

land off weldale street, reading



Introduction

Lochailort Thames Quarter Ltd is seeking Outline Planning Permission, from Reading Borough Council, for a residential development of 47 homes located at the junction of Weldale Street and North Street, Reading. All matters are to be Reserved apart from siting and access.

This Design and Access Statement describes the way in which the future Reserved Matters proposals for this site could be developed, in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) (Amendment) Order 2013 and the National Planning Practice Guidance (Validation Requirements) paragraphs 029 - 031.

We recognise and welcome the increasing necessity for high quality design in new developments, set down within the National Planning Policy Framework and associated design guidance. The high standard of design which this application embodies is essential to the positive contribution that the development will provide, both to the local character and to the community.

DHA Architecture has prepared this application following several months of negotiation between Lochailort and Reading Borough Council. The work undertaken by them in their pre-application proposals, together with their presentations to both Reading Borough Council and the Design Review Panel, had evolved this high quality design response to the unique qualities of this site. In particular, the key considerations of these design proposals were to respect the scale of the adjacent development, to make use of the natural levels, and to respond to the mature Norway Maple, a key feature of the site.

The design and development standards set down within Reading Borough Council's policies and guidance have been responded to and developed within the planning and architectural approach described herein, and we have also been directed by our detailed appraisal of the local context and the established development pattern and character, as well as consultation with the Local Authority and a comprehensive Professional Team across a range of disciplines. In particular, the following consultants have contributed to this Design and Access Statement:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| ■ Architectural Consultant: | DHA Architecture |
| ■ Transport Consultant: | Stuart Michael Associates |
| ■ Noise & Air Quality Consultant: | Stuart Michael Associates |
| ■ Arboricultural Consultant: | Ian Keen Ltd |

In the following chapters we demonstrate that the site can be developed with a strong and contextual design strategy, outlining the possible urban design, landscape design, architectural approach and access principles for the scheme, and describe the way in which the form of the site and the open space areas would provide a legible and positive experience of the development, enhanced by an appropriate architectural style and materials palette.

The development of this site will offer a sensitively designed, high quality built environment, meeting local and national aspirations for sustainability and character.



The Application Site in Context



The Context of the Development

"The steps taken to appraise the context of the development"

The application site is sustainably located in close proximity to Reading town centre and to wide ranging public transport infrastructure. The site lies in an evidently transitional location:

- To the east and north lie medium-scale commercial/warehousing areas, including the ambulance depot which adjoins the site to the north. These areas have minimal townscape or landscape value, although providing employment and necessary local services.
- To the west and south lie 3-storey apartments, with 2-storey terraced housing beyond.
- To the south-east however, new multi-storey mixed-use and apartment developments are making a significant advancement to the character of this area.

In this context, the application site should take the opportunity to reinforce the evolution of this part of Reading, and to sensitively manage the transition from the large-scale multi-storey development to the domestic-scale streets.

The Wider Setting of the Application Site

The new Weldale Street development is illustrated overleaf [1]. The application illustrations for this development include two perspective images of the new buildings viewed from North Street, showing the 8-storey element approved for this part of the new development. The contemporary design for this building is predominantly brick faced, with grey cladding to the upper storeys and vertically-proportioned large-format windows.

This new development also lies in the context of a yet taller recent development, Chatham Place, illustrated overleaf [2]. Chatham Place and the Weldale Street apartments strongly contribute to the regeneration of this part of Reading, and create a substantial backdrop to the A329. In addition, the commercial uses to the north and east are zoned for redevelopment under RCAAP Policy CR12b (Great Knolleys Street); and the neighbouring ambulance depot is clearly a brownfield windfall site that is entirely appropriate for and likely to be redeveloped in the future.

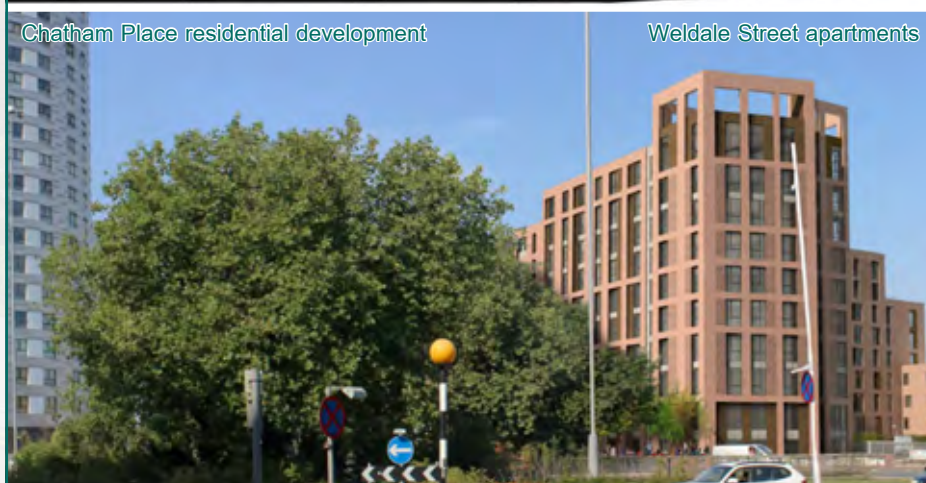
By contrast, the domestic-scale residential area to the west and south of the application site is the eastern edge of the more suburban residential neighbourhoods of western Reading.

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1. Recently approved Weldale Street apartments



2. A329/Chatham Street relationship



3. Stratheden Place/Caroline Street



The Particular Characteristics of the Application Site

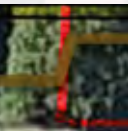
The site is 0.21Ha in area and has been cleared of any buildings. It comprises a disused plot which had previously housed a temporary education building; and which adjoins the ambulance depot to the north, 3-storey apartments to the west, and highways to the eastern and southern boundaries which serve the residential and commercial areas previously identified.

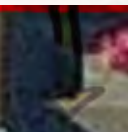
The submitted Arboricultural Assessment concludes that, through pre-application discussions, the Local Planning Authority has confirmed that the only tree on the site worthy of retention is a single Norway Maple in the southeastern corner of the site.

Various other physical and planning factors will influence any future development proposals for this site, including:

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Allowance for the Root Protection Area, streetscape setting and future protection of the high quality Norway Maple.
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Careful consideration for the amenity and privacy of the neighbouring 3-storey apartments to the west...
- 

...including the lower ground level of the neighbouring ground floor apartments.
- 

Careful consideration for the amenity and privacy of the 3-storey apartments across the road to the south.
- 

Careful consideration for the relationship with the ambulance depot and the necessity to not fetter any future development proposals for this land.
- 

Where the site falls south-north by 1.5-2m, accommodate this ground form into the design of the proposed building and its setting.
- 

Potential to utilise the existing site access for the new development, if the design requires vehicular access into the body of the site.
- 

Potential to provide new active frontages to address both Weldale Street and North Street.

The Application Site



Design Parameters

“How the Design of the Development Takes the Physical Context Into Account”

The proposed new block of apartments will provide an opportunity to provide strong and active street frontages to both Weldale Street and North Street, as required by policy RC10; and should address the prominent corner tree, which is an important feature in the street scene and will become a new focal landmark for this neighbourhood, ‘announcing’ the gateway into the residential area.

There is an opportunity in this location to replace trees which are of poor quality, of limited longevity and of a species unsuited to the urban environment, with new planting which will permanently enhance the character and appearance of the area, have a significantly greater life expectancy compared to the existing trees, and will contribute to local biodiversity and habitat gains.

The new residential frontage to North Street in particular will offer important benefits to this neighbourhood, providing passive surveillance to a streetscape which is not presently overlooked. In addition, the new frontages will provide a continuation of the built form to enclose and improve the street scene.

Neighbour amenity and privacy are also important considerations, particularly for the 3-storey apartments which address the western boundary of the application site, some of which are at a lower ground level than the application site.



Previous Pre-Application Stage Development Proposals

The pre-application negotiations for this site have been ongoing since June 2017, with the iterations of the development proposals by the previous design consultants being considered unacceptable by Officers and the Design Panel. Some of these evolving schemes are reproduced right and below.

Early schemes did not allow for the retention of the mature Norway Maple; subsequent iterations allowed for its retention within a landscaped space. Various building forms were also proposed: C-shaped buildings intended to maximise the developable land, and L-shaped buildings intended to create more amenity space, either to the front or rear of the building.

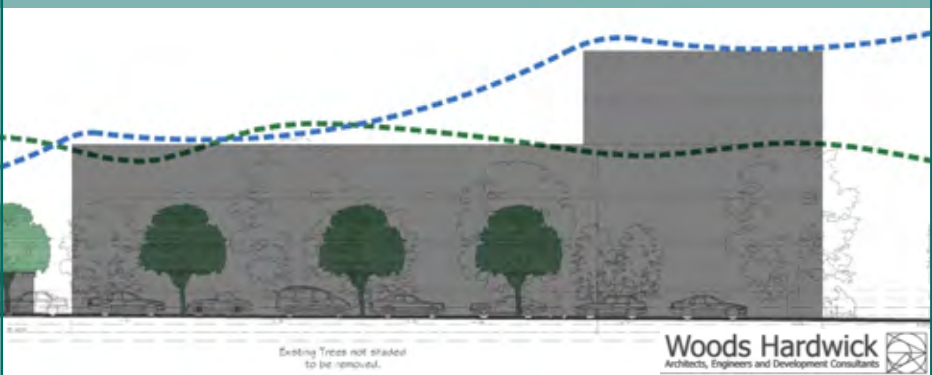
During these negotiations the Planning Officer expressed particular concern regarding these proposals' massing, overbearing of neighbouring buildings, and overdevelopment. It was advised that the scale be reduced to three storeys on Weldale Street and four storeys on North Street with a pitched roof, with the potential for 4.5 storeys subject to design, particularly with regard to the shadowing of the amenity space.

The Reading Design Review Panel (January 2018) noted that the stylistic approach was acceptable, providing a transition from the urban housing schemes and the traditional streets. However, the amenity space was judged to be poor and overshadowed, the proposals were considered unneighbourly, and the proposals lacked a strong concept or identity with too much variance in material tone.

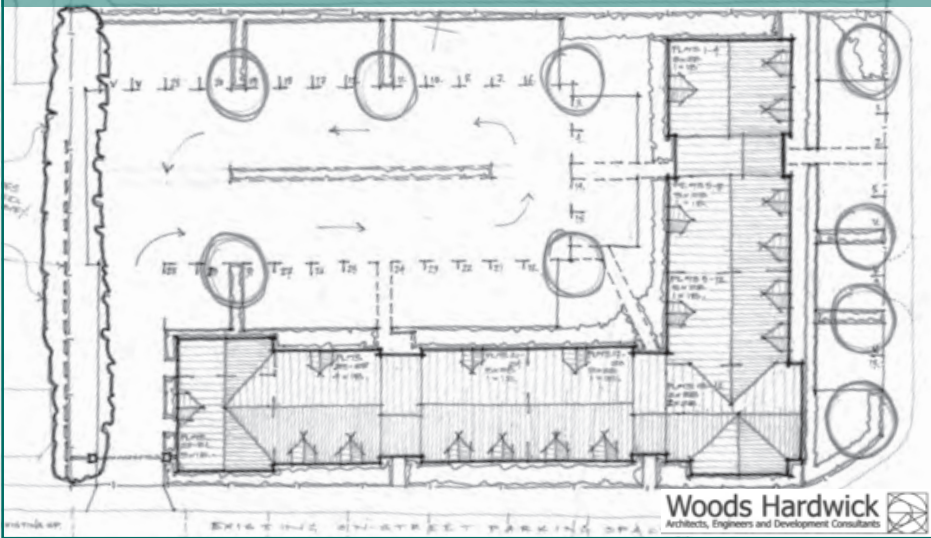
Pre-Application Elevational Proposals: January 2018



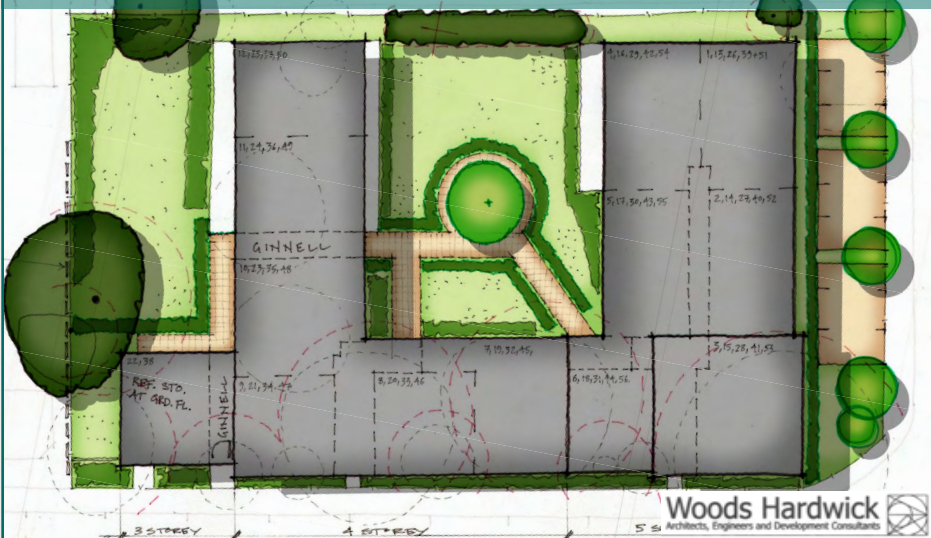
Pre-Application Massing Proposals: August 2018



Pre-Application Proposals: June 2017



Pre-Application Proposals: June 2017



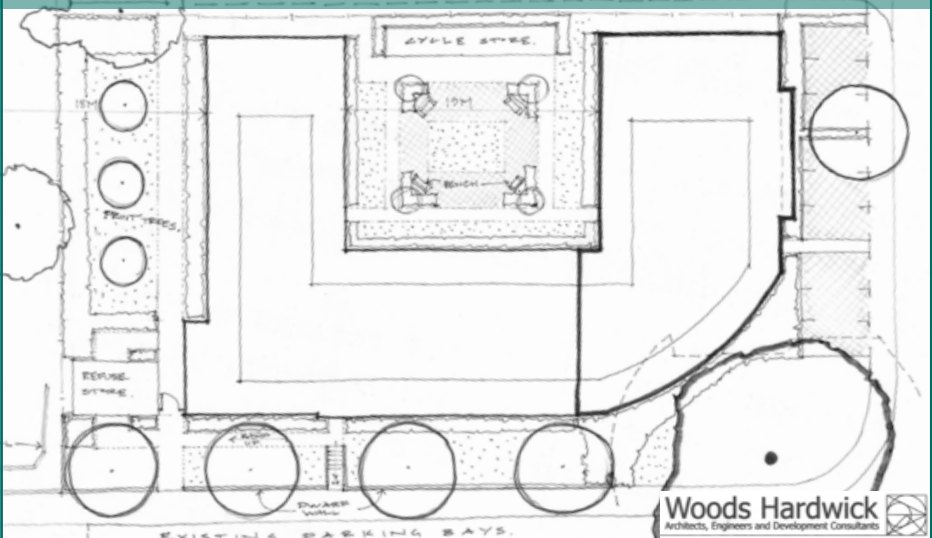
Pre-Application Proposals: August 2017



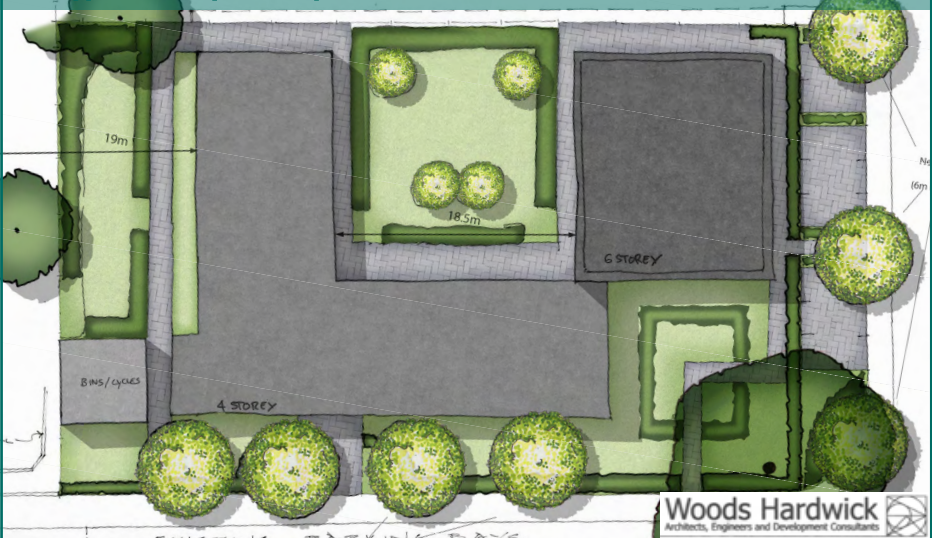
Pre-Application Proposals: February 2018



Pre-Application Proposals: March 2018



Pre-Application Proposals: April 2018



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Recent Pre-Application Stage Development Proposals

The current design team sought to address the Officer's and Design Review Panel's previous concerns and to pursue an agreement from the Council to the proposed siting, bulk, height and massing, as part of the iterative process in which the applicant had worked closely with the Local Planning Authority over a 15-month period in order to realise a design which makes the optimum use of this sustainably-located brownfield site.

A second Design Review Panel was also undertaken. The Panel agreed that the scheme was supportable 'in general', and noted that the massing and the relationships with the neighbours were improved. The Panel also made some more detailed comments regarding the elevational design; however given that the design of the building is to be a Reserved Matter, this could be refined further at this future stage.

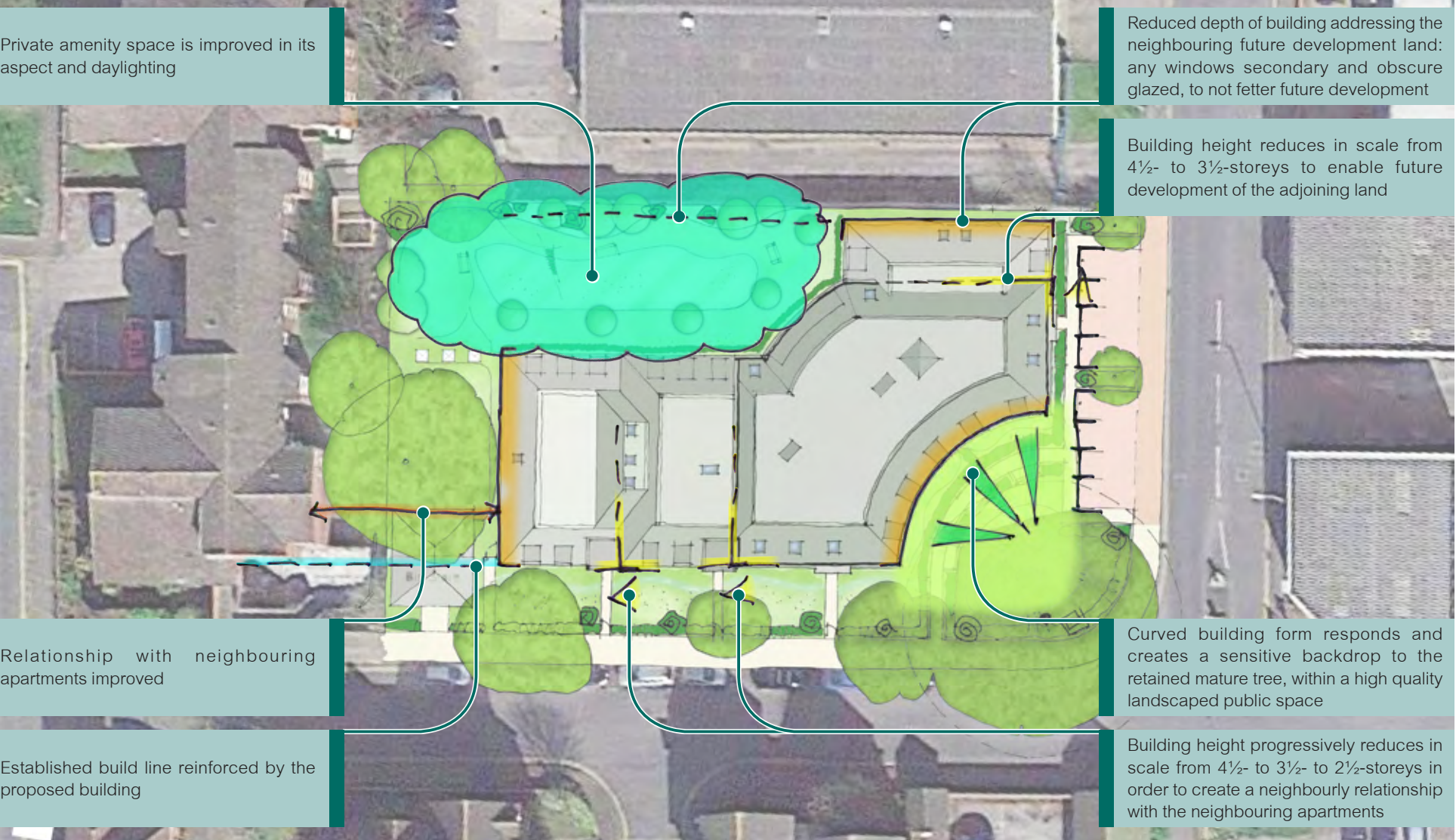
At the Panel's suggestion, the upper floors of the crescent are now shown with dormers rather than velux windows; this approach was considered appropriate in this location as the building form is set back off the road junction and roads, with the upper floor windows looking onto the landscaping below, rather than towards adjacent development. The crescent is pivotal to the building's design, with each wing stepping down in scale and elevational detailing. The wings of the building are aligned to the adjacent roads but set back to provide private landscaping as well as the parking on to North Street.

This illustrative scheme offers an appropriate single area of communal open space to the rear for residents, which has an open westerly aspect to benefit from midday, afternoon and evening sunshine.

Pre-Application Concept Proposals: September 2018



Pre-Application Stage Illustrative Development Proposals: September 2018



Pre-Application Concept Proposals: September 2018



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Design Principles and Concepts

“The design principles and concepts that have been applied to the proposed development”

The submitted illustrative development proposals have been designed to address the issues raised in the course of the pre-application stages and the Design Panel reviews.

On the layout accompanying this Outline Planning Application (reproduced right), the apartment building has been designed to ensure the retention of the prominent tree in the corner of the site, reinforcing this distinctive landmark at the North Street/Weldale Street junction. It has also been designed to respond to the three storey residential developments to the west and south, in particular to avoid any overbearing or overshadowing. It is anticipated that the principles incorporated in this layout would be taken forward to any subsequent Reserved Matters application when the Outline Permission is granted approval.

The layout demonstrates how west-facing amenity space can be provided as part of a development proposal: with a landscaped area around the retained Norway Maple tree creating a green relief in the urban street scene, and an area of landscaped open space behind the building providing a more tranquil location shielded from traffic noise by the surrounding buildings.

Where the rear of the illustrative building faces north, it is suggested that the few apartments that aspect in this direction could be provided with projecting bays to increase the levels of daylight and sunlight visible within these apartments.

Safety & Security

In order to minimise crime and antisocial behaviour, active frontages address, overlook and passively police the public realm, and front doors to the dwellings address these surrounding spaces. The private garden is made secure and defensible by ensuring that where possible it adjoins other gardens and cannot be accessed directly from the public realm.

The high quality of design applied to the development is an important factor in encouraging residents to have a sense of ownership and responsibility towards their locality, and contributing to the local sense of community. High quality surface treatments and landscaping will establish ‘ownership’ of the spaces and make clear the expected modes of behaviour within each space as well as increasing the possibility that an intruder’s presence will attract attention.

The vehicular and pedestrian movement principles for the development and the for streets which it addresses provide for convenient accessibility without compromising security: access space has been carefully planned in order to maximise its quality and vitality, minimising any opportunity to commit crime and to evade view or capture; and the pedestrian accesses utilises the same spaces as the vehicular routes along Weldale Street and North Street, these routes being well overlooked, straight and short. Car parking is a particular concern in respect of security and crime, and therefore proximity to and visibility from the owner’s individual dwelling has been maintained as much as possible in the parking design.

In addition, more physical methods of reducing crime and improving security will be incorporated into the proposals, by means of secure walls, fences and gates, particularly to the private garden space.



Development Proposals



Dwelling Mix and Tenure

These illustrative proposals provide for 47 apartments, with a variety of accommodation types, layouts and floor areas:

■ 1-bed apartments:	15
■ 2-bed apartments:	27
■ 3-bed apartments:	5
■ Total:	47

For details of the proposed tenure please refer to the accompanying Planning Statement.

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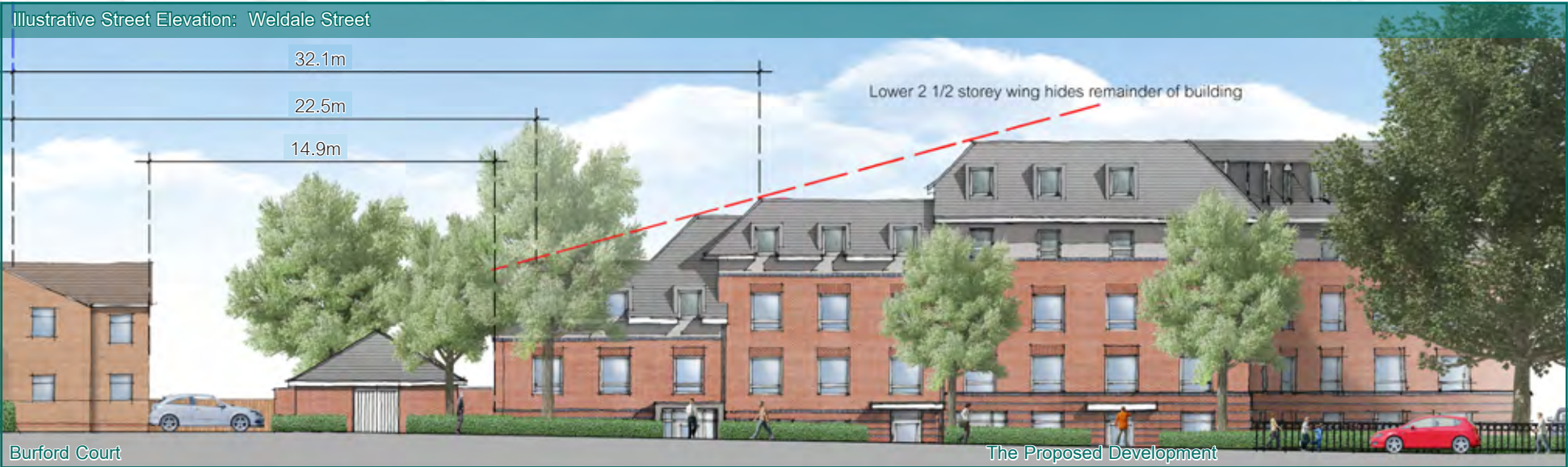
Building Heights

The building has been located on the the natural north-south slope, and in doing so is at approximately the same ground level as the neighbouring 3-storey apartments (Burford Court). The proposed building is 14.9m from Burford Court at its closest point, with no habitable room windows aspecting towards the neighbouring properties; thereby protecting the privacy and amenity of the neighbouring residents.

The Weldale Street elevation (reproduced below) is designed to be 2½ storeys in height at its western end, with a ridge level which is equivalent to Burford Court. The building steps progressively in height to 3½ storeys and to 4 storeys, with a fifth floor hidden in the roof void within the crescent at the corner of North Street and Weldale Street. When the building form is viewed from the west of Weldale Street the lower roof form will visually hide the higher storey height, which is separated by appropriate distances.

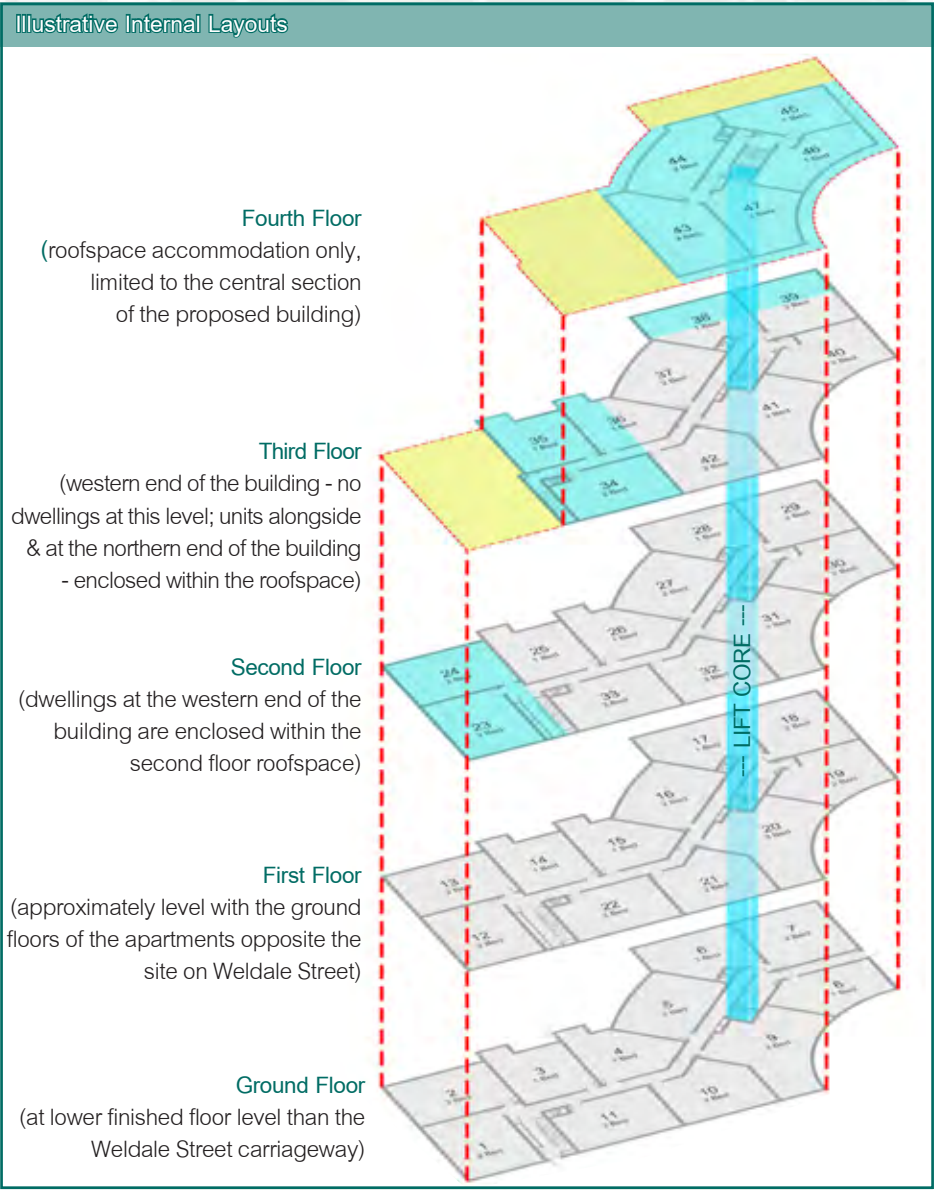
The Norway Maple remains the most prominent element to this proposed townscape, and the height of the proposed building is significantly lower than this retained high quality tree.

The North Street elevation is stepped down by 1 floor to 3½ storeys adjacent to the ambulance station, with its internal outlook having already been considered to not require any habitable windows in this flank elevation. In addition, this view of the proposed development (reproduced bottom) demonstrates that the overall height of the proposed building is equivalent to the 3-storey Stratheden Place apartments, located on the opposite side of Weldale Street at 20.8m distance.



Internal Layouts

The internal arrangement of the apartments has been considered to avoid solely north facing apartments. Although detailed design in subject to a Reserved Matters Application, it is important to demonstrate an appropriate outlook is achieved in the proposed building form. A typical floor plan demonstrates how the internal sub-division of the building is possible and illustrates the orientation of individual dwellings.



Elevational Design

Although the elevational details are subject to a Reserved Matters Application, it is important to demonstrate that the details are considered to justify the scale and form of the building. The crescent has evolved through the requirement to respond to the road junction and the tree and therefore its elevational design is established through its form. Typical of crescent architecture is symmetry and rhythm seen on historical crescents, of which there are many examples in Reading. Appropriate void to mass proportions of window apertures and facing brickwork is key, and decreasing window proportions are important to reinforce the architectural language.

Elevational detailing on the ground floor is punctuated with a darker contrast facing brick, with horizontal banding to create a weightier plinth. The floor to ceiling windows then reduce in depth higher up the building, with the top floor having smaller windows inserted into a banding of a light grey facing brick, suggesting a cornice under the roof eaves.

The elevations proposed are a contemporised response to the historic proportions with its detailing, materials, colours and application.

The Illustrative Development - viewed from the southeast



The Illustrative Development - viewed from the northeast



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Access to the Development

“The approach to access, and how issues relating to access to the development have been addressed”

The apartments shown on the illustrative proposals anticipate pedestrian access from both Weldale Street and North Street: the ground floor apartments facing the street are provided with individual front doors, and the upper storeys are provided with two access cores. The proposed car parking is shown being accessed from North Street.

There is no direct vehicular access into the site proposed, but the eight parking spaces serving the development will be directly accessed from North Street, where the current access into the site is located. This level of parking provision has been previously agreed at pre-application stage with Reading Borough Council due to the application site’s highly sustainable location close to the town centre and major public transport hubs.

The illustrative scheme would require storage for 26 cycles, based on Reading Borough Council’s standard of 0.5 spaces for one/two-bedroom dwellings and 1 space for three-bedroom dwellings. This would be provided within a secure cycle store, part of the free-standing structure which also incorporates the bin storage for the development.

The refuse storage has been located close to the Weldale Street frontage to facilitate convenient collection by refuse operatives whilst being convenient for residents to use.

Access Consultation

The previous pre-application advice indicated concerns about the level of car parking, cycle storage and bin storage. The subsequent pre-application enquiry identified the appropriate parking standard applicable to a site in this location and the necessary requirements for cycle storage. These standards have been incorporated in the current proposals.



The Illustrative Development - viewed from the southwest



Conclusion

We are proud to present this development for your consideration, which will provide 47 new homes, the tenure of which is addressed in the accompanying Planning Statement. The development has been planned positively in order to embody high quality and inclusive design, following a considered appraisal of the identity of the surrounding settlement and the site’s setting, and will provide a final completion to the existing surrounding development and will be complimentary to the adjoining dwellings. In the preparation of this application the development team has strived to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of the immediate area and has sought to integrate these proposals seamlessly into the existing suburban grain:

- It will deliver a significant quantum of new housing in a highly sustainable location and designed to a high standard.
- The design of the development will provide for a good residential environment with the retention of an existing Norway Maple tree, and the provision of associated open areas within the managed landscape and public realm.
- The scheme integrates with the neighbouring pattern of development and seeks to complete the development frontages along Weldale Street and North Street; whilst bridging its transitional location between the high-rise developments and the suburban neighbourhoods.
- The scheme has excellent access to very good public transport links as well as the services and facilities of Reading.

The scheme has been developed with considered regard to the previous pre-application responses and the Council’s policies and planning, providing a scheme of much needed smaller dwellings. These application proposals represent high quality, contextual design, of which Lochailort Thames Quarter Ltd, the Local Planning Authority and the residents of Reading can be rightfully proud.

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