



Heritage Statement

No. 1 Reading, 29 – 35 Station Road

Station Road Dev Co Ltd

Andmore Planning Ltd

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1. Introduction

- 1.1.1 This Heritage Statement has been prepared by Andmore Planning Ltd on behalf of Station Road Dev Co Ltd to accompany an application at 29 – 35 Station Road, for:

“Demolition of existing building and erection of replacement mixed use building comprised of hotel (Class C1), office (Class B1a) and flexible ground floor retail use (Classes A1, A2, A3, A4 and A5 use), with associated servicing from Garrard Street”.

- 1.1.2 The site is relatively small comprising an existing 1950s former office and retail building and an access yard to the rear off Garrard Street. The site covers an area of 0.09Ha and does not contain any designated or non-designated heritage assets. The site is also outside any Conservation Areas. However, there are nearby assets which the development could be considered as being within their setting. The building is considered a tall building being 77m tall measured from the Station Road footpath having a height of 121m AOD. This will accommodate 22 storeys with a gross external area of 9,964 sq m.
- 1.1.3 The site is identified in the Adopted RCAAP within the RC13(a) Station Area Cluster which allows for tall buildings in this part of the town. The Council also commissioned Entec UK Limited to complete the Reading Tall Building Strategy, January 2008. This has been further reviewed and an Update Note provided in 2018. The site being within the Station Hill cluster has been assessed in terms of townscape sensitivity and concluded in 2008 *“The large townscape scale, the absence of historic townscape features and the precedence for tall structures, all contribute to this area having a high capacity for the development of further tall buildings in terms of townscape character”*. The 2018 Update Note has since and recently confirmed *“Townscape sensitivity remains low. Planning permissions have continued to establish this as the primary opportunity for tall buildings in Reading”* (page 23 of the Update Note). The Council have taken the adopted policy through an Examination in Public and at the time considered any impacts on heritage assets by having a cluster of tall buildings in this location. The policy having been considered sound was formally adopted. The principle of tall buildings in this location has therefore been accepted by the Council.

1.1.4 The demolition of the existing building and its replacement is considered to provide public benefit given it has been vacant for many years and detracts from the streetscene and its wider context. The office space above the vacant shop units has most recently been used on a temporary basis as the site office for a nearby residential development at Garrard House. Now vacant this dilapidated building detracts from the town centre. This baseline position presents an unattractive building which does not contribute positively to the significance of the heritage assets surrounding the site. However, the new development would make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness supporting the aims of the Tall Building Strategy and the Reading Central Area Action Plan policies. The proposal provides an opportunity to improve the setting of the immediate heritage assets identified and others noted in this statement will be preserved.

2. Relevant Planning Policy

- 2.1.1 The full Development Plan has been considered in detail in the accompanying Planning Statement, as such it will not be repeated here. Instead, this section summarises those policies at a national and local level which are relevant to the application site and proposal.
- 2.1.2 Legislation relating to Heritage Assets notably listed buildings and conservation areas is contained in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Sections 16 and 66 of the Act place a duty on the decision maker to have special regard to the desirability of preserving listed buildings and their settings. Section 72 of the Act places similar duty on the decision maker with respect to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas.
- 2.1.3 Conservation Areas were introduced by the Civic Amenities Act 1967 and are defined as areas of “special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”.

2.2 National Planning Policy Framework

- 2.2.1 The latest version of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in July 2018 by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. The content of the document in respect of conserving and enhancing the historic environment remains largely unchanged from the 2012 version; and importantly in responding to the Consultation Draft of the new document, the Government stated that:

“The Government recognises the importance of the historic environment and has no intention to reduce, whether through the Framework or otherwise, the important protections that exist for it”.

- 2.2.2 Chapter 16 (Paragraphs 184-202) of the new NPPF deals with conserving and enhancing the historic environment with much emphasis on “significance” and defined in Annex 2. Paragraph 190 states that that:

“Local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence

and any necessary expertise. They should take this into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal."

2.2.3 Paragraph 190 advises that Local Authorities should take account of "the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness".

2.2.4 Paragraph 193 confirms that "great weight should be given to the asset's conservation" noting that the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. Furthermore, at paragraph 194, it notes that "any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated asset, should require clear and convincing justification".

2.2.5 Importantly, and carried over from the 2012 version of the NPPF, "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..." (paragraph 196).

2.2.6 Paragraph 200 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."

2.3 Local Planning Policy

2.3.1 The Development Plan relevant to this site is set out in the accompanying Planning Statement. The Core Strategy (Adopted January 2008 with alterations adopted January 2015), along with the Site and Detailed Policies Document (October 2012) and the Reading Central Area Action Plan (January 2009) remain the key policy documents. However, in March 2018 the Council submitted the Submission Draft Reading Borough Local Plan to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government to begin the public examination process. These draft policies are relevant, albeit the pre-application advice provided on 18th July 2018 (ref 180289/PREAPP) stated that they are "given no weight for development control purposes at this time".

- 2.3.2 Core Strategy Policy CS7 requires that new developments “must be of high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area in Reading in which it is located”. The policy goes on to set out a list of overarching urban design principles that developments must achieve, and proposals will be assessed against. The key criteria for heritage assets states that “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”.
- 2.3.3 Reading Central Area Action Plan (RCAAP) (2009) states that “tall buildings are defined as being 12 storeys or 36 metres of residential development”. Policy RC13i Tall Buildings Cluster relates to three separate areas, the cluster of relevance is the Station Area Cluster RC13a, having the station at the centre of the cluster to signify the status of the station area as a major mixed-use destination. Tall buildings in this area should, amongst other requirements, be located at the centre of the cluster, close to the station, and step down in height from that point towards the lower buildings at the fringes.
- 2.3.4 Chapter 4.2 of the draft new Local Plan deals with the heritage aspect of the Built and Natural Environment. Policies EN1-6 aim specifically to proactively conserve and enhance the historic environment and promote its enjoyment. These are:
- EN1: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment
 - EN2: Areas of Archaeological Significance
 - EN3: Enhancement of Conservation Areas
 - EN4: Locally Important Heritage Assets
 - EN5: Protection of Significant Views with Heritage Interest
 - EN6: New Development in a Historic Context

3. Heritage Assessment

- 3.1.1 In accordance with the national and local policies above and pre-application advice received on 18th July 2018 (ref 180289/PREAPP) the following buildings have been identified for further consideration:

Great Western House (Malmaison Hotel), Statue of Edward VIII, Queen Victoria Jubilee Statue, Town Council Chamber, Municipal Building Art Gallery, 11 – 15 Friar Street, St Laurence’s Church and Churchyard (including walls and piers), Forbury Gardens (Registered Park including The Mound, Maiwand War Memorial), 13 – 15 Station Road, Reading General Station and Queen Victoria Street.

- 3.1.2 Some of these buildings fall within the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area and require additional analysis. Furthermore, the Abbey Ruins as a Scheduled Monument have also been identified in the pre-application discussions as an asset requiring consideration. Each of these structures will be appropriately assessed in turn as they have been identified as within the Baseline Study Area, illustrated at Appendix A, that being a reasonable distance of 300m from the site. Other listed buildings have been identified within the assessment area. However as this is a dense town centre location with significant large buildings in the vicinity those assets have no visibility of the site so are considered outside the setting of the proposal. Those being:

35 Friar Street, 147 Friar Street, 154 Friar Street, 155 Friar Street, 67/68 Broad Street, 89 Broad Street, 99 Broad Street, 106/107 Broad Street, Palmer Memorial Hall, Quadrant Walls and Railings (Greyfriars Vicarage), The Mitre Inn, 1 & 2 Market Place, 13 -16 Market Place, 23-26 Market Place, 27 & 28 Market Place, 29-31 Market Place (The Coopers Public House), 32 Market Place, 33 & 34 Market Place (Trustees Bank), 48 & 49 Market Place, 50 & 51 Market Place, 10 Forbury Road (Walter Parsons Corn Stores), The Old Vicarage Municipal Buildings, The Former Police Station & Magistrates Courts, The School of Art Municipal Buildings, Small Town Hall, Concert Hall Municipal Buildings. All noted above being Grade II Listed.

- 3.1.3 Reading has a dense town centre that has evolved over the centuries with buildings from many eras present in this urban context. The town has seen considerable change and the

Station Hill Cluster of tall buildings is providing the opportunity to further enhance this part of the town. Station Road itself has significantly changed over the years with the most significant alteration recently being the recladding of Thames Tower in terracotta tiles along with its four-storey extension. Even listed buildings have been the subject to change and the Great Western Hotel, now Malmaison, opposite the site having received an entire new floor to the roof altering its appearance and proportions. Reading has aspirations for city status as supported by the Council's own vision of the future in "Reading 2020" and continues to grow.

- 3.1.4 In terms of the impact on the historic town centre Historic England has previously stated through consultation on similar schemes that they consider an additional tower would have little additional heritage impact to the Station Hill development cluster that already has planning permission. This is a clear indication that they, in assessing proposals for the site, accept the principle of a building of the scale proposed.
- 3.1.5 There are buildings assessed here cannot be seen in views from the Conservation Area. For example, Great Western House cannot be seen from Valpy Street nor Blagrove Street therefore the development could not possibly affect its setting when viewed from those streets within the Market Place Conservation Area. Similarly Greyfriars Church is so removed from the conservation area that there is no relevant connection between two heritage assets.
- 3.1.6 Within the study area there is one locally listed building, the former Rising Sun public house at 18 Forbury Road. The building is already contained and somewhat dwarfed by the significantly larger 1980s and 1990s office buildings, Tangent House and North Gate House on Valpy Street that wrap around it. There would be no impact on the public house by this proposal given the visibility of the site from this location.
- 3.1.7 The Market Place/London Street Conservation Area was designated in 1972 and extended in 1982. It is a heritage asset which contains a number of buildings that are listed, and also buildings of townscape merit, as well as many that are considered to be visually negative on the character and appearance of it. The area is relatively large in a generally linear fashion stretching from Forbury Road to the north, over the River Kennet and south to London Road. Therefore, this assessment considers the main area of influence towards the northern end of

the conservation area focussing around the Town Hall Square at the junction of Blagrove Street and Friar Street with the statue of Queen Victoria as its focal point.

- 3.1.8 The conservation area character appraisal notes key important views with those within the study area being along Friar Street looking east (away from the site) towards the statue and a further view looking south down Blagrove Street again away from the proposal site. The principle view to note from the conservation area is from Market Place looking north-west. The assessment of harm on the conservation area has been the subject of numerous reviews and confirmed in the Tall Building Strategy noting “*Any tall building development should consider the potential impact of tall buildings on views experienced within the Market Place.*” The Thames Tower as extended can be clearly seen above the buildings on the western corner of the Town Hall square similarly the Novotel Hotel is also apparent. The Station Hill development with the tallest tower in Block C will also be visible. This part of Reading has already undergone significant change with the new buildings now well underway. They have been designed not to detract from the views out of the conservation area but to compliment them. It is considered that the impact would be neutral on the conservation area.

Heritage assets in the setting of the site and within the Market Place Conservation Area and requiring additional analysis:

3.2 Queen Victoria Jubilee Statue Grade II

Architectural Description (Historic England Detailed List Description)

- 3.2.1 Facing down Blagrove Street. 1857. Sculptor George Simmonds, son of one of Reading’s notables. Large Carrara marble statue of the Queen Empress in commanding and appropriate attire. High plinth with moulded cornice and base on wide step which has red granite corner bollards. Inscription tablet facing Blagrove Street.

Setting

- 3.2.2 Being a statue set within a pedestrianised paved area the setting is considered in the round with views afforded to it from all angles. It is also surrounded by predominantly three to four storey buildings and given the height of the statue has the back drop of the existing buildings or where these are not present the longer views along Friar Street, Blagrove Street and Market Place. Its setting has been improved and the impact of the road network diminished in recent years.

Significance and assessment of harm

- 3.2.3 The statue is read at a street and pedestrian scale rather than as a larger building of architectural significance. While the paving of this area had reduced the impact of the road on the asset, the inclusion of street furniture and most recently the Reading Cycle Hire scheme docking station have detrimentally harmed the setting of the asset. The social, evidential and historic significance remains although these would be considered of low significance. The proposed tower would be visible above the corner buildings on Blagrove/Friar Street junction however those buildings would still provide the backdrop to the statue and as such the harm is considered neutral.

3.3 Town Council Chamber with Clock Tower Grade II*

Architectural Description (Historic England Detailed List Description)

- 3.3.1 Built in 1872-75 by Alfred Waterhouse. French Gothic style. 2 storeys and attic. 5 storey tower. Built in red and grey brick with terracotta ornaments. Tower placed to close vistas from Friar Street and Market Place. The whole is modest in scale and surprising in its use of the local materials, uncharacteristically 'soft' for Waterhouse. Tower is over entrance lobby. Corbelled polygonal buttresses at corners with finials and steep saddle back roof. Clock below belfry screen. Pointed arch entrance with shields and date in spandrels. To left the Council Chamber, 4 bays with slight break gabled to left. Paired lights in segmental headed recesses to ground floor. Tall lancets with label moulds and polychromed tympana over 2 light double transom windows which contain Waterhouse pink grisaille glass. Roundel with arms of Borough in gable below attic window. 1 gabled dormer. To right of tower the effect altered by removal of 2nd tower following war damage. Angled round to east, 3 storeys with modillion cornice to pierced parapet. 4 bays divided by diagonal buttresses; 2 light transomed windows in segmental headed recesses.

Setting

- 3.3.2 To the north and east are the further municipal buildings of the museum gallery and concert hall forming the larger group of buildings in the setting; these are considered to be strongly positive. To the south is St Lawrence's Church also being in the Conservation Area and is strongly positive to the setting of the asset. Immediately to the west is Blagrove Street which is a busy one-way street with parking bays either side abutting the asset on the eastern edge of the road. This is also used by bus services and is busy at all hours of the day, this is

strongly detrimental to the setting. In recent years the thoroughfare from Blagrove Street to the Market Place has been closed off and pedestrianised with the Queen Victoria Statue (Grade II) now more strongly associated with the asset. This arrangement of new public space is positive. The building is surrounded by the Conservation Area, buildings on the opposite side of the new pedestrianised area are outside the Conservation Area and are neutral to the setting.

Significance and assessment of harm

- 3.3.3 The Town Council has been present here since the construction of the building hence the importance of it being made from local materials. The building is still in use for its intentions and open to the public with access dependent on events. The social and evidential significance is therefore high with historic significance as moderate-high. The tower forms an important finishing feature in the streetscape but when viewed from the west and the south. The proposal will not appear within those views in terms of inter-visibility given it is the north west of the listed building with the townscape extending between the sites. The Site will appear in a view containing the Town Council Chamber when viewed from an angle from Market Place, however, this is similar to the tall buildings of the hotels on Friar Street and indeed the extended Thames Tower and the Station Hill development beyond. The impact on the significance of this heritage asset is considered neutral.

3.4 Municipal Building Art Gallery and Museum Grade II

Architectural Description (Historic England Detailed List Description)

- 3.4.1 1894 designed by a local architect (W R Howell) to fill corner between concert hall and earlier school of art (qv). Asymmetric design in Gothic style closely echoing the style of the concert hall. 2 storeys attic and basement. Dark blue brick with dark red brick and terracotta dressings. Sandstone plinth. Terracotta band over ground floor, the carved reliefs depicting history of Reading. Arcaded cornice continued right across. Projecting terracotta polygonal porch turret, heavy arcaded and decorated ground floor, gables over 1st floor windows. 3 bay gable to right matches entrance to concert hall (coped gable, poppy head saddlestone, arcaded band and polygonal corner buttresses); 2 attic lancets flanking statue of Queen Victoria in canopied niche, C13 style. 2 light and oculus windows on 1st floor, segmental headed on ground floor. Corner block polygonal, basically a projecting chamfered turret with steep saddleback roof and 3 extremely rich gabled French Renaissance dormers with C13

geometrical tracery. 1st floor blind with 3 canopied niches on corners. On ground floor 5 foiled lancets and a basement of segmental headed windows. Commemorative marble tablet on corner. Return to Valpy Street repeats Waterhouse and Lainson use of triangular section buttresses capped with pinnacles between bays. 5 bays. 1st floor blind, ground floor has 2-light and oculus pointed windows with gables over. Tiled roofs.

Setting

- 3.4.2 The setting of the asset is similar to the Town Council Chamber as it forms a strong grouping of buildings. However, the building is on the junction of Blagrove Street and Valpy Street which is a busy road junction which detrimentally impacts on the setting. On the opposite corner of the junction to the north is the new build replacement office which has altered the setting further since the demolition of the former 1970s office development and a new contemporary office building erected in its place. The buildings forming the group are strong in their identity as civic buildings using local materials with fine detailing. The more modern buildings to the east and west on both streets neutral to the setting given the relative heights and relationship with the Municipal cluster.

Significance and assessment of harm

- 3.4.3 The buildings are strong in their grouping, despite different architects and design, the style of high Victorian Gothic Revival with polychrome brickwork is characteristic of Reading at the time and the buildings are assessed as having a moderate architectural significance. This part of the Municipal Buildings is contained within a tight urban grain with similar heights of buildings surrounding it. The inter-visibility with the Site is limited given the scale and proportions of Valpy Street and its position in relation to the proposed development, it will not be possible to obtain a view of the proposed scheme from within that part of the conservation area. Given the location of the surrounding building the proposal is assessed as likely having a neutral impact on the setting and significance.

3.5 St Laurence's Church and Churchyard Grade I

Architectural Description (Historic England Detailed List Description)

- 3.5.1 Structure Norman to C15 with excessive restorations of 1867. Flint with ashlar quoins and dressings. Principal feature tile C15 3 stage tower closing vista to north of Market Place - crenelated parapet, octagonal chequered clasping buttresses with strings, capped by

crenulation (spirelets removed); sundial to south dated 1727, main entrance to west. Tower built 1458. Tiled roofs with centre valley (nave and north aisle). 1+4 bay nave, 2 very wide chancel bays. Nave south wall has small Norman window at west end and a late C12 round headed doorway with waterleaf capitals; other openings restored Decorated style.

Setting

- 3.5.2 Again, forming part of the grouping of the Municipal Buildings to the north but also with the registered Forbury Gardens and Abbey Ruins to the east these are considered strongly positive to its setting given the walls extending along The Forbury (road). The Conservation Area setting is important; particularly when viewed from the south. The setting of the western end of the listed building has been improved following the pedestrianisation of the end of Friar Street. The Forbury however is strongly detrimental to the setting given the number of buses and other vehicles with the traffic calming and restricting road works in the vicinity. The proposal being beyond the Town Hall square has limited visual association with these church buildings.

Significance and assessment of harm

- 3.5.3 The square tower is a prominent feature on the listed building forming an important element of the Market Place Conservation Area composition. The church, particularly the tower viewed externally, is a fine example of mid-15th Century ecclesiastical architecture. The 19th Century restorations retained the appearance of predominantly flint facades with ashlar dressings that correspond with the abbey buildings to the east of the asset. Further alterations are apparent due to war damage which includes rebuilding of the western windows and the removal of the spirelets. The building is still in use as an Anglican parish church and can be assessed as having a moderate social, evidential and historical significance level with a moderate to high architectural significance. The main views of the church are those afforded from the south and west where the proposed development would not be considered directly visible of the listed building. Views of the proposal would be available from the former junction of Friar Street and Market Place although the tower of the church would be so prominent in the foreground that the proposal is not considered to be detrimental noting that the setting in that view has already been affected by modern tall buildings noted on Friar Street. The towers of the Town Hall itself form the immediate

setting of the frontage and church tower to such a degree that the proposals impact is diminished and would have a neutral impact on the setting of this asset.

- 3.5.4 In summary of the buildings within the Conservation Area, it is clear that the proposed development will form a satisfactory part of the emerging tall building cluster around the railway station and will provide very significant benefits such as bringing a derelict site back into use and demolishing an unattractive building that has a negative impact on the townscape. The specific position of the development is such as to have a relatively small effect on the northernmost part of the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area closest to the site. The proposed scheme will preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area as well as preserving and enhancing the setting of nearby listed buildings.

Heritage assets in the setting of the site not within a Conservation Area:

3.6 Great Western House (Malmaison Hotel) Grade II

Architectural Description (Historic England Detailed List Description)

- 3.6.1 One of the first Railway Hotels in Britain. 1844 Italianate. 3 storeys and basement. Stucco with rusticated quoins. Ground floor channelled. 5x3 bays divided by pilasters supporting an entablature and boldly projecting modillion cornice. Glazing bar sash windows with architraves. Balustraded balcony, frieze and cornice to 1st floor windows, centre with pediment. 2nd floor windows with bracket cornice. Central projecting portico with full Doric order and paired columns. 2 bay canted extension to right in matching style. North front has central bowed 3 light bay with cornice over on ground floor. High panelled parapet over cornice. Later 4 storey extension to left with carriage entry. Moulded coping to parapet. 2+1 bays. Modern extension to south. Similarities with Royal Station Hotel at Slough suggest I K Brunel as architect or one of his assistants. Balustraded area to street with heavy balusters. Curved to station approach corner.

Setting

- 3.6.2 To the north and west are Station Road and Blagrove Road, both of which are extremely busy routes and considered to have a strong detrimental impact on its setting. To the east and south are extensions to the hotel which have affected the setting in a moderate detrimental way. In addition to the description above, the listed building also now has an

additional storey added to the roof in the form of a mansard style extension. This together with those either side have changed the scale, proportion and massing of the asset to no longer being of a domestic scale. However, the prominent corner location allows a strong visible connection with the station buildings for which its use was intended. The main station entrance has since been moved westwards away from the original station buildings which would have housed the ticket office and entrances. Those buildings are now a public house and arguably the human connection between station entrance and the former Great Western House has already been interrupted by the construction of Thames Tower. The relationship has therefore already been eroded. The physical importance of the location of hotel and station would remain unchanged with a tall building opposite on Station Road.

Significance and assessment of harm

- 3.6.3 Despite the extensions the listed building is still in use as a hotel to which much of the reason for listing is attributed given its strong links to the railway. The extensions result in an architectural significance at a low to moderate level with a moderate level for social, historic and evidential significance. The inter-visibility between the sites has been carefully considered given they are opposite each other on the same street. In assessing the impact of the proposed development on the heritage asset it is very important to note the existing structures, the proximity and the relationship between the two. The existing building on the application site already presents a six-storey structure built up to the back edge of the pavement. There are also further seventh storey structures to the rear of the building in the form of lift over-runs and stair core access towers. The blank north elevation of the existing building is considered to be a negative contributor to the surrounding streetscene and detracts from the character of the town centre.
- 3.6.4 The effect on the special architectural and historic interest is reduced by the separation of the site by Station Road itself. Therefore, there is no direct juxtaposition given this separation. Great Western House has been considerably altered over time and while retaining special historic interest, its special architectural interest has been diminished.
- 3.6.5 Views westwards along Blagrove Street are already dominated by Thames Tower separating the station from the hotel. The most prominent view of the hotel is of its façade along Station Road where its architectural characteristics are retained and are least affected by its own additional roof storey and extensions to either end.

3.6.6 In 2010 planning permission was granted for a 22-storey building for 103 residential units. Similarly, there was also a retail unit proposed at the ground level which would have had very similar impact assessments considered acceptable in relation to the heritage assets nearby and particularly Great Western House. Therefore, this application is not introducing a whole new concept of development rather it is a replacement of a significantly sized building and considered to be an improvement over the previously permitted design. The additional height above the existing building is not viewed as causing any additional harm to the setting of the listed building in a similar way to that already approved and indeed also the increase in height and recladding of Thames Tower adjacent. Although the 2010 planning permission has now expired the heritage position has not changed since its determination. It is important to note that the scheme does not intervene physically with any heritage asset's site or curtilage and when considered from the street elevations does not propose to encroach further into the public realm. The lower levels of the proposal add an interest and activity with the retail unit fronting Station Road opposite the heritage asset. The strong corner entrance for the hotel floors above, together with the lobby area at first floor, provide a positive feature in a similar way to the corner of Great Western House presenting itself towards the railway station. Both these features emphasise the social and historical connectivity between the railway buildings. The proposal is therefore considered to have the potential to enhance the setting of the heritage asset given the existing building could be seen as negatively impacting on it in its present form.

3.7 Statue of Edward VII statue on roundabout Grade II

Architectural Description (Historic England Detailed List Description)

3.7.1 1902 to commemorate Coronation. Sculptor: George Edward Wade. Large bronze statue of the King in Coronation robes. High polished granite plinth with Ionic corner scroll balusters and re-entrant cornice.

Setting

3.7.2 Similar to the Queen Victoria Statue this statue is considered in the round with views afforded to it from all angles. It also forms the focal point for the main road roundabout serving the northern end of Station Road and Blagrove Street. Given the height of the statue has the back drop of the existing buildings or where these are not present the longer views along Friar Street, Blagrove Street and from the new station plaza. Its setting has been

improved by the closing of Station Hill and the impact of the road network diminished in recent years however the immediate setting is strongly detrimental to the statue.

Significance and assessment of harm

- 3.7.3 The statue is read at a street and pedestrian level scale rather than larger building architectural significance. The numerous buses and taxis that use this part of the road network to access the station area have detrimentally harmed the asset. Despite the statue forming the roundabout when first erected there are now road signs also on the roundabout which diminish the significance architecturally. The social, evidential and historic significance remains although these would be considered of low significance. The proposed tower would still provide the backdrop to the statue when viewed from the north east, but the improved appearance of the proposal will improve the setting and as such considered positive impact.

3.8 11- 15 Friar Street (North side) Grade II

Architectural Description (Historic England Detailed List Description)

- 3.8.1 About mid C18. 3 storeys. 2 narrow bays. Silver grey brick headers and red brick dressings in about equal proportion. Small brick block cornice and parapet. Band at 2nd floor level. Tiled roof, modern shopfront, 1st floor windows have segmental heads and have been shortened. 2nd floor window sashes in flush moulded surrounds (upper sashes with glazing bars). Included for group value.

Setting

- 3.8.2 Located on the busy main thoroughfare acting as the east-west axis of the town, this part of Friar Street retains its activity despite the pedestrianised improvements nearby previously linking it to the Market Place. Bus routes on this section of the one-way system (heading west) dominate with numerous bus stops on the southern side of the street which is considered strongly detrimental to the setting. The group value of these building provide the setting for one another expected from a town centre terrace of shops with accommodation above.

Significance and assessment of harm

- 3.8.3 The ground floor frontages have been lost over a number of years and replaced with unsympathetic alterations although commonplace in this part of the town centre noting the

uses in the area predominantly relating to night time entertainment with three of the buildings having been amalgamated to create one large bar. The significance relates to the group value of having retained the upper floor facades in an area that had seen many structures of this age demolished. Although the height of the proposal is significant in terms of the changing skyline of Reading the inter-visibility is only perceived from far reaching views when the buildings would be in the foreground if viewed from the east. However, this is not to the detriment of the buildings and other more prominent buildings, such as the hotels further along Friar Street play a greater part in the setting. Given the separation afforded between the buildings by those on Station Road to the rear there will be no direct views between the sites and therefore not within each other's setting.

3.9 Forbury Gardens Registered Parks and Gardens Grade II

Architectural Description (Historic England Detailed List Description)

- 3.9.1 The Forbury Garden lies at the north-east corner of Reading town centre, between the C12 St Lawrence's church to the west and St James' church (Pugin 1840) to the east, overlooked by Reading Gaol to the east of this. The 2ha site is largely enclosed by a low brick and flint wall, in places still punctuated by tall piers to give a castellated effect. It is bounded to the north by the dual carriageway Ring Road, to the east by the path from Abbot's Walk to St James' church and beyond this the ruined remains of the Abbey, and to the south by Abbot's Walk at the east end, becoming at the west end The Forbury which also curves north alongside the west boundary. The landform is largely level, with the prominent raised earthwork of Forbury Hill adjacent to the north boundary. The setting is urban, with St Lawrence's churchyard to the west, and views of the west end of St James' church to the east, together with views of the rebuilt Abbey gateway adjacent to the south. The remaining Abbey ruins stand to the south-east of the Garden. The ground around them, also laid out in the mid to late C19, runs down to the River Kennet to the south.

Setting

- 3.9.2 The gardens have retained some connectivity with some of the older buildings and uses that surround them such as to the abbey ruins, the gatehouse and St Lawrence Church. However, the busy dual carriageway to the northern boundary, although separated by the garden's perimeter walling is highly detrimental. The replacement of a number of 1950s to 1970s office blocks have occurred over recent years, notably those on The Forbury and most

recently the replacement of the Metal Box building to the north. Those developments were considered to have neutral impact despite their strong visible relationship.

Significance and assessment of harm

- 3.9.3 Some glimpses could be afforded of the proposal from areas furthest from it to the east particularly in the winter months given the larger trees at the western end of the gardens and those in the church yard adjacent. However, there is significant distance and also large buildings that prevent the inter-visibility being eroded such as those on Blagrove Street and especially One Valpy, the 8/9 storey office on the corner of Valpy Street and The Forbury. The significance of the gardens is strongly retained and having a social and evidential significance at a moderate to high level. This significance is not diminished by the proposed development.

3.10 Maiwand War Memorial within Forbury Gardens Grade II

Architectural Description (Historic England Detailed List Description)

- 3.10.1 1886. Sculptor George Simmonds. Casters Young and Co, Pimlico; terracotta pedestal Wheeler Bros. Kilns, solely supervised by the sculptor. 3 times life-size cast iron statue of an enraged lion courant weighing 16 tons. Rectangular pilastered plinth records the names of the dead.

Setting

- 3.10.2 Similar to the setting of the gardens to which it forms one of the focal points towards the centre.

Significance

- 3.10.3 Social and historical significance remains at a high level given its intended status and reasoning as a war memorial. Its setting is more immediate with the gardens forming the context rather than any other buildings or structures. Given the statue is set within the garden grounds the impact on this significance has been assessed as neutral given the gardens are surrounded by other larger buildings and the offices on The Forbury between the sites in terms of inter-visibility.

3.11 13 -15 Station Road Grade II

Architectural Description (Historic England Detailed List Description)

- 3.11.1 Probably circa 1903 and by Joseph Morris. Similar exuberant mixture of Baroque Art Nouveau and Flemish styles as Nos 17-27 (odd) qv. Very elaborate. 3 storeys and attic. Red and yellow glazed brick with terracotta enrichment to front only. Tiled roofs. 2 bays, tripartite sash windows. Bracketed oriel on 2nd floor to left. Enriched crows step gables of differing heights. Modern shop front.

Setting

- 3.11.2 To the east is Station Road which a very busy thoroughfare forming the main north-south axis for the town centre. Following redistribution of the bus network a new covered bus stop and associated street furniture are now located immediately to the front of the listed building. These together with the number of buses standing in front of the building have a negative impact on the setting. Being mid-terraced the buildings both sides to north and south are of varying age and styles; this is not uncommon, and their impact is assessed as neutral.

Significance and assessment of harm

- 3.11.3 The building is not considered a rare example of its type as noted by a similar building further north on Station Road and the ground floor retail unit has removed any original features and now incorporates modern frontage and advertisements. The façade that contains the ornamentation as described above is in the same plane as the proposed development. This will not change save for the material and height, the rhythm of the street will be retained. The use of the building as retail with office above likely the same as when first constructed however its significance architecturally, socially, evidentially and historically is considered low. The impact on this significance has been assessed as neutral given the buildings between the sites in terms of inter-visibility.

3.12 Main Building of Reading General Station also now known as the Three Guineas public house Grade II

Architectural Description (Historic England Detailed List Description)

- 3.12.1 1865-67, architect Mr Lane (Chief Engineer of the GWR Co). Enlargement and remodelling of I K Brunel's original station of circa 1840. Italianate details. 2 storey symmetrical main building of buff brick from Coalbrookdale with Bath stone dressings, rusticated quoins. 10 bays wide, slight break to centre 4. Frieze, moulded cornice and blocking course, the

projecting centre having console brackets to the cornice and the blocking course raised as solid pediment. The ground floor of the centre break has guilloche frieze and panelled pilasters with wreath caps flanking the windows and doorways. Cornices on console brackets over 1st floor windows, with triangular and segmental pediments over those in centre break. Canopy across ground floor. Hipped slate roof, chimneys removed. Pleasant central cupola, which has round headed lights and bracket eaves to pyramidal roof with finial. Canopy extends over ground floor extensions on both sides, about 12 bays to left and 7 to right.

Setting

- 3.12.2 Surrounding the building on three sides is the modern railway station buildings most recently to the west is the new concourse entrance and pedestrian bridge. That entrance dominates the listed building however was considered acceptable at the time of the application and subject to listed building consent. The street in front of the station building has been closed off and a new public square created which has a positive impact on the setting. Detrimental to the setting is the 1980's former main entrance and retail concourse to the south east. That building together with the extended and re-clad Thames Tower to the south could be considered negative influences on the setting yet the extension to Thames Tower gaining permission within recent years. The setting from the north is only perceived at the ground floor level given the presence of the platform roof abutting the main building.

Significance and assessment of harm

- 3.12.3 Views from the listed building from the north, east and west are not apparent further than the immediate platform. Therefore, the harm to the building from those views are removed. The inter-visibility therefore only affects the front elevation as direct views of the proposal would be afforded to the south. However, the setting of the listed building is read in the context of the larger massing of Thames Tower which would be in the foreground of its setting and the views to the proposal would be partial as only the north eastern corner of the proposal would be viewed from the front of the listed building. This is the same as the existing building albeit at a lower height than proposed given the footprint of the proposal in that location is the same. That corner of the existing building and its corresponding northern façade presents a negative impact to the listed buildings; whereas the proposal seeks to

provide activity and modernised elevations to work alongside the neighbouring new buildings and nearby listed buildings. Thames Tower has also undergoing extensive alterations including new facades, squaring off the corners and an increase to its overall height. With these facts considered the proposed development has been assessed as having a positive impact on the setting and significance of the listed station building.

3.13 Queen Victoria Street Odds and evens Grade II

Architectural Description (Historic England Detailed List Description)

- 3.13.1 Probably by Joseph Morris. Dutch gabled free Baroque style. 3 1/2 storeys, yellow brick and terracotta with dividing Ionic pilasters. Dentil cornice. Pilasters to dormers, broken pediments above. An elongated pattern of shallow bays to 1st and 2nd floors 4:2:1:1:1:3. Mullion and transom window to bays, sashes with architraves (and pediments on 1st floor) to rest. Modern shopfronts, retaining cornice to fascia and scroll brackets to pilasters, only one shop retains pre-war shopfront.

Setting

- 3.13.2 The street is well contained having retained both east and west elevations creating a streetscene as a singular whole piece of architecture. At four stories the street has the feeling of enclosure and robustness that resists interaction with the buildings at either end outside its immediate setting (Station Road and Friar Street to the north and Broad Street to the south).

Significance

- 3.13.3 The architectural significance is considered high given its degree of completeness at the upper levels above ground floor where shopfronts have been inserted. Social and evidential significance is moderate to high with varying uses at ground and upper floors but generally town centre uses as would be expected. The street is not truly aligned to Station Road to the north with the axis of the two roads changing at the junction with Friar Street. However, the inter-visibility at the northern end is direct as the Site can be seen when viewed from the eastern side of Queen Victoria Street. However, the other tall buildings already serve as the distant backdrop such as with Thames Tower which will be joined by the high-rise developments of Station Hill. The strength of the uniformity of the heritage asset as a

complete architectural composition resists impact from buildings outside the street. This part of the town centre has always comprised higher densities of buildings and at a variety of heights. The harm to this asset is considered neutral.

- 3.13.4 Further afield are the Greyfriars Church and the Abbey Ruins with Reading Prison to its north. These are considered of significant distance and with the scale and proportions of the immediate street context and the proposal, it will not impact on those heritage assets. In any case a brief review follows.

3.14 Greyfriars Church Grade I

Architectural Description (Historic England Detailed List Description)

- 3.14.1 Said to be the most complete surviving example of Franciscan architecture in England, and in use again as a church. The first site (1255-59) being unsatisfactory, the present church was built 1285 plus, and ready by 1311. It served as Town Bridewell during the C18 and was only restored circa 1863 by the Borough Surveyor (W H Woodman). Built of squared knapped flints with stone plinth, dressings and buttresses. Tiled roof swept down over aisles with small vents. 3 bay nave, large transept (added to church by Woodman, probably incorrectly), chancel removed after the Reformation and east chancel arch blocked. Gable over now carries Woodman's triple arched belfry. The nave has segmental headed 3 light windows of plain decorated style and an extremely fine west window of 5 lights, decorated style with reticulated tracery. The transept has 2 bays each side of main vessel, each with plain 'Y' tracery, the north and south windows 4-light in Decorated style.

Setting

- 3.14.2 This asset is on the edge of the assessment area and has a context not related to the Site but distinct given the distances involved and the buildings between the two. Its setting is dominated by the main road network and significantly by the roundabout above the IDR and Friar Street. The Station Hill developments will create a break in the setting yet still be set behind the recent developments on Friar Street.

Significance and assessment of harm

- 3.14.3 The architectural, historical, evidential and social significance is high with the site still being in use as intended after nearly 800 years. The proposed scheme does not seek to develop land that has a contextual significance to the church and the categories of significance would be maintained.

3.15 Abbey Ruins (Scheduled Monument)

Architectural Description (Historic England Detailed List Description)

- 3.15.1 Reading Abbey is an excellent example of a medieval monastic complex, one of few such sites in Berkshire. The ruined abbey buildings survive well, standing almost to their original height. The complete Abbey site is well documented, both historically and archaeologically, and there is still considerable potential for the survival of archaeological material within its confines.

Setting

- 3.15.2 This Scheduled Monument is set within gardens beyond the buildings along The Forbury and Abbott's Walk. The buildings have connections to the Forbury Gardens given remains of other parts of the abbey such as the gatehouse. To the east adjoining is the Reading Prison wall which has a negative detrimental impact on its setting. Similarly, to the west is the large office building built over the main abbey church also creating a negative impact.

Significance

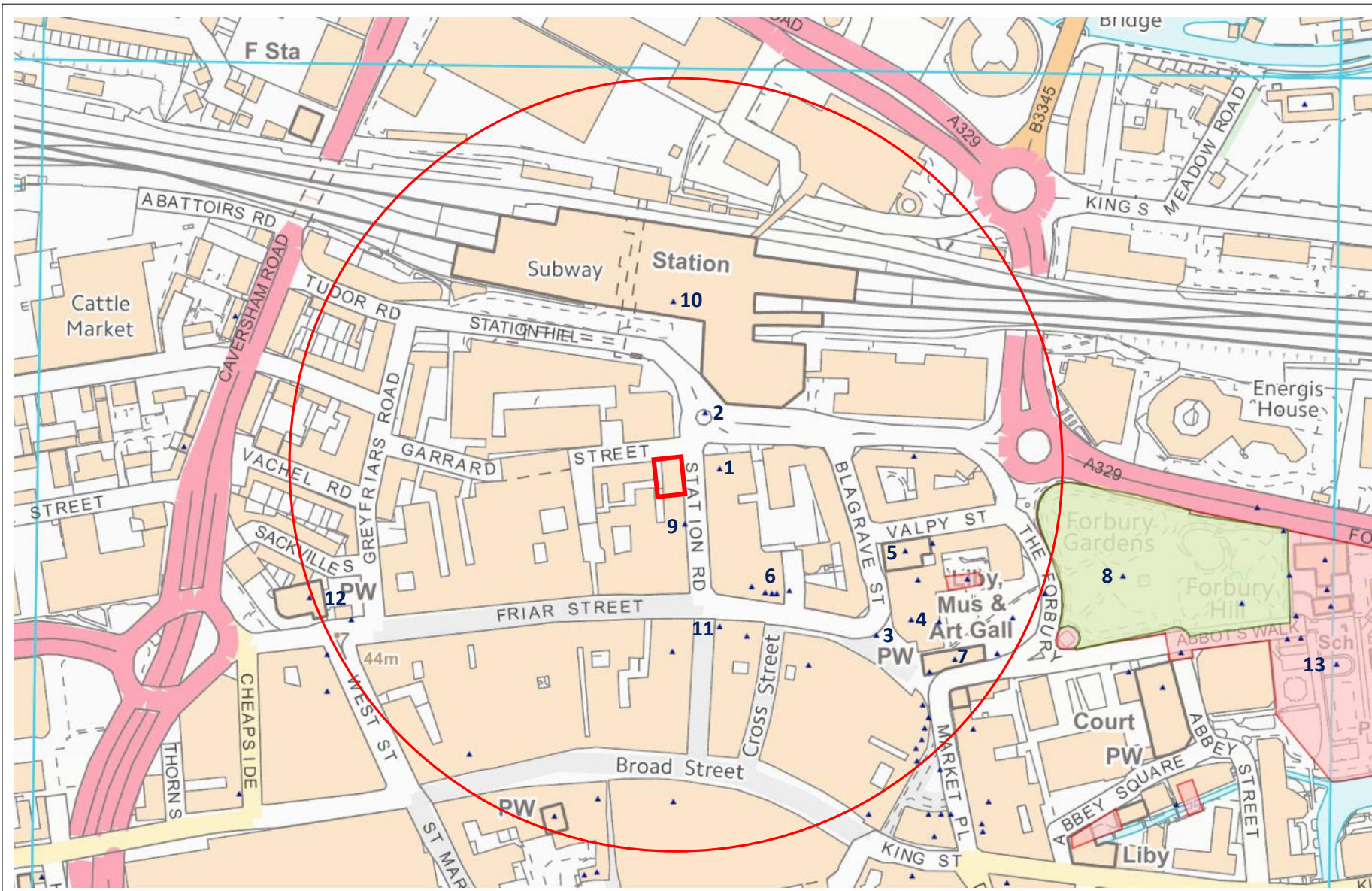
- 3.15.3 This is a significant distance from the Site and while the historic and evidential significance is high, the proposed development would not impact unduly and is considered neutral to the Scheduled Monument.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1.1 The above assessments of individual assets within an appropriate study area has been completed to support the submission. This is in line with the NPPF guidance of describing the significance of the assets, their setting and an assessment of the development's potential to cause harm to those assets. The proposed scheme will not develop on land that includes a heritage asset. It will not intervene with the fabric of any listed building, the nearest being the former Great Western House (Malmaison Hotel) nor does it encroach into any curtilage of a heritage asset.
- 4.1.2 This Statement assesses the proposal's potential for harm with regard to the increased height of the building from 6/7 stories to 22 stories. The site is seen within the context of other major applications for tall buildings in this part of the town centre. These include Thames Tower adjacent, which is now complete and has secured an additional four storeys to its height; and Station Hill development to the west which having had reserved matters approved is being implemented. Therefore, the setting and appearance of the nearest heritage assets has already been affected by these new developments and it is likely that additional height and bulk will be forthcoming when the rest of the station area is developed.
- 4.1.3 The areas around the nearest heritage assets has for many years been a mix of uses at various heights within this denser part of the town centre and the setting therefore has always comprised closely related buildings in terraces rather than standalone structures. The site is considered brownfield and the reuse of the land is in accordance with the aims of the NPPF with the external dimensions similar to the existing building.
- 4.1.4 The building has been considered against the guidance of the tall buildings policy from the Reading Central Area Action Plan, the Update Note of the Tall Building Strategy and follows full planning permission granted most recently in 2010 for a building also of 22 storeys and similar massing. The heritage position has not changed for this site, instead the surrounding buildings with permission have now been built out or underway. This is considered to be an improved design to the previously approved permission and it promotes high quality design in accordance with the aspirations to regenerate this part of Reading.

- 4.1.5 Of the heritage assets identified the nearest, Great Western House, is also the building most likely to receive the greatest impact. However, the existing building is of a quality that fails to positively contribute to its setting and it is there considered that the proposal will have a positive impact by improving this part of Station Road and the assets nearby. Emerging Local Plan Policy EN1 requires that replacement buildings respect historic buildings and their setting and this includes impact on Conservation Areas. Numerous other assets have been noted in the assessment, some of which would only be viewed from far reaching views and the harm is diminished by distance and other buildings already present within their setting.
- 4.1.6 The proposed development thus complies with S.66(1) and S.72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. In accordance emerging Local Plan Policy EN1 the significance of the assets and any potential harm have been assessed and the proposal does not lead to 'substantial' harm or any meaningful level of 'less than substantial' harm to any heritage assets. Any 'less than substantial' harm that might be asserted as being caused by the proposed scheme is more than outweighed by the evident benefits of the scheme.
- 4.1.7 This assessment concludes that the proposed development would have a neutral or beneficial impact on the majority of the heritage assets assessed. As set out in the Planning Statement which accompanies the submission it is considered that any less than substantial harm is more than outweighed by the evident benefits of the scheme. In this light the proposed development accords with Paragraph 196 of the NPPF.

Appendix A



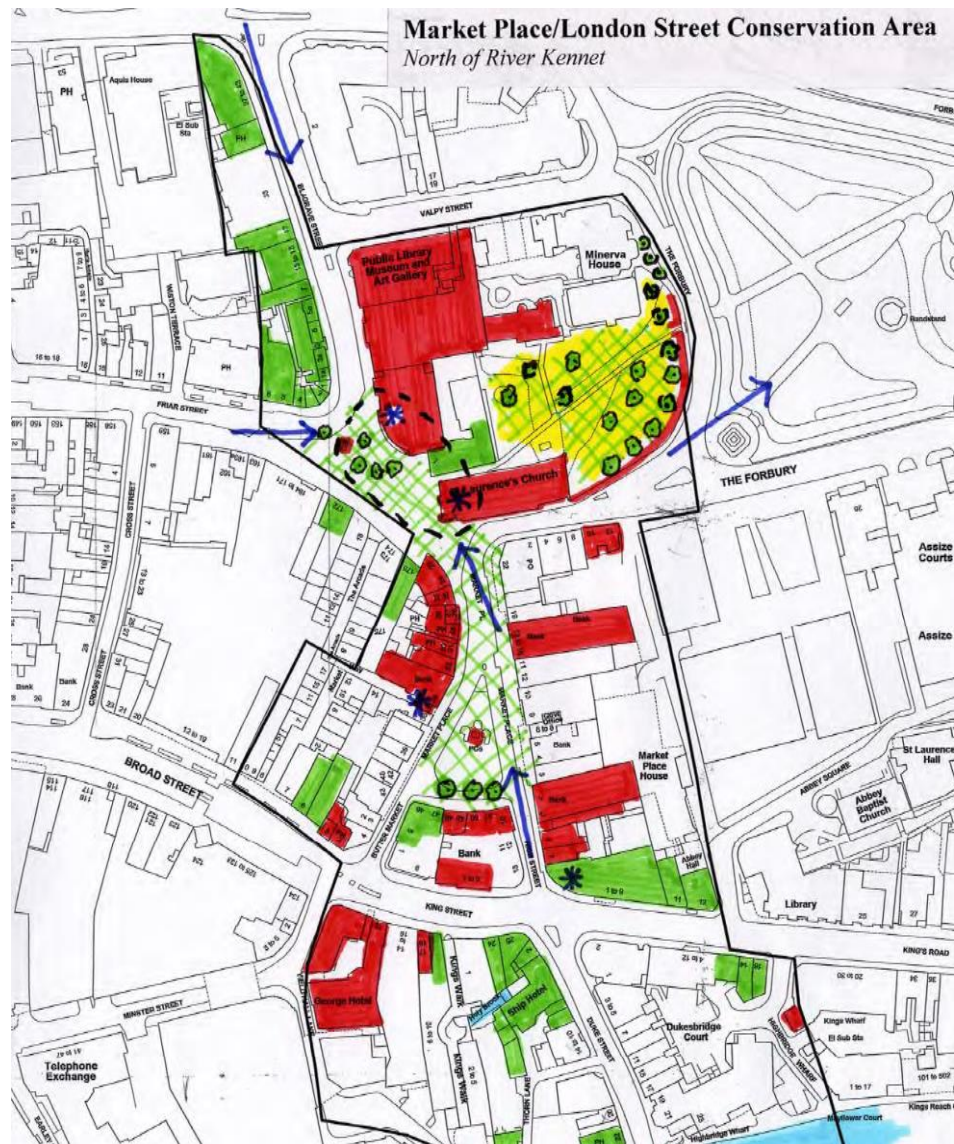
- 1 Great Western House (Malmaison)
- 2 Statue of Edward VIII
- 3 Queen Victoria Jubilee Statue
- 4 Town Council Chamber
- 5 Municipal Building Art Gallery
- 6 11 – 15 Friar Street
- 7 St Laurence's Church and Churchyard
- 8 Forbury Gardens
- 9 13 – 15 Station Road
- 10 Reading General Station
- 11 Queen Victoria Street
- 12 Greyfriars Church
- 13 Abbey Ruins

Heritage Assessment:
Baseline Study Area

October 2018
Andmore Planning Ltd



Appendix B



Key:

-  Conservation area boundary
-  Listed Buildings
-  Buildings of Townscape Merit
-  Important views
-  Significant trees
-  Landmark buildings
-  Significant open space
-  'Green' areas
-  Focal point
-  Water

Source: Reading Borough Council –
Market Place/London Street
Conservation Area Appraisal

Heritage Assessment:
Conservation Area

October 2018
Andmore Planning Ltd

