation Area is situated nearby. The policy that deals with heritage assets is set out in the NPPF (3.1-3.6) and the Core Strategy Policy CS33 (3.26).

3.49 All the heritage assets potential impacted by the Proposed Development Site are identified and summarised in section 4 below and the impact on these heritage assets is assessed in section 6, the Views Assessment.

Station Hill South Planning and Urban Design Brief (March 2007) (Ref 1-11)

3.50 The Station Hill South Planning and Urban Design Brief (SHSPUDB) has been prepared to provide specific urban design and planning guidance for the Station Hill South area of Reading. The document is formed around ten design principles:

- “Establishing a clear character
- Allowing for improved freedom of movement
- Open space and landscape
- Designing for tall buildings
- Determining appropriate scale, height and massing
- Active street frontage
- Achieving mixed-use development
- Incorporating high standards of sustainable design
- Designing in safety and security
- Demonstrating viable and flexible phasing” (Ref 1-11, p.9)

Each principle is outlined in further detail in chapter 2 of document establishing clear objectives and design requirements for each. Principles 1 and 4 are of particular note.

- 3.51 The key objectives for Principle 1. Establishing a clear character are:
- To provide for quality landmark development, setting the benchmark for an outstanding architectural redevelopment of Reading Station and land to the North whilst respecting the built heritage which surrounds the study area.
 - The establishment of an accessible and legible transport interchange with clear links to a new MRT facility.
 - Secure a wider choice of safe pedestrian and cycle movement patterns.
 - The promotion of a mix of uses synonymous with a vibrant city quarter and an 18 hour economy.
 - The provision of streets that double as unrestricted visual corridors through the study area.
 - To allow for attractive, useable and accessible public open space.
 - To integrate public art into buildings, structures, streets and spaces” (Ref 1-11, p.10)

- 3.52 The key objectives for Principle 4. Designing for tall buildings are:
- “A cluster of city-scale tall buildings, designed as a ‘family’ with complementary roofscapes, detailing and material selection should emphasise the location of Reading Station and the Station Plaza.
 - The tallest buildings in the area covered by the brief should be close to the Station Plaza to provide a landmark. Figure 2.15 indicates a general gradation of building heights, which respect local scale in the south and west part of the brief area.

- A second landmark location is appropriate at the western end of the area covered by the brief, adjacent to the MRT stop. This should rise from a shoulder height set back along Greyfriars Road, to assist with the transition to the lower townscape to the west. This should be lower than the city-scale buildings adjacent to the Station plaza, but visible from Friar Street and Chatham Place.
- Applications for tall buildings within the study area should take account of the CABE/English Heritage [sic] guidance relating to tall buildings.” (Ref 1-11, p.16)

3.53 The SHSPUDB requires that tall buildings demonstrate design excellence make a positive contribution to the local and wider views and help create and interesting skyline. Tall buildings should have a positive relationship with other buildings, streets, public and private spaces, especially historic buildings. The impact of proposed tall buildings will be tested through a 360’ view analysis in accordance with the methodology set out by the IEMA and the Landscape Institute (Ref 1-1) and using viewpoints approved in discussion with the Council.

Reading Tall Building Strategy (J anuary 2008) (Ref 1-12)

- 3.54 The Reading Tall Buildings Strategy (RTBS) was completed by Entec on behalf of Reading Borough Council in January 2008. The purpose of the strategy is to guide the development of tall buildings in central Reading. The Strategy complements the RCAAP and will inform future tall building policy in Reading.
- 3.55 The RTBS is formed of a baseline review and analysis of the current conditions in central Reading in terms of townscape, topography, visual context and historic assets and conservation. It goes on to identify character areas and defines the locations where tall buildings would be preferred. An appendix to the document contains a thorough baseline views analysis. Relevant views were adopted in the Reading Station Area Framework (2010) (Ref 1-10) described above and assessment of the views provided in the Tall Building Strategy is cited where relevant in the Views Assessment (section 6) below.

Chapter 4

BASELINE

CONDITIONS

Introduction

- 4.1
- Reading is widely thought of as the capital of the Thames Valley. The Borough covers 40,000 hectares and, apart from the River Thames and River Kennet, which flow through the borough, the area is mainly urban in character. Over the last 20 years the town has experienced great economic pressures to grow and develop, changing this once market town to a vibrant urban centre. Its railway station is a key hub in the national rail network and is the UK’s second busiest interchange outside of London with more than 15 million passengers passing through each year.
- 4.2
- The character of Reading’s built environment is varied and complex; Reading has a great heritage of historic buildings, spaces and waterways. The historic centre is based around a 12th century Abbey and a Victorian Town Hall. This diversifies out into post-war residential areas and industrial estates, to a modern business location, characterised by the office buildings in the city centre and business parks in the south west. Reading has over 880 listed buildings, thirteen conservation areas, and two scheduled ancient monuments.
- 4.3
- The rate and scale of development in Reading over the past 15 years has changed dramatically. This has led to the transformation of the centre and the South-West area.

History of the Site and surrounding area

- 4.4
- Reading is named after the Saxon tribe, Readingas, who settled in the area in the 6th century, though archaeological evidence to suggest Roman occupation. Reading was stormed and occupied by the Danes in 870-71 (Ref 1-13). In 1121 Henry I founded Reading Abbey; this later became one of the richest religious houses in England until the Dissolution in 1539. The remains of the abbey church now lie under the present Forbury Garden and Abbots’ Walk. Also dating from the 12th century is St Laurence’s Church, which originally had its outer abbey gate attached to its south flank. In 1189 the Hospitium of St John Baptist, a flint building located in the churchyard of St Laurence’s, was founded.
- 4.5
- There were three other churches in medieval Reading: St Giles, which is in the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area, St Mary’s, which is in the St Mary’s Butts/Castle Street Conservation Area and Greyfriars Church on Friar Street, altered and extended in the 19th century (Ref 1-13). During the Reformation, St Laurence’s, St Mary’s and St Giles’s were all stripped of their altars, statues, stained glass, and other finery and Greyfriars became the town lock-up in the 18th century.
- 4.6
- Reading quickly developed during the medieval period. Its location, close to the crossroads of a number of major historic routes and the

River Kennet and the River Thames, was an important factor in this growth. Equally, this was bolstered by its manufacture of woollen cloth, leather goods and silk weaving. In 1560 Elizabeth I confirmed a royal charter giving Reading greater powers of self-government. However, during 1642-51, the economy of the town was badly damaged by the Civil War (Ref 1-14).

- 4.7
- From the mid-18th century onwards, Reading became an important layover between Bath and London. Local inns thrived and a regular public coach service began in 1780. New industries also developed, including brewing, brick and tile making, iron-founding, and boat building. In 1786 a new Town Hall was built. During the beginning of the 19th century, the town began to extend beyond its medieval core. This new expansion was stimulated by the development of the Kennet Canal, completed 1723, and the Kennet and Avon Canal in 1810 (Ref 1-14). A large extension was added to the Town Hall in 1875 with a prominent clock tower.
- 4.8
- The construction of the Great Western Railway provided a further boost to Reading’s economy. Its arrival in the town in 1840 saw a rapid growth of a number of major industries. The first national census, in 1801, recorded that the population of Reading was about 9,400. By 1851 it had more than doubled and by the beginning of the 19th century it was around 72,000 (Ref 1-14). The OS map of 1879, fig 8.12 in Appendix 8 of the ES already shows the vast area of the railway and station at Reading, the northern half of the Site consists of mainly open space with a copse of trees.
- 4.9
- The 20th century saw further dramatic changes in the town. In the mid-20th century, the town centre was redeveloped, removing large parts of the historic core to be replaced by shopping and office facilities. In addition, the construction of the Inner Distribution Road in 1969 attempted to improve traffic circulation (Ref 1-14). This route cut across historic routes into and across the centre, isolating parts of the townscape. Buildings begin to encroach onto the north half of the site through the first half of the 20th century, leaving only one segment undeveloped by 1957, which contained a car park (see historic maps figs. 8.12-8.23 in Appendix 8 of the ES).

The existing buildings on and near to the Site

- 4.10
- The Site consists of low quality spaces and buildings which largely date to the 1970s. The majority of the buildings are unoccupied and in poor condition and none are of architectural or historic merit. Some of the buildings on Site have now been demolished (June 2015), however, the ‘baseline’ scenario considered in this report is that of the Site as it was prior to all demolition works.

- 4.11
- The Site has an important location just south of Reading Station and just north of the main shopping area. Building heights in the area vary from three to seventeen storeys and the townscape character of buildings close to the Site is generally of low value, although there are some historic buildings which are listed.
- 4.12
- In the close locality, the Site is most visible from the north when arriving by train. Views from the south and into the Site are restricted by the topography of the area. In the wider area, the Site can be seen from open spaces and elevated vantage points.
- 4.13
- The Site contains no listed buildings and does not lie in a designated conservation area. The Market Place/ London Street Conservation Area is situated to the east of the Site and St Mary's Butt's/Castle Street Conservation Area is situated to the southwest. There are also other conservation areas in the wider surrounding area.
- 4.14
- The nearest listed building is adjacent to the south side of the Site, 39 Friar Street, listed at Grade II. To the north of the Site is the Grade II listed Station building; the Station and associated structures have recently undergone significant redevelopment works, including the construction of a large bridge which is visible in some of the views assessed below.

Designated Heritage Assets

Figure 1: Map of Conservation Areas



Conservation Areas

- 4.15
- The development and special interest of the two Conservation Areas within the local area are described below. Conservation Areas in the wider area are considered in relation to specific views in section 6 where relevant.
- Market Place/London Street Conservation Area
- 4.16
- The Market Place/London Street Conservation Area, located in central Reading, was first designated in 1972 and later extended in 1982. The Conservation Area Appraisal was published in 2007 (Ref 1-13). The following description of the history and special interest of the Conservation Area is based on the Appraisal (Ref 1-14).
- 4.17
- Although there is evidence of Roman settlement in the conservation area, the principle phase of historic development came in the 12th century with the construction of Reading Abbey which lies just to the east of the conservation area. St Laurence's Church was the former gatehouse of the Abbey.
- 4.18
- Through the medieval and Tudor periods, the town flourished as a manufacturing centre and then in the 18th century as an important resting place on the route from London to Bath.
- 4.19
- The town then expanded rapidly beyond its medieval core in the 19th century following the construction of the Kennet Canal in 1810 and the Great Western Railway in 1840.
- 4.20
- The 20th century saw a large amount of redevelopment in the historic core and the construction of large traffic routes through the centre.
- 4.21
- The character of the conservation area is generally of a tight-knit urban grain with streets which have continuous frontages. The scale, however, is more domestic varying between two and four storeys.
- 4.22
- There are a few key open spaces, notably a broad pedestrianised space in front of the Town Hall and St Laurence's Church, which is "based on the medieval market place and forecourt of a former gateway to the Abbey, [and] provides a good setting for the area's historic buildings". Other open spaces are the graveyards of both the two churches in the conservation area. The river Kennet flows across the south of the conservation area parallel to "a wide, characterless dual-carriageway that completely disrupts the historic street pattern" (Ref 1-14).
- 4.23
- The Appraisal identifies three key landmarks: the tower of St Laurence's, the spire of St Giles' and the clock tower of the Town Hall. These three landmarks all feature in long distance views both within and outside the Conservation Area.
- 4.24
- The Conservation Area is subdivided into four character areas. Character Area 4: Market Place and environs of St Laurence's Church and Town

Hall is the closest to the Site. This part of the Conservation Area lies just to the west of the main precinct of Reading Abbey and accommodates the Town Hall and St Laurence Church which bound the pedestrianised Market Place.

- 4.25
- The Market Place/London Street Conservation Area Appraisal identifies a number of positive features and areas of special interest of Character Area 4:
- "The close proximity of St Laurence's Church and Town Hall buildings makes a strong architectural statement;
 - St Laurence's Church and distinctive tower;
 - The large public open space (part-pedestrianised) composed of Market Place and the area around the statue of Queen Victoria;
 - Town Hall complex comprising Victoria Hall, Concert Hall, Town Hall and Museum, Library and Art Gallery;
 - The collection of historic buildings looking onto Market Place;
 - The monument in Market Place, designed by Sir John Soane in 1804 to commemorate Edward Simeon a mayor of Reading and Governor of the Bank of England, and the statue of Queen Victoria;
 - Good views of Town Hall clock tower and the tower of St Laurence's Church;
 - Trees, greenery and open space of St Laurence's churchyard;
 - Trees in the public realm which soften the harsh urban townscape;
 - Natural stone kerbs" (Ref 1-14, p.16).

St Mary's Butt's/Castle Street Conservation Area

- 4.26
- The St Mary's Butts/Castle Street Conservation Area was designated by Reading in 1972 and the Conservation Area Appraisal was published in March 2008 (Ref 1-15). The following description of the history and special interest of the Conservation Area is based on the Appraisal.
- 4.27
- This Conservation Area incorporates the original core of Reading, which was early Saxon, before the founding of the Abbey after the Norman Conquest which moved the centre of the town, and the market place, north-eastwards. The original core lay at the cross-roads of two roads, running north-south and east-west. It would have been a busy centre in Saxon and medieval times with St Mary's Church and several public houses at the junction.
- 4.28
- The special interest of the conservation area is derived 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.
 - 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 ("The 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." (Ref 1-15, p.4)

- 4.29 In general, the Conservation Area retains its medieval scale and appearance in part, with buildings from the 16th to 19th century, as well as a small number of modern buildings. Buildings in the Conservation Area tend to be 2-3 storeys. It has a tightly knit urban grain that is a remnant of the medieval street pattern, which is still largely intact. The widest thoroughfares are St Mary's Butts and Castle Street, those leading to the original crossroads. The most significant changes to the street pattern and urban grain occurred in the 1970s with the construction of the Inner Distribution Road to the west of the Conservation Area. There is one large open space in the conservation area: the churchyard of St Mary's.

Listed buildings

- 4.30 There are no listed buildings on Site, however there are a number of listed buildings in the close vicinity, the setting of which may be affected by the proposals. These listed buildings and their significance are described in the following paragraphs based on their entries on The National Heritage List for England (Ref 1-16). Listed buildings in the wider area are considered in relation to specific views in section 6 where relevant.

Station Hill, Main building of Reading General Station – Grade II

- 4.31 The original station building was the work of Isambard Kingdom Brunel in c1840; the current building was an enlargement and remodel of the original carried out by architect Mr Lane (Chief Engineer of the GWR Co) between 1865 and 1867. The station is a two storey, ten bay symmetrical building in buff brick from Coalbrookdale with Bath stone dressings, rusticated quoins with Italianate details. The central four bays project forward. The top of the building is ornamented with a frieze, moulded cornice and blocking course, the projecting centre has console brackets to the cornice and the block course rising into a solid pediment. The first floor windows are all squared sashes. Those in the two wings are topped with cornices on console brackets and those in the projecting centre section have either triangular or segmental pediments, again supported on consoles. At the ground floor, the centre projecting section has a guilloche frieze and panelled pilasters flank the windows and doorways. There is a canopy above the ground floor. Above the hipped roof rises a central cupola with pyramidal bracketed roof, round headed windows and clock faces on each side.

The Statue of King Edward VII – Grade II

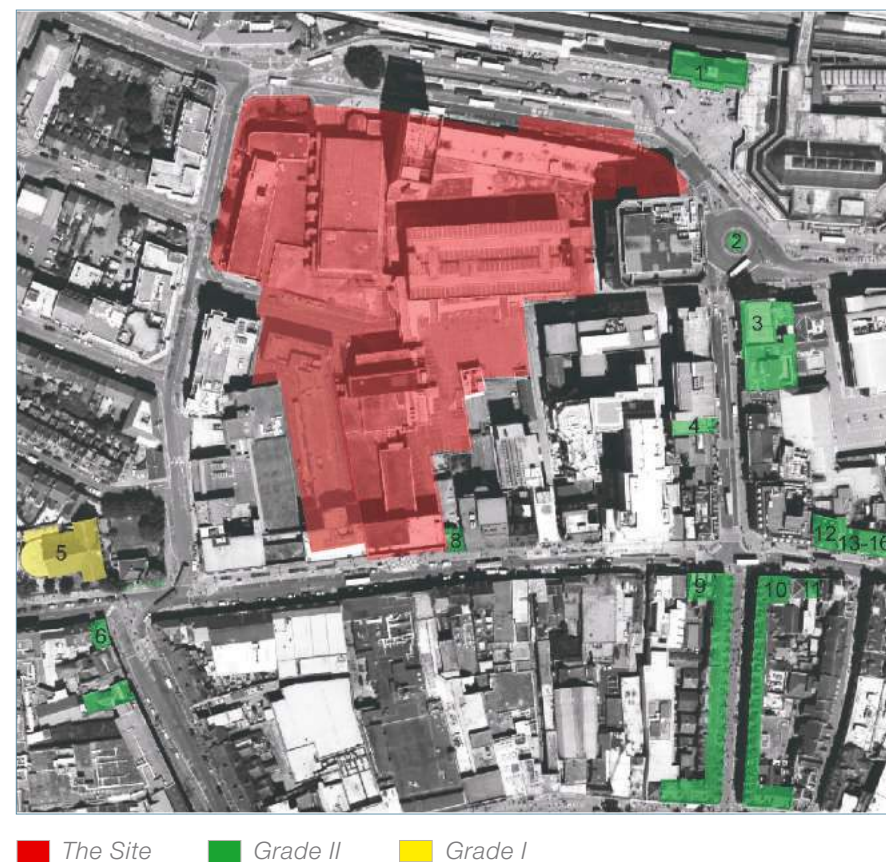
- 4.32 This statue was erected in 1902 to commemorate the coronation of King Edward VII. The large bronze statue was the work of sculptor George Edward Wade and depicts the King in his Coronation robes. It is mounted on a highly polished granite plinth with Ionic corner scroll balusters and re-entrant cornice.

Great Western House – Grade II

- 4.33 This building was previously listed as the Former Great Western Hotel and is one of the first railway hotels in Britain. It dates from 1844 and is in the Italianate style, it has similarities with the Royal Station Hotel in Slough, by Isambard Kingdom Brunel, suggesting that he or one of his assistants was also the architect of this building. The building is three storeys in height plus a basement below and dormered mansard roof above. It is five bays wide to Station Road, the principal elevation and three to Forbury Road, the building is fully stuccoed with rusticated quoins and channelled ground floor. At ground floor, the bays are divided by pilasters supporting an entablature and boldly projecting modillion cornice. On Station Road, the central bay has a projecting Doric portico supported on paired columns and topped with a balustrade balcony. The windows are all sashes with architraves. Those on the first floor have balustrade Juliet balconies, frieze and cornice and the centre has

Figure 2: Map of Listed Buildings

01. Station Hill, Main building of Reading General Station – Grade II
02. The Statue of King Edward VII – Grade II
03. Great Western House – Grade II
04. Nos. 13 and 15 Station Road - Grade II
05. Greyfriars Church – Grade I
06. The Mitre Inn – Grade II
07. Quadrant walls and railings to former No 64 (Greyfriars Vicarage) – Grade II
08. No. 39 Friar Street – Grade II
09. No. 147 Friar Street – Grade II
10. Nos. 1-31 and 2-32 Queen Victoria Street, nos. 148, 149 & 150 Friar Street and nos. 24-28 and 35-38 Broad Street – Grade II
11. No. 154 Friar Street – Grade II
12. No. 15 Friar Street – Grade II
13. No. 14 Friar Street – Grade II
14. No. 13 Friar Street – Grade II
15. No. 12 Friar Street – Grade II
16. No. 11 Friar Street – Grade II



a pediment. Above the second floor is a heavy, bracketed cornice. There is a two-bay canted extension to the south in matching style and a five bay modern extension beyond. The Forbury Road elevation is very similar; the central bay has a bowed three-light bay with cornice over at ground floor. A further four storey, three window extension is to the east, with carriage entry to the left side in a similar style.

Nos. 13 and 15 Station Road - Grade II

4.34 This pair of terraced buildings date from c1903 and were the work of Joseph Morris. Morris used an exuberant blend of Baroque, Art Nouveau and Flemish styles for this elaborate building. It is three storeys high plus attic and is two bays wide, one for each building. Each bay is topped with an enriched crows stepped gable, the one to No. 13 to the left much larger than that of No.15. The façade is principally red and yellow glazed bricks with details in pale terracotta. The windows are tripartite sashes, with a bracketed, canted bay window to the second floor of No. 13 and arched window to the first floor. The ground floors contain a modern shop front.

Greyfriars Church – Grade I

4.35 Greyfriars is a Church of England church and was first constructed from 1285 onwards and was complete by 1311. This was the second church of this name, the first, constructed between 1255 and 1259 was considered to be unsatisfactory. The church became the town bridewell, another name for a lock-up, in the 18th century but was restored to its original use in around 1863 following work by the Borough Surveyor W H Woodmn. The original church is built using squared knapped flints with stone plinths, dressings and buttresses. The tiled roof sweeps down over the aisles with small vents. The nave has three bays and a large transept, added by Woodman. The chancel was removed after the Reformation and so the east chancel arch is blocked up. Above this arch, the gable is topped with a triple arched belfry, added by Woodman. The windows are all pointed arches with three, four and five light variants and with tracery. The crown post, wind-braced roof structure is visible internally and the internal features date from the church’s restoration in the 19th century. A modern single storey flat roofed extension has been added wrapping around the west and north sides. This church is thought to be the most complete surviving example of Franciscan- architecture in England (Ref 1-17).

The Mitre Inn – Grade II

4.36 This public house dates from c1800, but may be earlier and it has been much altered. It is three storeys in height and constructed using brick which has been painted with colour wash. The building has a projecting cornice and parapet above. The principal elevation is to West Street and is five bays wide. The windows are sash windows, not all of which are original. On the second floor, the windows are squared and the outer two openings have been blocked. To the first floor the windows are segmental arched. The ground floor has late 19th century segmental arched windows with bracket keystones and central entrance with corbelled cornice, open pediment and carved decoration. The Friar

Street return is one bay wide and in the same style as the front. An additional small single storey one bay extension, with a pitched roof with a dormer, contains a late 19th century shopfront.

Quadrant walls and railings to former No 64 (Greyfriars Vicarage) – Grade II

4.37 The Greyfriars Church Vicarage has long been demolished but it, and so probably the surrounding walls and railings, were the work of John Soane. They date from between c1796-1808. The garden walls are quadrant shaped and are built in red brick. There are two arched garden doors off Friar Street with plastered tympana. These walls are linked by cast iron spearhead railings with fluted columns standards capped by urns. There is also a central set of stairs, leading up to the present doorway with an original foot scraper to the left side.

No. 39 Friar Street – Grade II

4.38 This simple terraced building dates from the 18th century. It is three storeys in height and is four bays wide and built using red brick. The windows are nine over nine sashes under flat brick arches and there is a brick parapet above the second floor. The ground floor has a modern shop front inserted.

No. 147 Friar Street – Grade II

4.39 No. 147 is a commercial building which dates from around the 1880s. It is three storeys in height with gabled attic dormers and is constructed using brick but painted in white with black details. The Friar Street façade, the main commercial frontage, with two storey shop front, is the main area of special interest of this building. The first floor is the most striking with four depressed arches under a cornice and fascia with outer pilasters and dividing fluted Corinthian columns. The ground floor below has a similar pattern of supports and with a deeply recessed entrance. The second floor has three pairs of sash windows. The dormered gables have segmental arches, the central one wider than the outer two. The central one has a pair of sash windows and the outer two have a single window.

Nos. 1-31 and 2-32 Queen Victoria Street, nos. 148, 149 & 150 Friar Street and nos. 24-28 and 35-38 Broad Street – Grade II

4.40 This group of commercial buildings date, centring along Queen Victoria Street and with returns to both Friar Street and Broad Street, date from c1894 and are probably the work of Joseph Morris. The street front is uniformly three storeys in height, plus attic gables and is clad in yellow brick and red terracotta. The ground floor houses modern shop fronts, though one pre-war shop front does remain as does the bracketed cornice band. The first and second floors have an irregular rhythm of slightly canted bays and flat bays, with the bays being divided by Ionic pilasters. The flat bays have architraved sash windows and the canted bays have mullioned and transomed windows. Above the second floor is a heavy, dentilled cornice and each bay is topped with a gable containing

a window with pilaster surrounds and invariably finished with a broken pediment. The returns to Broad Street are much larger than those to Friar Street, all are in a similar style.

No. 154 Friar Street – Grade II

4.41 No. 154 was originally part of a pair with no.153, which is too altered to be listed, it dates from c1800. The building is three storeys in height and constructed using red brick with a stone sill above the ground floor and coping to the parapet. It is two bays wide with squared sash windows under red brick lintels and a modern shop front at ground floor level.

No. 15 Friar Street – Grade II

4.42 This building dates from the late 18th century with shopfronts and central arcade inserted into the ground floor in the 1920s. The principle elevation is three storeys in height with two dormers in the attic roof and four windows wide. It is constructed in red brick with a simple bracketed stone cornice and parapet. The windows are all squared sashes. The 1920s shopfronts, with a central entrance to the Harris Arcade, have a joint cornice, panelled fascia and side pilasters. This house was the birth place of Professor Goldwin Smith, who is of local notoriety.

No. 14 Friar Street – Grade II

4.43 This early to mid-18th century terraced building has possibly been rebuilt. It is three storeys in height and two windows wide and built using a combination of silver grey and red brick. The windows, all of contain modern frames, have cambered arches. There is no decoration to the façade but there is a high, plain parapet. A modern shopfront has been inserted in the ground floor. It has primarily included for its group value with its neighbours.

No. 13 Friar Street – Grade II

4.44 No. 13 Friar Street dates from the mid-18th century and consists of two narrow bays and is three storeys in height. The elevation is an equal combination of silver grey brick headers and red brick dressings, with a tiled roof and modern shopfront inserted at ground floor level. The first floor windows have segmental heads and squared at the second floor, all are sashes. Further decoration includes a brick band above the first floor windows, a block brick cornice and parapet. It has primarily included for its group value with its neighbours.

No. 12 Friar Street – Grade II

4.45 This building forms a pair with no. 11 described above but it is around one hundred years older dating from the early to mid-19th century. It is a duplicate of No.11 at three storeys in height with mansard roof and four windows wide. The façade is a combination of the same details as No.11; silver grey headers with red brick dressings and moulded brick cornice and projecting string above the first floor. A modern shop

front has been inserted at ground floor level and two modern dormers have been added in the mansard. The windows are flush-framed sash windows, giving a slightly different façade character to its neighbour.

No. 11 Friar Street – Grade II

- 4.46 No. 11 is an end of terrace brick building from the early to mid-18th century and forms a pair with No.12 described above. The building is three storeys with an attic in the mansard roof above, hidden behind a parapet and with two, three-light dormers. The building is four windows wide, all of which are inset sash windows and with a modern shop front inserted into the ground floor. The façade has a decorative combination of silver grey brick headers and red brick dressings with a moulded brick cornice and projecting string course above the first floor.

Chapter 5

VISUAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

Introduction

- 5.1 The Proposed Development consists of the SH3 Scheme and the amendments proposed to Plot E which are the subject of this planning application. The subject of the ES is the entire Proposed Development since the proposals for Plot E would not be built out without the rest of the SH3 scheme.
- 5.2 The SH3 Scheme is described in detail in the Development Specification and Framework (DSF), the Design and Access Statement and the Design Codes documents which formed part of the planning application in 2013. The present proposals for Plot E are described in the Design and Access Statement for Plot E and Telecom House. Aspects of the design of the Proposed Development relevant to this assessment are described in the following paragraphs.
- 5.3 Overall, the Proposed Development has been conceived as a high density development which includes offices, residences, retail and leisure uses and has been designed to meet the following key objectives:
- to set out clear and legible design parameters for the site that ensure that the development connects well to the areas of the town adjacent to it;
 - to encourage quality design both for the buildings and for the public spaces;
 - to subdivide the parcels of land within the site so that they can be delivered in realistic phases;
 - to integrate the public transportation interchange to stimulate its regular use;
 - to produce a comfortable environment balanced between residential and commercial uses; and
 - to add a new civic square for Reading.
- 5.4 The description in the following paragraphs is the same as section 5 of the 2013 ES, with reference to Plot E only updated. Plot E is the only part of the Proposed Development which has been altered since 2013. The Reserved Matters Application for Plot B is considered within the Cumulative Assessment in section 6 below; it does not form part of the Proposed Development because it is not yet consented.

Routes and spaces

- 5.5 The Site is situated to the west of Station Road, which is intended to remain the most direct route between the train station and the town centre. The Proposed Development will provide alternative pedestrian routes from the station to improve the permeability of the area. It will include two new routes across the Site, one running east-west

connecting the station to Greyfriars Road to the west and a major route running north-south to connect the new Station Hill bus interchange and station with Friar Street to the south.

- 5.6 At its northeast corner, the Site incorporates part of Station Square, which is currently being refurbished alongside the creation of a new bus interchange and taxi drop-off on its west side. The southeast corner of Station Square is formed jointly by this site and the adjoining Thames Tower site (which is currently under construction and shown in the Future Baseline views in section 6). The design team has therefore worked closely with RBC and the Thames Tower project team to discuss the accessibility of the space and the appearance and finishes that will give it its new character. A coordinated approach to paving pattern and materials has been sought. A design feature of a ‘bosque’ of trees has been discussed for the centre of the space (outside the application boundary for the Proposed Development), to create a focal point for the space whilst allowing for a large pedestrian flow through the space. Specific rules have been included within the Public Realm Design Codes to ensure both of these approaches are delivered within any future reserved matters application.
- 5.7 Central Square will be at the heart of the site and fronted by the buildings on Plots B, C, D and G. It will be located at the intersection of the north-south route from the new bus interchange to Friar Street and the east-west route from the station to Greyfriars Road. Careful consideration has been paid to the size, orientation and the relationship of the space to the buildings adjacent in order to create a space that will be functional and welcoming to office workers and visitors. The parameter plans set minimum dimensions for this and all spaces within the proposals which must be achieved in future detailed proposals. In addition, key aspects of the landscape proposals – trees, furniture, and features – are set out in the Public Realm Design Codes.
- 5.8 The Arcade Walk will provide a new east-west link from Station Square to Central Square. It will be between Plot C, to the north, and Plot G, to the south. Plot G contains the retained Multi Storey Car Park (MSCP) and its north side will have retail units to bring activity to both sides of the arcade. It will be a narrow, busy retail space, enclosed by a roof to provide shelter from the elements, and its linear route will allow views in both directions to the newly landscaped public spaces which it connects.
- 5.9 Friar’s Walk will be a new pedestrian route linking the new Central Square in the north to Friar Street in the south. There is a significant level difference across the route of c.5m which will be addressed by a combination of Part M compliant ramps and steps. Retail units will also line this route to encourage activity all the way along it and to draw pedestrians through the site.

5.10 At street level, consideration has been given to the appropriate location of active retail frontages and office and residential entrances, in order to make the new public routes and spaces safe and welcoming. The majority of the length of the north-south route between the bus interchange and Friar Street and part of the east-west route between the Central Square and Station Square will have active uses (specified in the DSF). The ground floor on both sides of Garrard Street will have some active use, in the form of retail spaces and office and residential entrances.

Temporary Events Space

5.11 An Interim Condition of the Proposed Development is a multi-functional events space which is the subject of a separate planning application which gained approval in January 2014. It will replace the Station Hill retail parade that was present on Site prior to the recent demolition works (June 2015). It will be temporary, constructed pending the redevelopment of the wider Site which will be delivered over a number of years. It will comprise an area of approximately 1,096sqm within the western side of the space and a raised lawn area on the east. It will be simply landscaped with hard and soft surfaces, providing a versatile and flexible location that will be a useable public space when events are not taking place. A panel will be mounted along its western boundary to mask the lower floors of Thames Tower and the construction works for the permanent Proposed Development on the rest of the Site. Full details relating to the design of the proposals and access arrangements are included within the Design and Access Statement supporting that application.

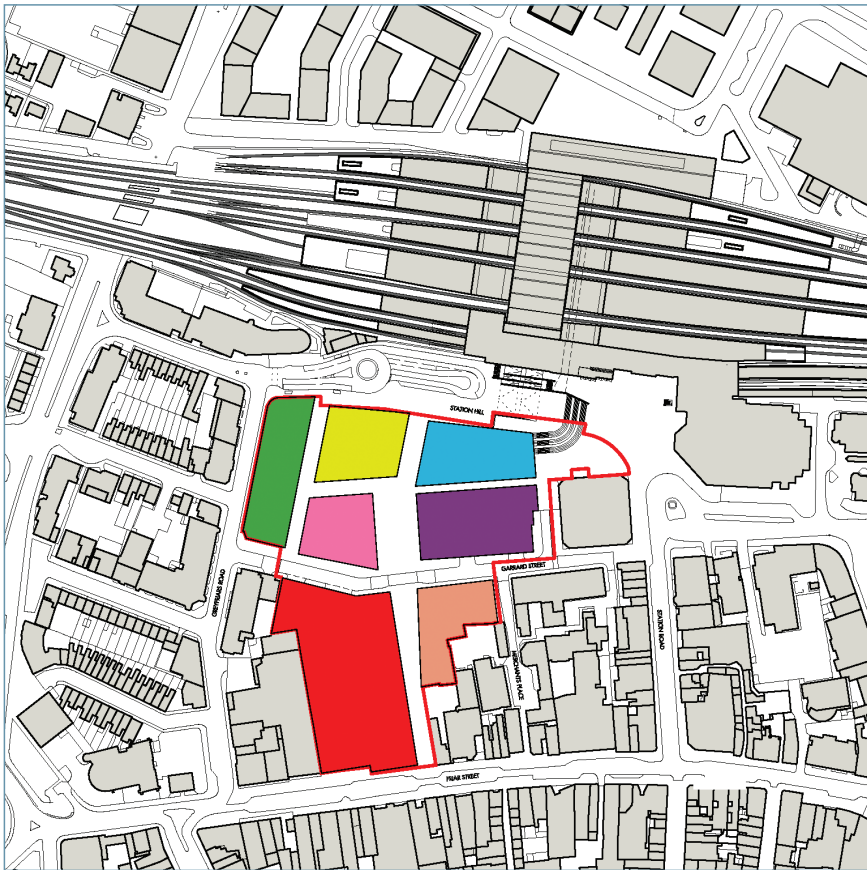


Figure 3: Plan of Parameter Plots

Building use, height and mass

- 5.12 The Site includes seven building plots, labelled A to G on Figure 4, organised around the new public routes and spaces. The larger building plots to the north of Garrard Street (A, B, C, D and G) contain commercial development and the plots to the south (E and F) have residential apartments. Car parking would be provided within the refurbished existing MSCP car park (in Plot G) and the amended proposal for Plot E allows for the possibility of up to a further 200 spaces on Plot E. Leisure use is allocated to the roof of Plot G in the form of a multi-sports pitch, which will also provide animation to the roof when viewed from the upper levels of surrounding development. A further quantum of potential leisure use has been allocated to Plot F.
- 5.13 The proposed massing has followed the principles set out by RBC in the Station Hill South Planning Urban Design Brief (SHSPUDB) (Ref 1-10). The building masses will appear stepped, rising from the southwest of the site, and the residential areas just beyond that corner, up to mark the station at the northeast of the site. Careful consideration has been paid to the profile of each plot, the size and proportion of the pavilion elements and the treatment of the facades of each plot to ensure that an appropriate massing profile can be achieved overall and in relation to the adjacent redeveloped Thames Tower in particular.
- 5.14 Due to the phased approach to the SH3 Scheme, it is necessary to maintain some flexibility to the footprint of each plot to ensure individual plots can be adapted over time if market forces dictate. As a result, limits of deviation ('LOD's) were set out in Parameter Plan 3 of the 2013 application that allowed for varying degrees of flexibility to the various boundaries of each plot. It should be noted that, whilst individual plots may be afforded limited flexibility, the minimum dimensions for the public realm as set out in Parameter Plan 4 need to be maintained, i.e. if one plot gets bigger there will be a net reduction in size on an adjacent plot in order to achieve the minimum public realm dimension.
- 5.15 This report considers the maximum and minimum parameters for each plot in the Proposed Views in section 6 and makes an assessment of the overall skyline profile of the Proposed Development and the relationships of the different building masses based on those verified views. Plot C is the tallest building plot (128m AOD maximum/ 109m AOD minimum), with Plots B and A stepping down from C to the west (Plot B: 121m AOD/94m AOD and Plot A: 91m AOD/ 67m AOD). To the south of C, G is lower still (83m AOD/ 72m AOD) and Plot D is 105m AOD/ 75m AOD. On the part of the site leading south from Garrard Street, Plot E is 85m AOD/ 63m AOD and F is 85m AOD/ 66m AOD.
- 5.16 The proposed amendments to Plot E entail extending the breadth of the plot westwards. The stepped form of the maximum and minimum parameters – stepping down from north to south – for the plot remain the same: 85m/63m on Garrard Street and 73m/63m on Friar Street. 63m equates to approximately ground plus five storeys, 73m to ground plus seven storeys and 85m to ground plus ten storeys. This range of heights also allows for a significant slope in ground level, of 5.5m rising upwards from Garrard Street to Friar Street.

Building appearance

- 5.17 The Illustrative Scheme is not represented in the views in section 6 below but is described and illustrated in the Design and Access Statement. In discussion with RBC Planning Officers, both a Maximum Illustrative Scheme and a Minimum Illustrative Scheme were developed during the design process to find an appropriate massing profile for each plot, and from this exercise the maximum and minimum overall quantum of area were extrapolated.
- 5.18 For this planning application, Allies + Morrison Architects have developed an Illustrative Scheme that is set lower than the maximum parameter heights and higher than the minimum parameter heights, and includes some articulation at roof level. The general principle and relationship of stepped building heights across the Site is the same in the Illustrative Scheme as it is in the maximum and minimum parameters. The Illustrative Scheme is divided into office (Plots A-D), residential (Plots E and F) and car park (Plot G).
- 5.19 The Design Code sets out the following guidance for the materials of the office buildings:
- Where stone panels are used they must be simply divided up in relation to a structural bay;
 - The colours of any cladding material (except glass) must come from the base colours of the materials used rather than widespread use of applied coatings or paints;
 - Where brick is used it should be good quality. Brick mixes can be used to achieve a variation in colour and tone. The selection of mortar must be considered concurrently with the selection of any brick; and
 - The proposed use of concrete in a building must include demonstration of how design and detail will limit and resist the discolouration and staining over time.
- 5.20 The Design Code sets out the following guidance for the materials of the residential buildings:
- The design of the buildings should reflect their predominantly domestic use;
 - Within courtyards, a lighter coloured material should be used to reflect the available daylight;
 - Window openings shall be set back by a minimum of one brick or 225mm from the facade of the external walls in order to introduce depth and relief to the facades;
 - Where provided, balconies shall have a minimum clear depth of 1500mm between the building face and the back of the balcony enclosure; and
 - The elevations of buildings on Plots E and F should share a common architectural language so that they complement one another. This could be achieved by the use of similar materials or by employing a similar palette of material.