

18-20 Hosier Street

Reading, RG1 7JL

Heritage Appraisal

November 2018

Consultancy for the
Historic Built Environment

KMHHeritage

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 This report has been prepared to support the application for planning permission for proposals to develop a Premier Inn on a site on Hosier Street, Reading on behalf of Inception (Reading) Sarl.

Purpose

- 1.2 The purpose of the report is to set out the history and heritage significance of the site and its context, and to comment on the proposals for its redevelopment.
- 1.3 This report should be read in conjunction with the drawings and Design & Access Statement prepared by Corstophine + Wright Architects.

Organisation

- 1.4 This introduction is followed by a description of the heritage context. Section 3 analyses the heritage significance of the building and its context. Section 4 sets out the national and local policy and guidance relating to the historic built environment that is relevant to this matter. An outline is provided in Section 5 of the merits of the scheme in heritage terms.

Author

- 1.5 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 English Heritage. 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.

2 The 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.
- 2.5 The post-war development of Reading focused on new housing, including tower blocks
- 2.6 The application site currently comprises the former Eva's nightclub and a vacant barn/warehouse, the former of which closed down at the end of 2017. It is not regarded to be of any local interest.
- 2.7 All existing structures will be demolished to ground/slab level under permitted development rights to facilitate the proposed development. The application site also includes a small section of the eastern edge of South Court, adjacent to the southern entrance of Broad Street Mall.

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 adjacent 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 (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.

- 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 in 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 former Eva's nightclub is not regarded as being a building of any quality and of no local interest. The southern side of Hosier Street comprises open space with mature trees that mask the majority of the more modern development to the west, and the northern rear elevations of the listed buildings on Castle Street are hidden behind relatively utilitarian 'back-of-house' buildings to their rears. As a consequence there is little character or quality to Hosier Street, except for the side return of 21-23 St Mary's Butts – which does not form part of the conservation area. If anything, the current state of the street detracts from the nearby heritage assets.
- 3.29 The important views identified around Hosier Street are to the east – 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

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.

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;
 - 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 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,

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.

and to make this evidence (and any archive generated) publicly accessible' (paragraph 199).³

- 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

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

- 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.

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 The proposals are for the erection of a part 7, part 8 storey building for use as a Hotel and Restaurant, associated enabling and means of access works.
- 5.3 This will replace the existing Eva's nightclub building, which is not regarded as being of any local interest.
- 5.4 The design has been evolved to ensure that a number of issues are addressed, including the current poor quality public realm, the lack of active frontages on Hosier Street and the current dilapidated state of the existing buildings.
- 5.5 The proposal provides an opportunity to activate the street frontage and enhance the east-west route – providing a gateway development that also sits comfortably in its surroundings.
- 5.6 The choice of materials has been specifically considered to not only reflect its immediate surroundings of warm brick tones but also the long tradition of brick-use in Reading.
- 5.7 This will also ensure a harmonious and contextual relationship with Reading Minster in longer views down Hosier Street from the west – which has been specifically referenced with a homage to the diaper brickwork found on the church tower referenced with chequerboard brick work detailing to the hotel building.
- 5.8 The proportions of the building and window/wall ratio ensure it has an elegant symmetry which, along with the openings on the building's eastern elevation mean that the building does not provide a blank wall in views from St Mary's Butts- as suggested by the Design Review Panel.
- 5.9 The proposals provide an overall composition that seeks to resolve efficient use of the site whilst contributing to the wider urban context. The roof form has been carefully considered and is felt to be an appropriate one both with respect to the scale and proportions of the proposed building.

- 5.10 Overall, in terms of impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area and the setting of nearby listed buildings, these proposals will considerably enhance both. The materiality of the building will ensure it is a contextual neighbour to the nearby heritage assets and will help to improve the currently poor quality of Hosier Street and provide a high quality backdrop to views to the east of the important Grade I Reading Minster and St Mary's Butts.
- 5.11 Whilst the building – and Hosier Street – do not have a direct link to the elements of those listed buildings on Castle Street that make them significant, any improvements on Hosier Street can only be regarded as positive.
- 5.12 Therefore, the effect on the conservation area and setting of nearby listed buildings will be a positive one.

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 and enhances 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 building will make 'a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness' through its contextual architectural approach.
- 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 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'.
- 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 both protects and enhances 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 building aims 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 patterned brick makes to local distinctiveness – and particularly in the context of the church.

7 Summary and conclusions

- 7.1 The proposed scheme has been carefully conceived to ensure that the redevelopment 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 proposed building will be a contextual and appropriate neighbour to the nearby heritage assets.
- 7.2 The effect of the works on the heritage significance described earlier is therefore positive. The proposal will preserve and enhance the setting and therefore character and appearance of the conservation area and also the setting of nearby listed buildings.
- 7.3 For these reasons, the proposed scheme complies with the law, and national and local policy and guidance for listed buildings and conservation areas.

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