

EAA - EMRE AROLAT ARCHITECTURE



ROYAL HEIGHTS

*Volume I
Design & Access Statement
May 2018*

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This document Contains:

The detailed design proposals for Royal Heights, a residential development located on, 59-75 Queens Road, Reading RG1 4BN. This document forms Volume I: Design and Access Statement to support the planning application, this should be read in conjunction with: Volume II: Application Drawings aong with the technical appendices.

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1. INTRODUCTION

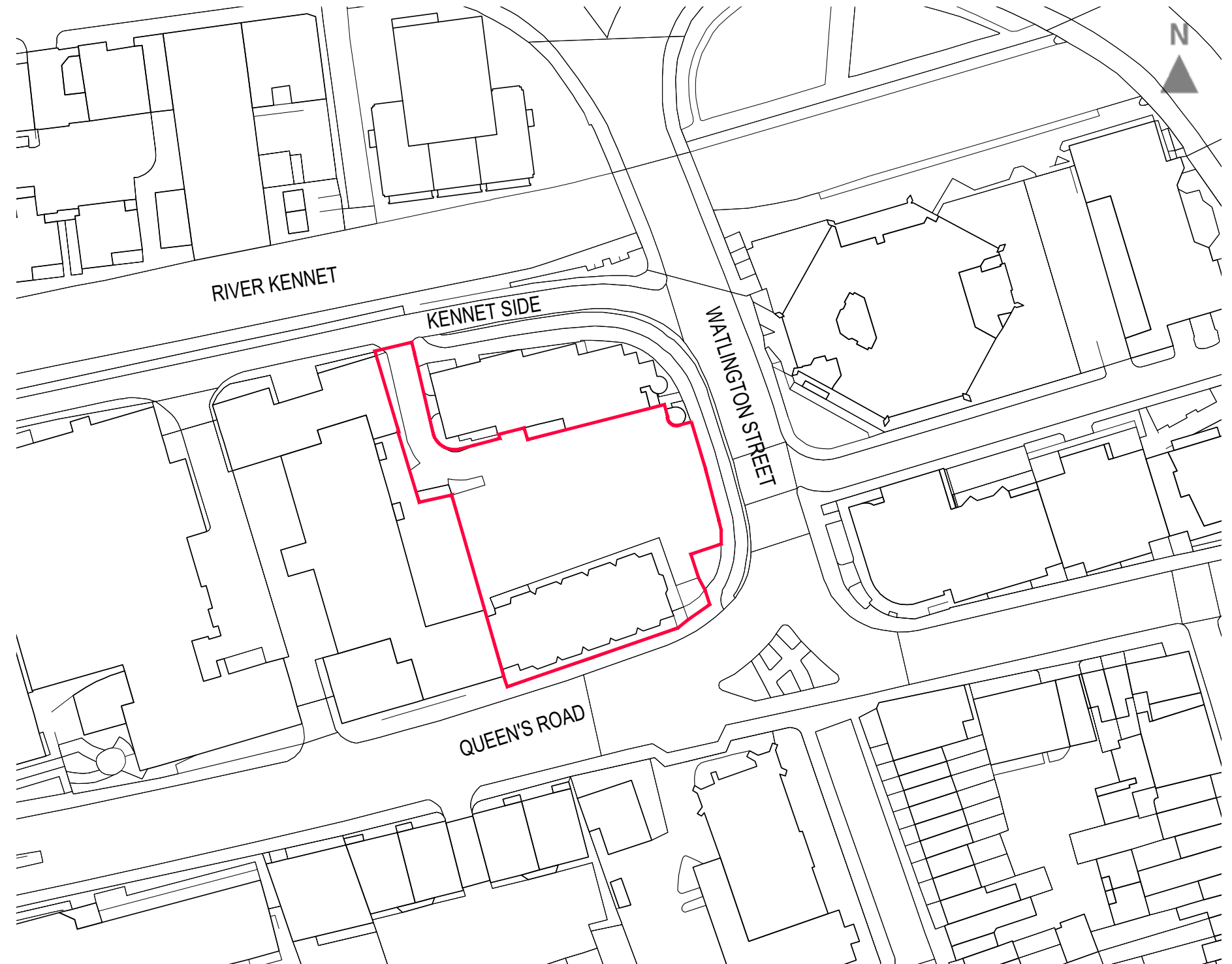
1.1 APPLICATION SUMMARY

The Site is located at 59-75 Queens Road, Reading, RG1 4BN. The site is referred to in this application as Royal Heights, and is comprised of an existing 1980's commercial building (Clarendon House) along with a car park to the east and north of the existing building. The site is bounded by residential and mixed-use residential buildings to the north and west, and by Watlington Street to the east.

The planning boundary includes Clarendon House and the adjacent car park site. Clarendon House was subject to a change of use application, submitted in June 2017 that has been consented through Permitted Development in 2017 (Application No: 170905). A prior approval for change of building use from Class B1(a)(offices) to C3 (dwelling houses) to comprise 49 residential units was granted in July 2017. Amendments to this application were submitted in January 2018 (180156) and April 2018 (180240) which include layout amendments.

This detailed planning application includes erection of a one storey roof extension and a part six, part ten storey building, mews houses comprising 4108sqm of new development, providing up to 50 residential units together with associated services enclosures, parking and landscaping. The application includes a new landscape design for the site, in order to improve the experience of the residents and the wider public realm.

 Planning Boundary



Ordnance Survey Map showing planning boundary and areas concerning this planning document

1. INTRODUCTION

1.2 SITE LOCATION

The buildings which make up this urban block are generally mixed use residential. As is typical in the central Reading area, the rear courtyard area provides car parking for the surrounding blocks. The car park behind Clarendon House provides 4 spaces which will be brought forward separately for the use of Clarendon House residents.



Site Location Within Reading



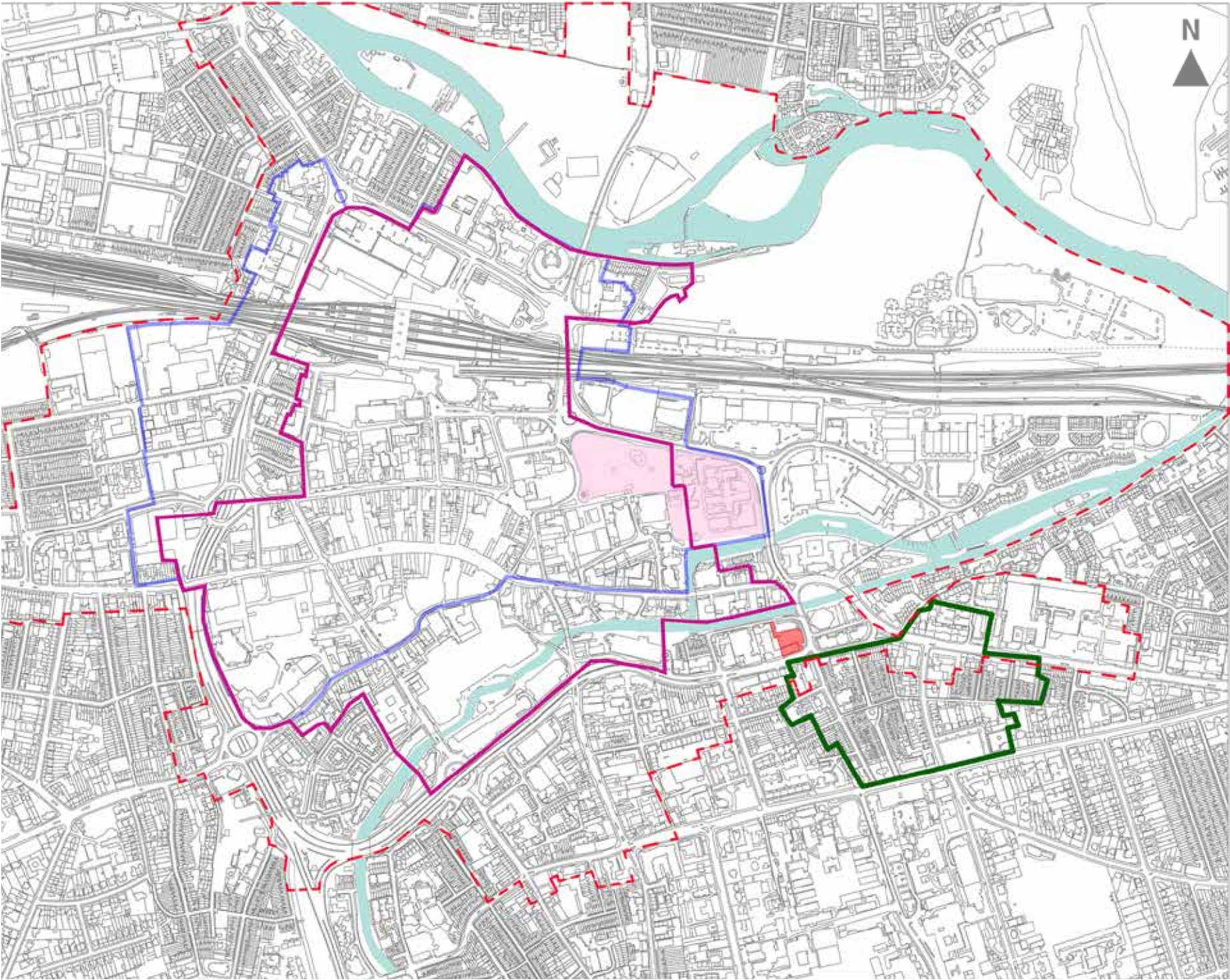
Aerial View of the Site Looking North

2. AREA ANALYSIS

2.1 STRATEGIC PLANNING AREAS

Royal Heights is located within an urban block immediately to the south of the River Kennet and the Central Zone; inside the Inner Distribution Road (IDR Zone 1). The Eldon Square Conservation Area is located immediately to the south-east of the site.

- Inner Distribution Road (IDR) Zone 1
- █ Eldon Square Conservation area
- █ Central core
- █ Office core
- █ Ancient monument
- █ Site



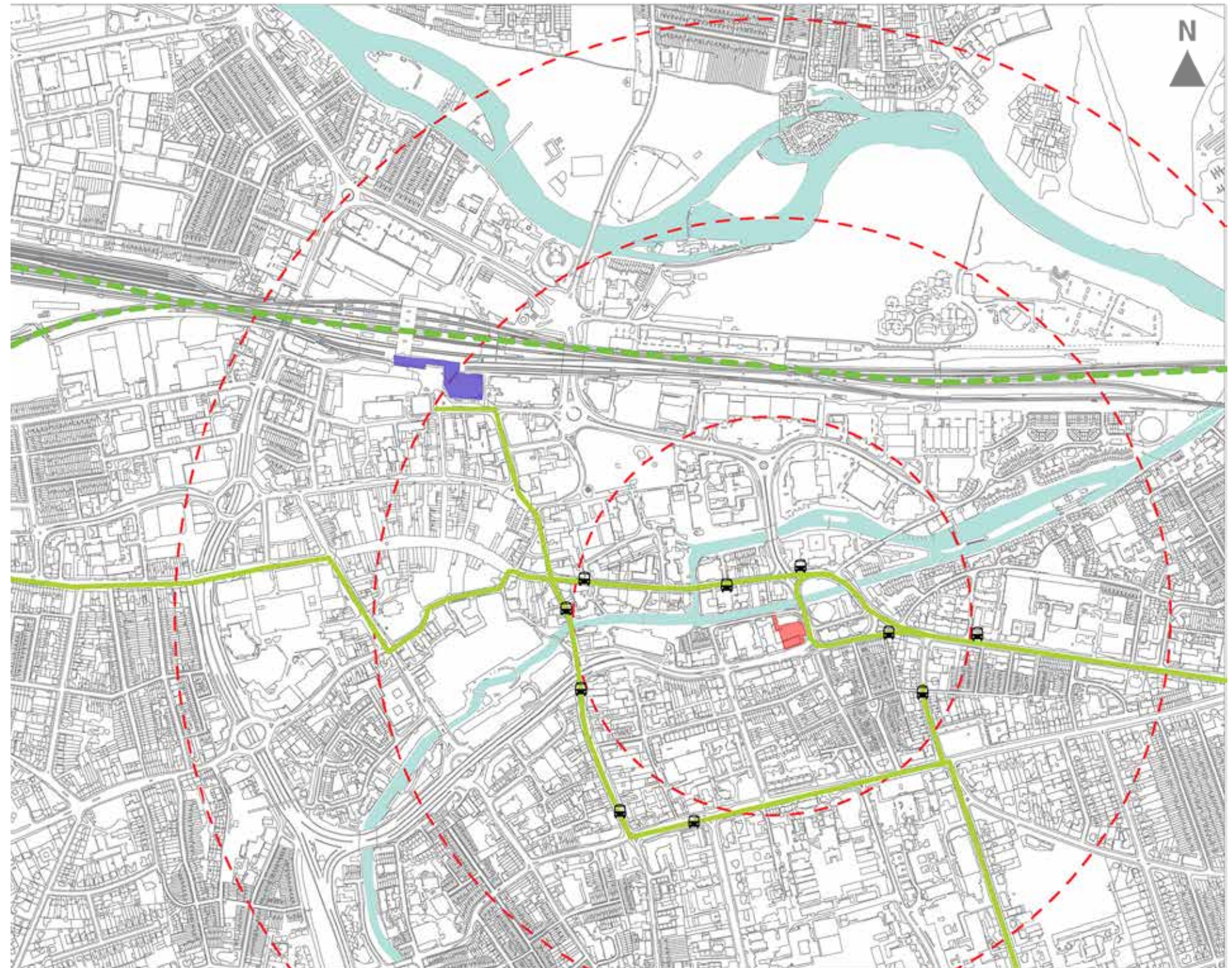
Strategic Planning Areas Map from Reading Borough Council

2. AREA ANALYSIS

2.2 PUBLIC TRANSPORT

The site is located within 13 minutes walk from Reading train station through the quiet backstreet along the Kennet River. The site is also well connected by local bus routes which are within 2 and 5 minutes walk and providing transport options in all directions. Please read in conjunction with 6.2.1 Landscape proposal.

- 5, 10, 15min
- Bus route
- Train line
- Bus stop
- Train station
- Site



Public Transport Routes Map

2. AREA ANALYSIS

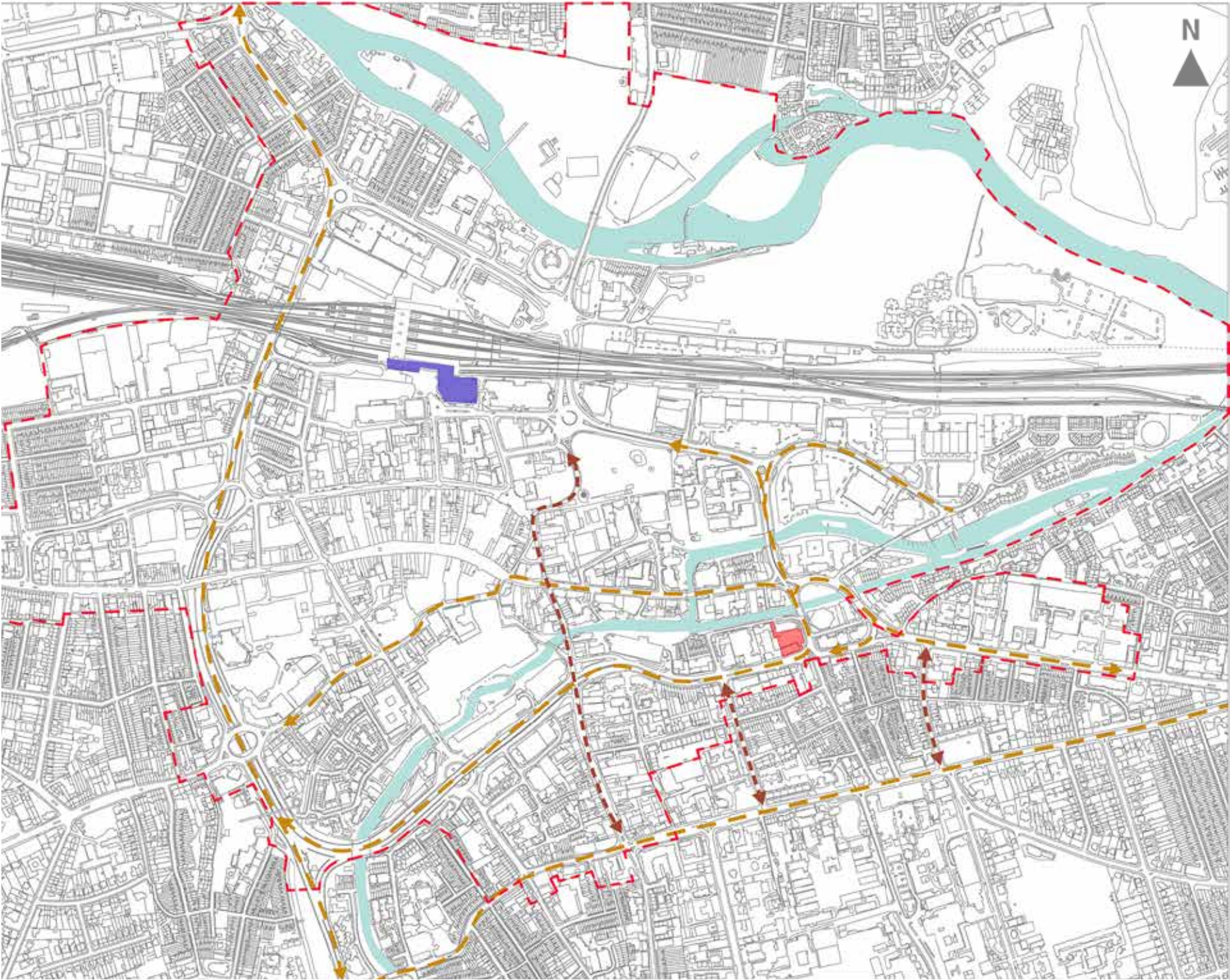
2.3 ROAD NETWORK

The site is well connected by local and wider road networks, located on Queens Road (A329) which is in close proximity to the A33 and directly connected to the M4 motorway.

The site is also located next to the R2 bicycle route on Kennet Side and Watlington Street connecting Lower Earley, Shinfield Rise, University & Royal Berkshire Hospital to Central Reading. From the Lower Earley District Centre R2 utilises off-road cycleways to connect to Shinfield Rise.

Quiet roads along the East Reading Ridge bring the route to Christchurch Green and Reading University's main entrance from where R2 passes the Royal Berkshire Hospital, joining R20 at Watlington Street to follow the Kennet Side cycleway into central Reading. Please read in conjunction with 6.2.4 Landscape proposal.

- Secondary road
- Main Road
- IDR Zone 1
- Train station
- Site



Aerial View of the Site Looking North

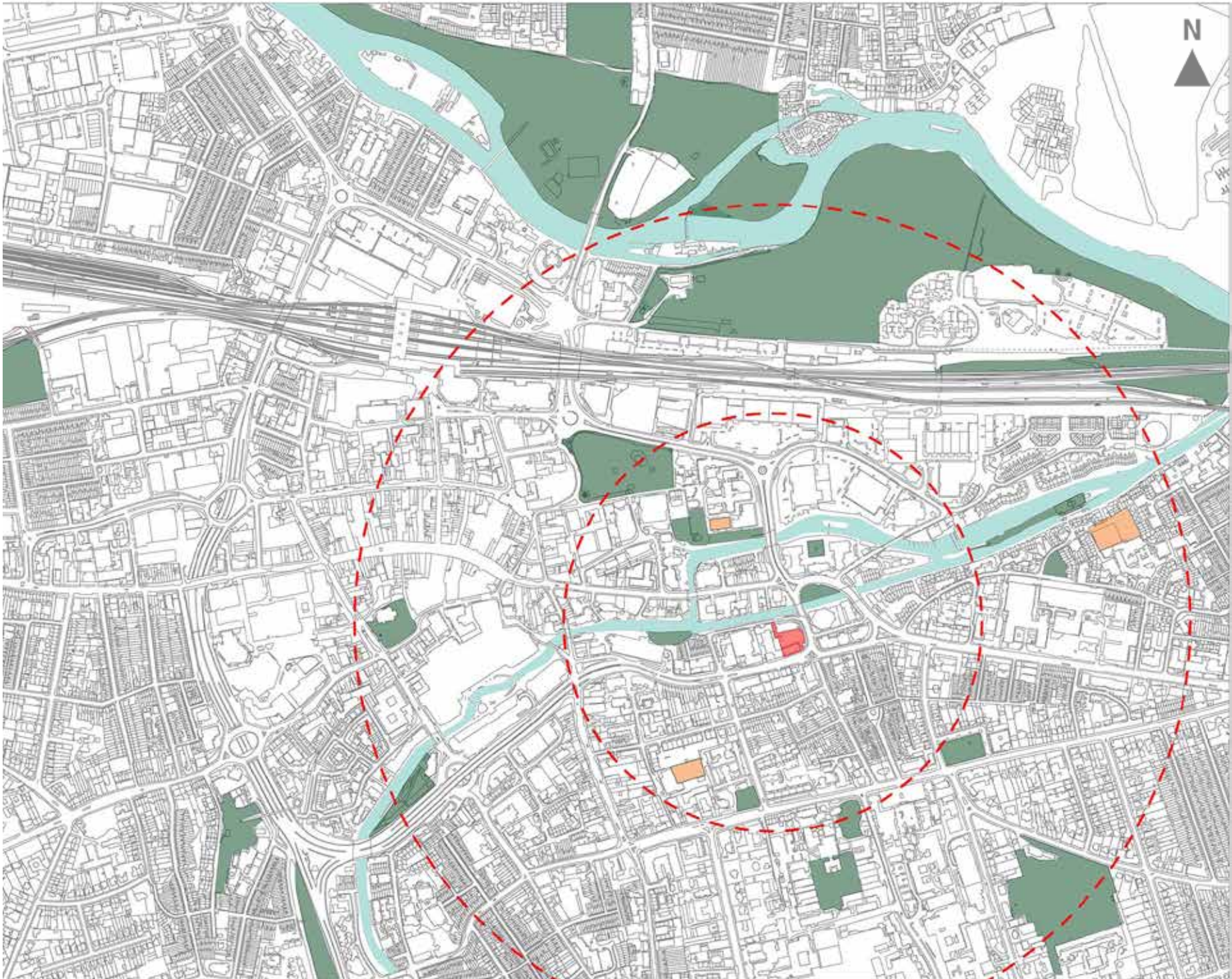
2. AREA ANALYSIS

2.4 PUBLIC OPEN SPACES

Reading town centre is characterised by hard urban spaces including a variety of public open spaces, shopping streets and amenities. Green open spaces are therefore relatively rare and taking the form of pocket parks or left-over pieces of the town such as the lozenge-shaped pocket park bounded by Kings Road and Watlington Street or the cluster of green behind Queens Road car park next to the River Kennet.

The River Kennet forms a connective route to the east and west and is a major asset to the site. Larger green spaces are located within 400 meters of the site, notably Forbury gardens and Abbey Ruins, a place of historic significance and special character in Reading. Slightly further afield within 800 meters to the north of the site Christchurch Meadows and Kings Meadows line opposing sides of the Thames. Please read in conjunction with 6.2.3 Landscape proposal.

- 400m & 800m
- Amenity spaces
- Public green space
- Site



Aerial View of the Site Looking North

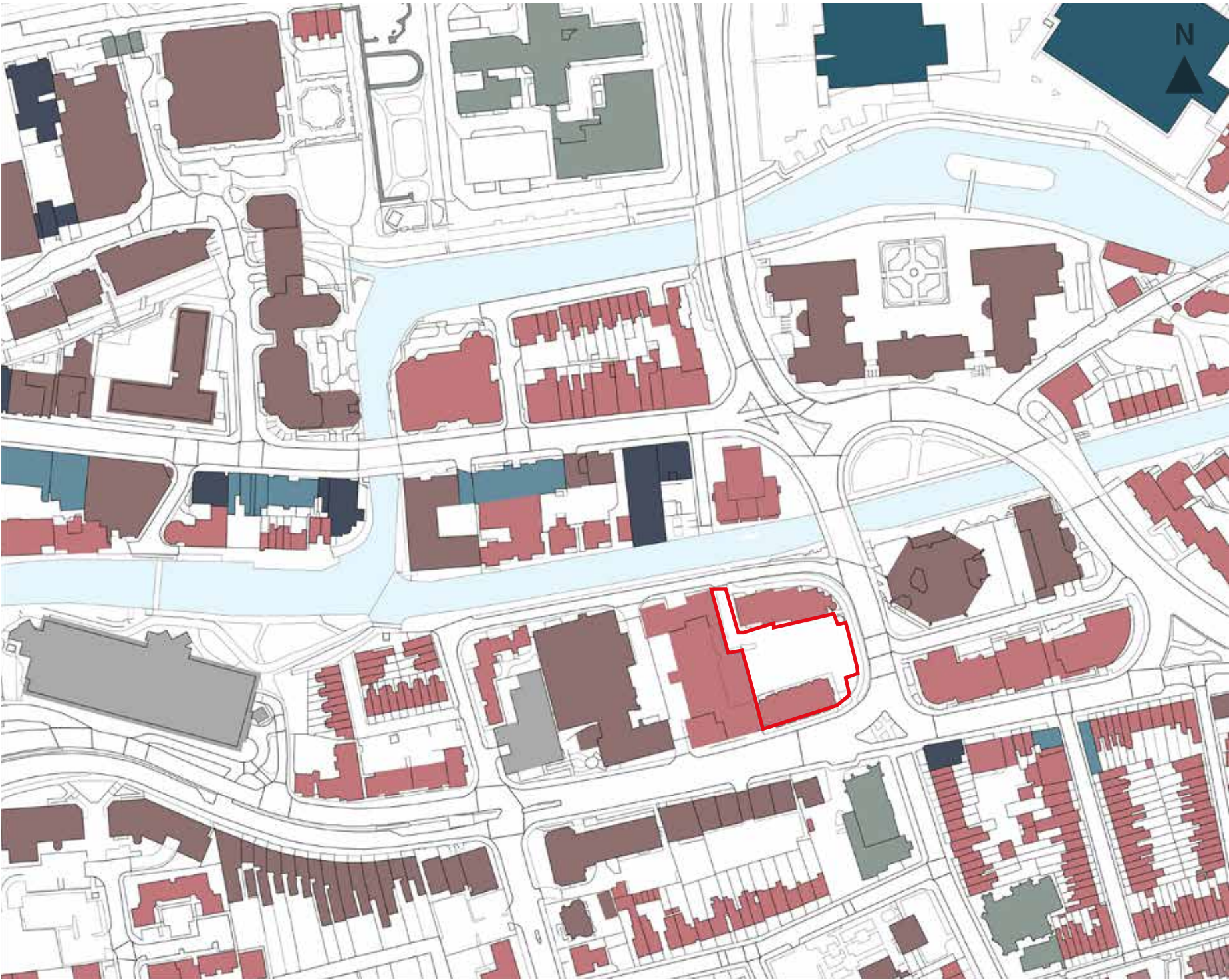
2. AREA ANALYSIS

2.5 BUILDING USES

The area is bounded by the Kennet and Queens Road and its immediate surroundings is predominantly mixed use. The urban block surrounding the site provides residential and offices as well as some open parking space. However it is envisaged that the area will become more residential as building plots are developed to help fulfil Readings Housing needs.

The south side of Queens Road provides local employment in a continuous row of low rise commercial buildings to the west of commercial. To the south and east of this lies the Endon Street Conservation area that is predominately residential with some places of worship.

- Application Boundary
- Commercial
- Leisure
- Office
- Residential
- Residential + Commercial
- Community
- Parking



2. AREA ANALYSIS

2.6 LOCAL BUILDING HEIGHTS

The area is characterised by a varied roof line in clusters of heights. The narrow area between the river Kennet and Queens Road, where the site is located varies between 2 and 10 stories, and the development site being located within a block of between 5 and 7 stories.

The conservation area to the south is predominantly low rise between 2 and 3 stories, with the area to the north beyond the River Kennet going up to 17 stores with the new Kings Point development on Watlington Street.

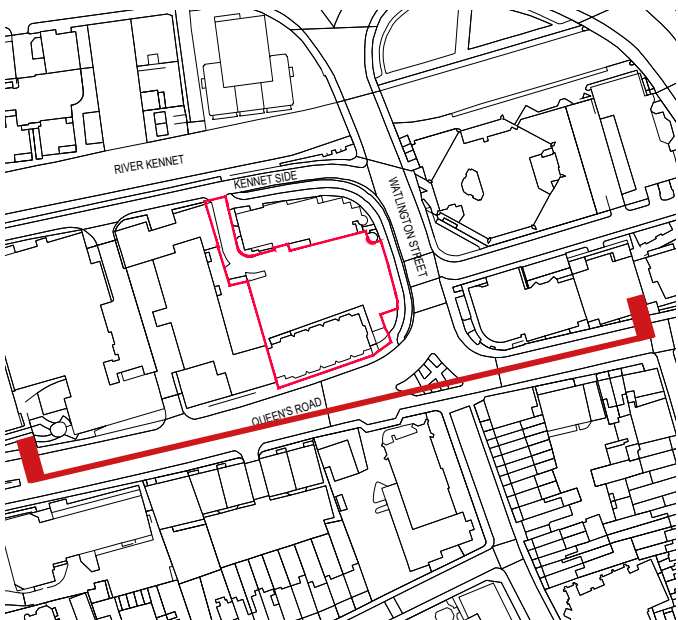
The site is located opposite number 25 Watlington Street which rises to 11 stories (including a raised podium).



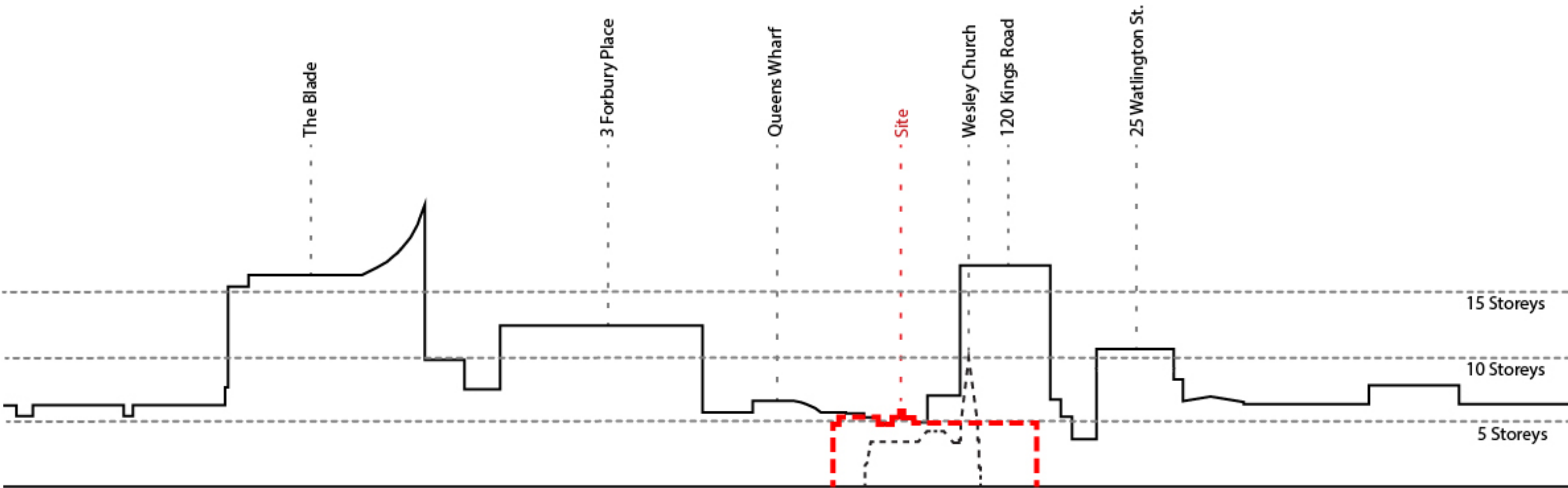
2. AREA ANALYSIS

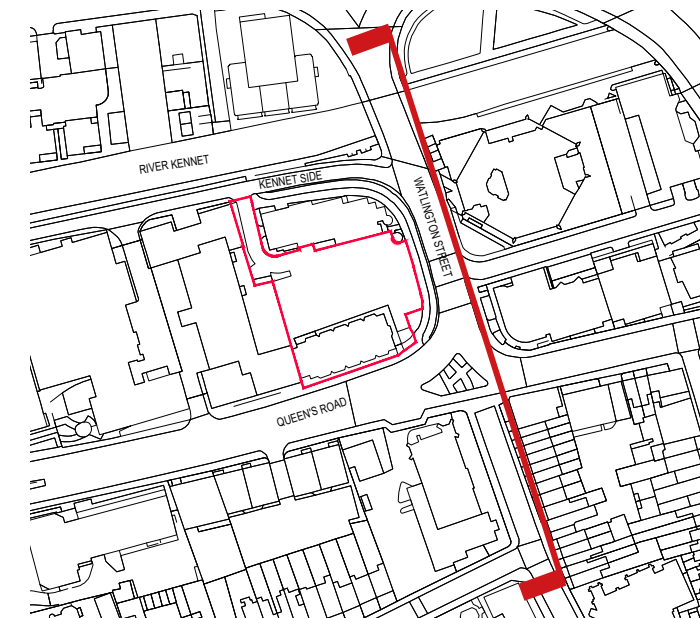
2.7 EXISTING SITE SECTIONS

The two site sections show the wide range of building heights between the Conservation Area and the Central Area. Clarendon House, the existing building on the site has been shown in red to identify the site area. The site area includes buildings between 5 and 11 stories creating a varied skyline with a few taller buildings.

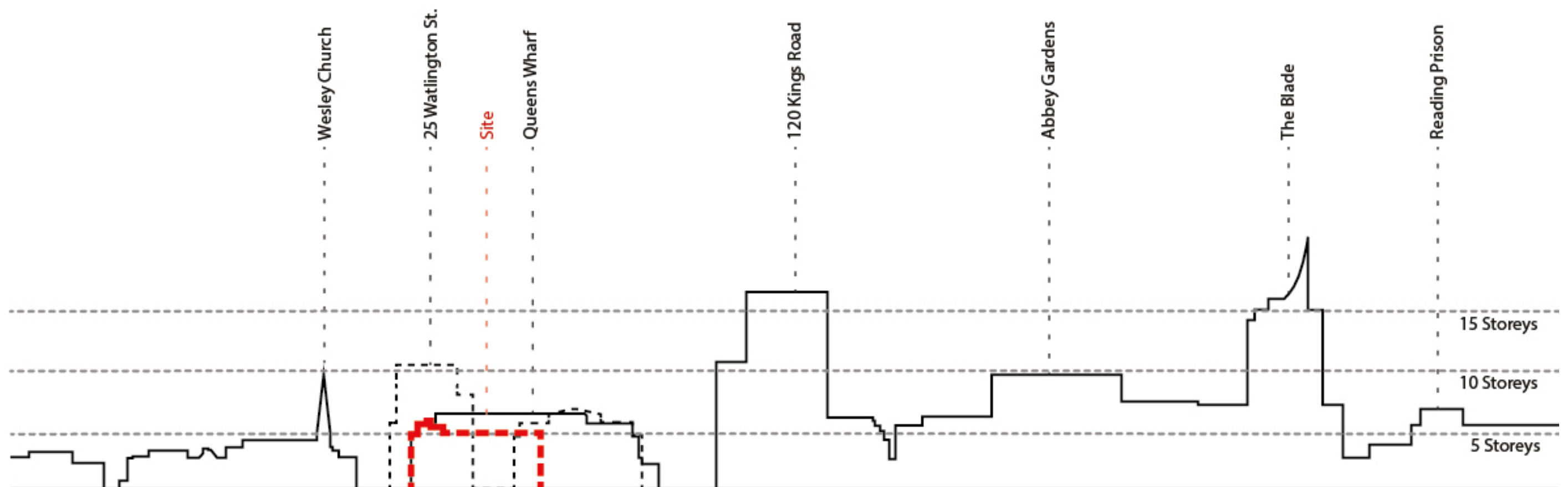


SECTION LOOKING NORTH THROUGH QUEENS ROAD





SECTION LOOKING WEST THROUGH WATLINGTON STREET



2. AREA ANALYSIS

2.8 LOCAL BUILT CONTEXT

CONSERVATION AREA

The Endon Square Conservation Area is located immediately to the south-east of the site and is characterised by 2-3 storey terraced period houses of varied types, creating a quirky and articulated roof-line along the street. The area has a variety of other buildings of special character such as Watlington House located behind the grade II listed Wesley Church and the Polish Church further south along Watlington Street.

Montague Evans, heritage and townscape consultants have been involved in the preparation of this document and have prepared a separate Heritage Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment (HTVIA) that is included within the Appendices.

Please refer to this assessment for more detailed information regarding the Conservation Area.



View North from Watlington Street



Polish Church Watlington Street



Wesley Church Queens Road



Terraced Housing Watlington Street

SURROUNDING BUILDINGS

Clarendon House is one of several buildings that form an urban block bounded by Queens Road, Watlington Street and Kennet Side. Unlike the Conservation Area to the south, the buildings surrounding Clarendon House have been designed in a range of styles and variety of materials over time.

This variety of styles create a block without any clear or coherent architectural character. In addition to the building language the relationship to the street scape also varies between buildings creating an ambiguous pedestrian experience and inconsistent street character.



Grantley Heights



25 Watlington Street



Queens Wharf



View West From Kennet Side

2. AREA ANALYSIS

2.8 LOCAL BUILT CONTEXT

EMERGING SKYLINE OF READING

The Central Area of Reading is in a period of transformation with the emergence of new commercial signature buildings such as The Blade and One Reading Central changing the skyline and creating a more urban character in the central business area. This transformation however, isn't limited to workplaces and commercial buildings but can also be seen in new residential developments responding to the increasing demands for high quality new housing in Reading.

These developments such as Kings Point and Chatham Place provide a new kind of mixed tenure housing combining different uses, housing types, scales and densities. Kings Point which is located immediately to the north of the site, is a stepped 17 storey high-rise development with an architectural language more related to the commercial buildings in the Central Area than the traditional residential areas of Reading.



Kings Point



The Blade



Chatham Place



One Reading Central

BUILDINGS ALONG THE KENNET RIVER

The route along the River Kennet is located immediately to the north of the site. This alternative riverside walk from the site forms the main desire line for residents towards the shopping centre (Oracle Centre) and riverside restaurants and café's. The shopping area marks the midpoint between the site and Reading train station which is approximately 13 minutes walk from the site.



View East along the Kennet with Kennet House in the background



View of Duke Street Bridge along the River Kennet

2. AREA ANALYSIS

2.9 HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Reading is a historically important minster town with a long ecclesiastical history. Early settlements dates from the 8th Century and it was an important trading and ecclesiastical centre in the medieval period as the site of Reading Abbey, one of the richest monasteries of medieval England with strong royal connections, of which the 12th century abbey gateway and significant ruins remain. The 18th century saw the beginning of a major iron works in the town and the growth of the brewing trade for which Reading was to become famous.

The 19th century saw the coming of the Great Western Railway and the development of the town's brewing, baking and seed growing businesses. During that period, the town grew rapidly as a manufacturing centre. The images below show reading during this period of prosperity and growth. The map on the bottom left shows the site area towards the end of the 19th Century, with the area to the south of the Kennet river dominated by a fine grain of Victorian residential terraces.



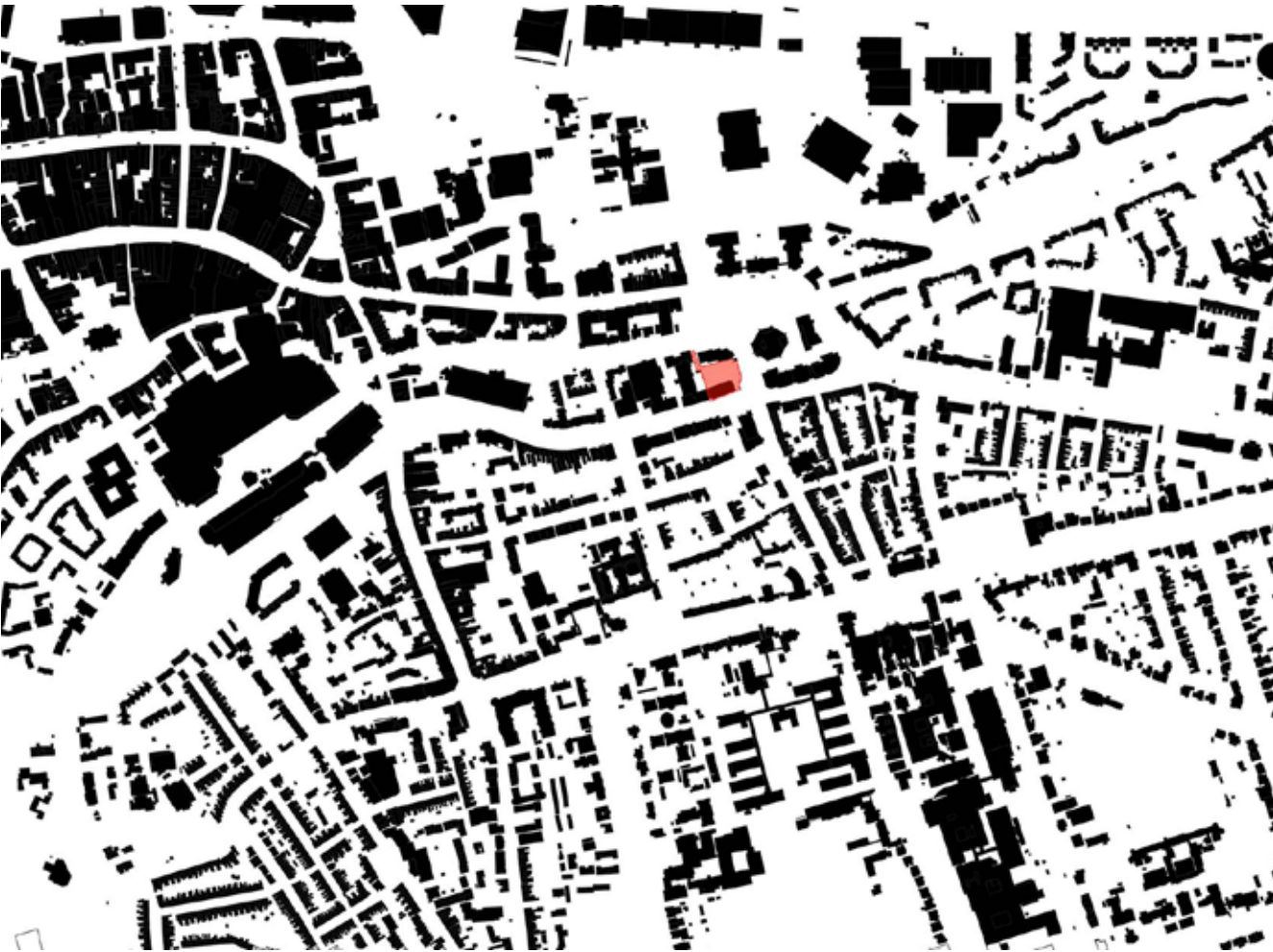
Archive Map from 1892-1905



The Huntley and Palmer's biscuit Factory c. 1910 (Reading Museum Service)

The figure ground map on the bottom left based on 2017 data, shows significant changes to the urban grain around the site area over the past century. This is especially noticeable in the east-west strip of land between the River Kennet and Queens Road where the site is located. The development of the Inner Distribution Road (IDR) widening Queens Road and Watlington Street has had a significant impact on the area, resulting in the erosion of the tight grain and intimate street scape of the historic

Victorian Houses. This has been replaced by large inward-looking object buildings that turn their back on the streets. Some of the surrounding areas have however avoided this kind of change which can be seen in the bottom right image from around 1900 looking north up Watlington Street within the Endon Street conservation area. This area remains largely intact.



Current Site Figure Ground Map from 2017



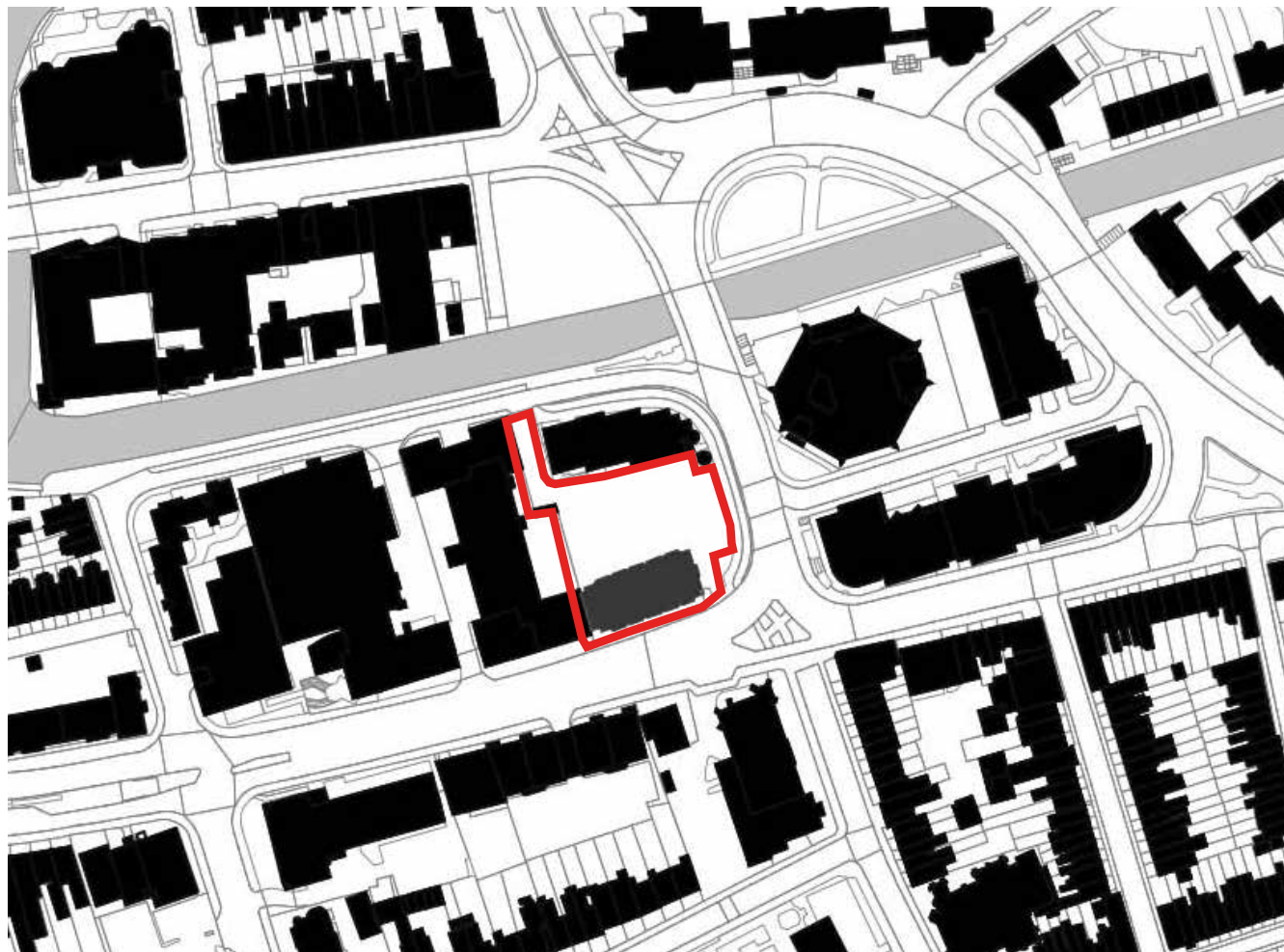
Watlington Street c.1900 (Source: Francis Online)

2. AREA ANALYSIS

2.9 HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The site area defines two sides of an urban block, one side defined by Clarendon House and the other side open to Watlington towards the east of the site. The site is therefore undefined with a disused car park that creates an ambiguous relationship to its surroundings. The figure ground image bottom left shows the current block relationship with the street-scape largely undefined in the immediate surroundings. The image to the bottom right shows the exiting courtyard spaces

which are mostly used for protected communal amenity private car parking, or service areas. These spaces are currently underused in Reading though provide spaces with an intimate quality and character reminiscent to the historic grain of the city.



Existing site layout Showing Clarendon House



Map showing courtyard spaces in the immediate area

The Heritage Asset Plan shown on the right shows the sites proximity to the Conservation area and notable heritage buildings within a 250 meter radius. Reading Abbey is also highlighted to the north of the site. A detailed appraisal of the local assets can be seen in the Heritage, Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment (HTVIA) that is included within Volume III: Appendices.

HERITAGE ASSET PLAN

Application Site

Conservation Areas

A.

Eldon Square

Grade II*

1.

Watlington House

Grade II

2.

4 & 6, Eldon Road

3.

12 & 14, Eldon Road

4.

Queen's Crescent

5.

9, Sidmouth Street

6.

Church of Saint John The Evangelist

7.

Walls enclosing garden to west of No 44 (Watlington House)

8.

The Oval

9.

3 & 5, Sidmouth Street

10.

43-49, South Street

11.

2, Eldon Road

12.

163, King Road

13.

Westley Methodist Church

14.

196-200, Kings Road

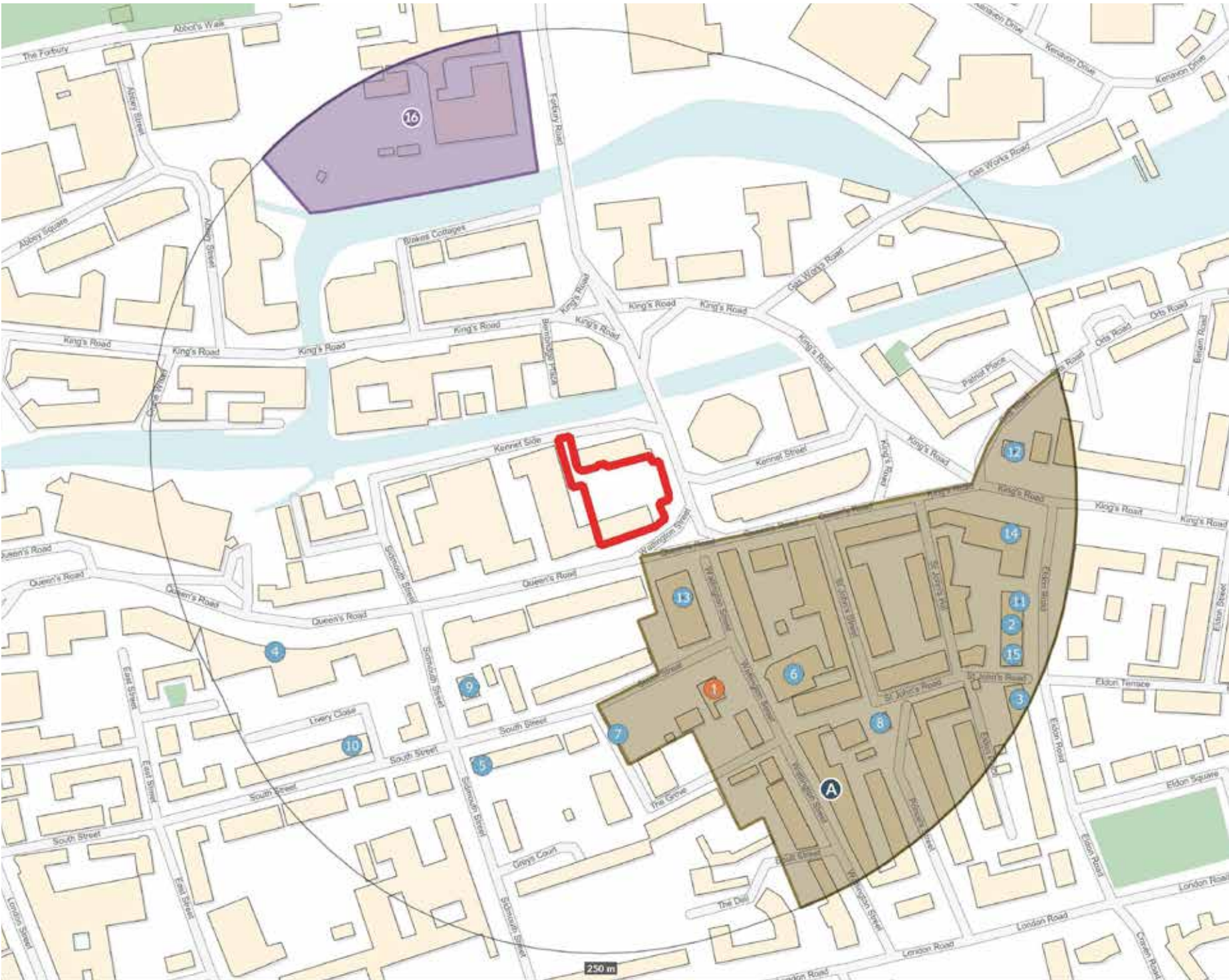
15.

8 & 10, Eldon Road

Scheduled Monument

16.

Reading Abbey



Heritage Asset Plan (Extract from Montague Evans HTVIA- Volume III Appendices)

3. SITE ANALYSIS

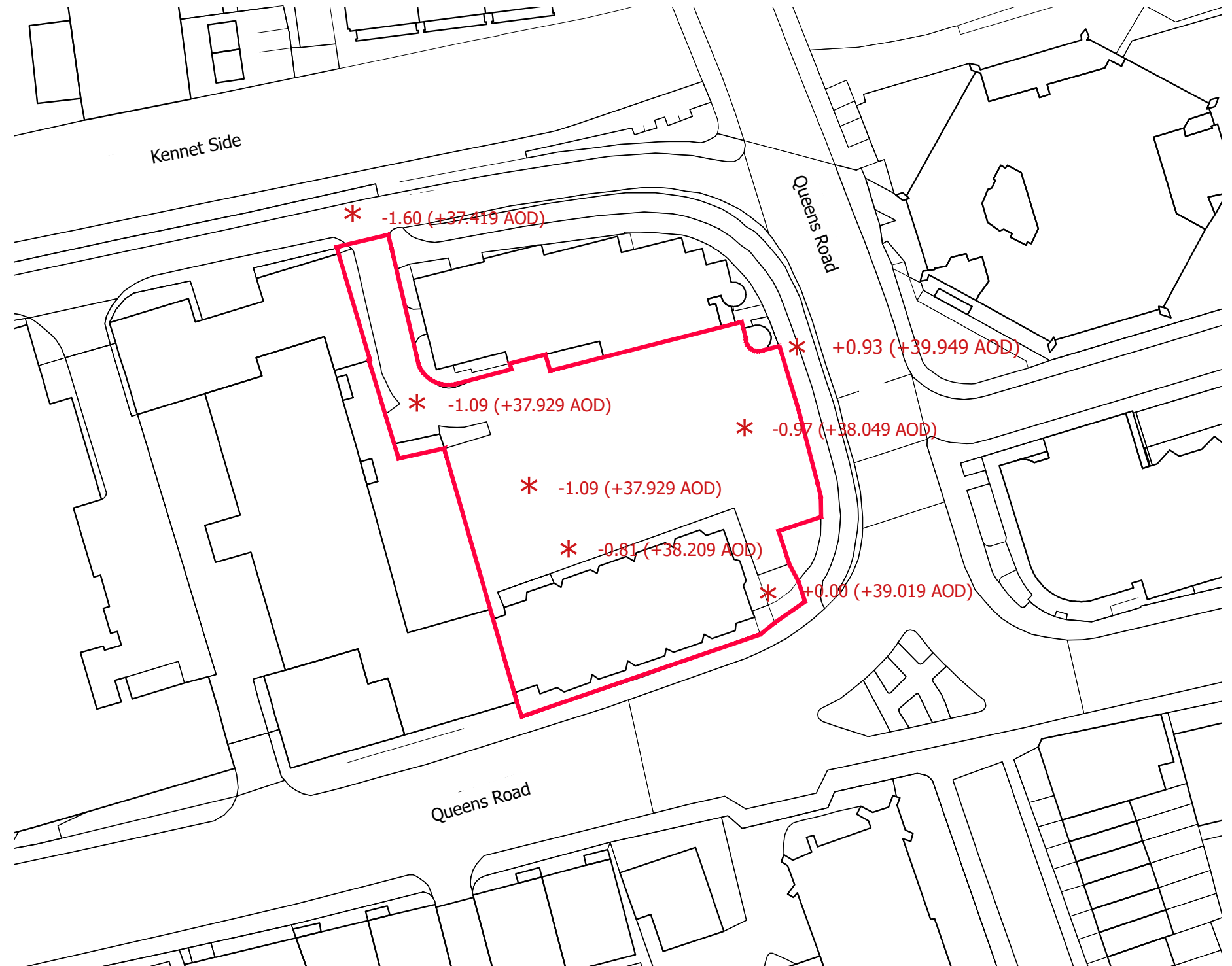
3.1 SITE CONSIDERATIONS

SITE LEVELS

The site levels vary on all sides of the site, between Queens Road and Kennet Side there is a level change of approximately 1.6 meters falling north towards the river. However this level change accommodates across the length of the site so its expected there will be little impact on design proposals for the site.

To the east of the site along Watlington Street the road slopes up along the edge of the site by approximately .9 meters and downwards the middle of the site by approximately .97 meters. These changes result in a varied level change from the road to the development site of between 0.9 and 1.9 meters.

This change may impact on any access and connections to the site from the east.

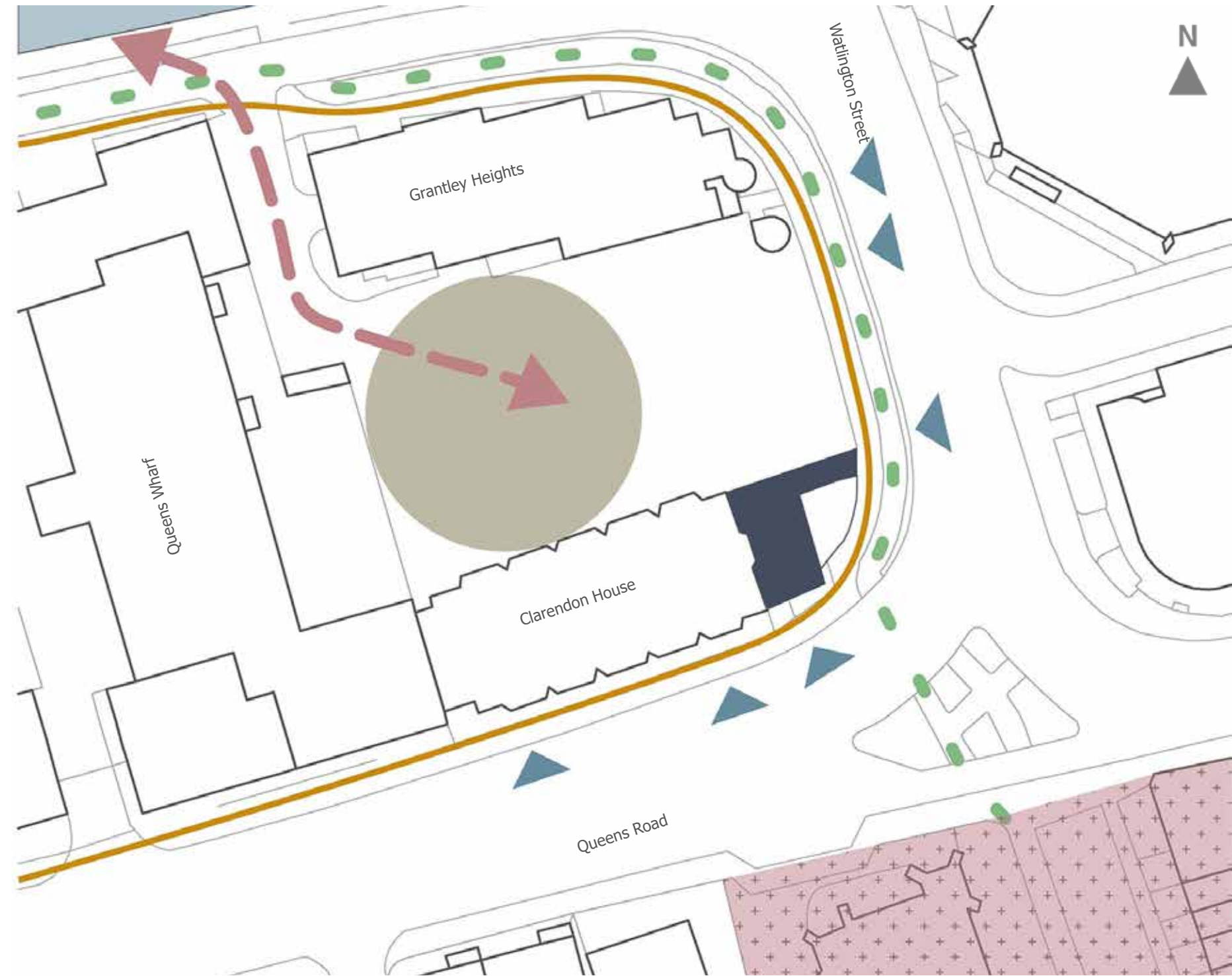


OPPORTUNITIES

The site has various opportunities that make this an ideal location for new homes, most notably its proximity to the River Kennet and to the town centre. Access from Kennet Side connects directly to an attractive riverside route from the centre of the site, a natural desire line. The existing buildings create a courtyard with generous proportions with the potential for landscaping and communal use.

The site has frontages along Watlington Street and Queens Road providing the opportunity to engage with the street for access, passive surveillance. Just opposite the Endon Square Conservation area, the site is in a desirable location giving an attractive outlook to the south. Good local transport connections including a dedicated cycle lane that connects the site south through the conservation area or west along Kennet Side to the town centre.

-  Amenity space
-  Desired line to town
-  Cycle route
-  Urban block
-  Active frontage
-  Enhance public realm
-  River
-  Conservation area



3. SITE ANALYSIS

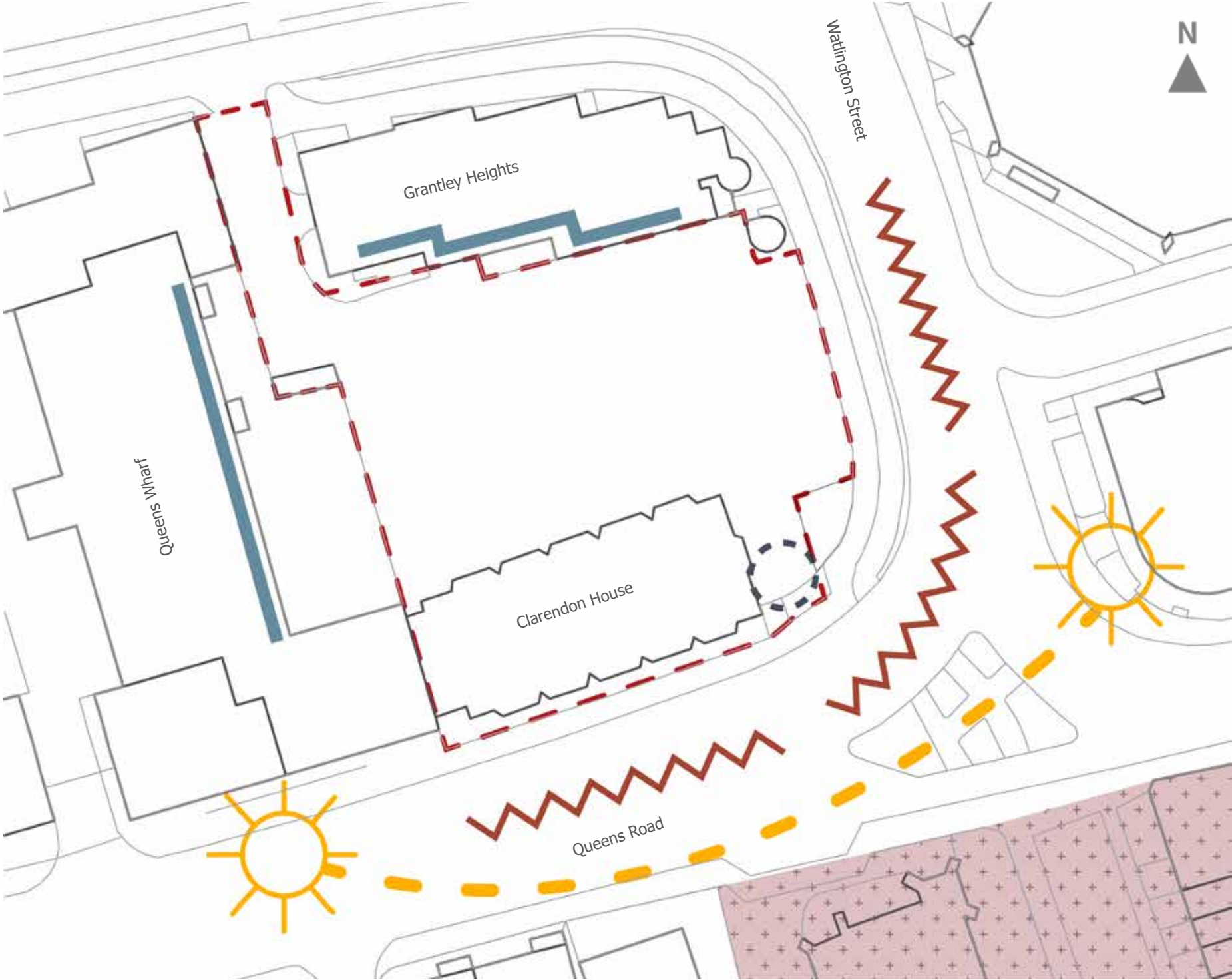
3.1 SITE CONSIDERATIONS

CONSTRAINTS: SITE & ENVIRONMENT

There are two main environmental considerations on the site, the first is impact from proximity to the busy roads including noise and air quality. The second is consideration of the south-easterly exposure in terms of sunlight and daylight. Two neighbouring building's, Grantley Heights and Queens Wharf have enjoyed unobstructed sunlight from the east due to the site being empty and disused for many years. The empty nature of the site also resulted in vagrancy and security risks on the site which need to be considered on balance. The impact from any proposals will therefore need to be studied in detail. All technical reports regarding environmental impacts can be seen in Volume III: Appendices of this document.

Grantley Heights has been constructed on the site boundary, as a result access is required onto the development site to maintain and service this building. In addition the residents of this block currently look directly onto the disused car park site, outlook and security will therefore be considered. Visual Amenity should be considered for all buildings looking onto this space.

- Site boundary
- Sun path
- Outlook from Neighbouring Buildings
- Noisy Roads & Poor Air Quality
- Conservation area



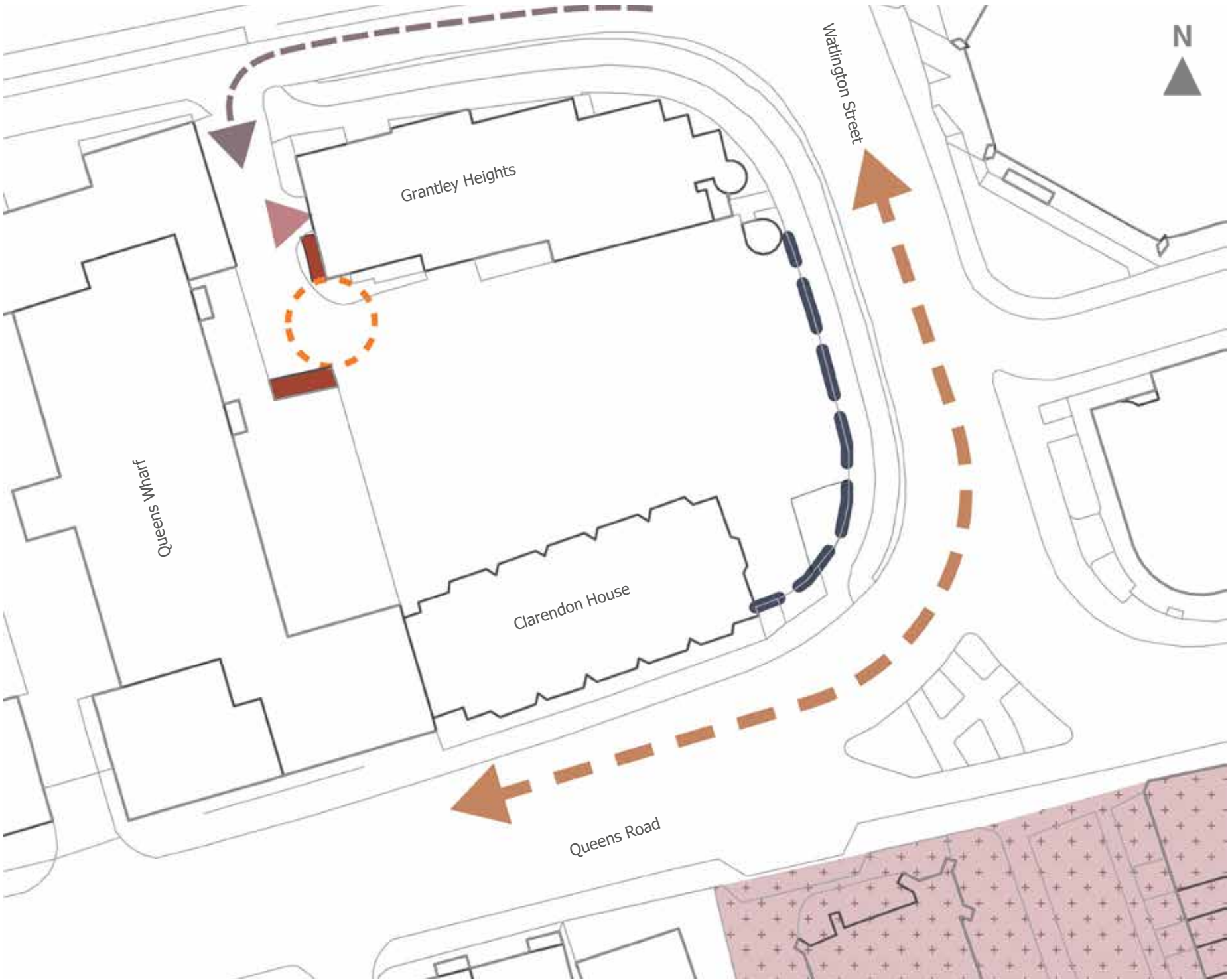
CONSTRAINTS: SERVICING & ACCESS

In terms of vehicle access the site is constrained by a single point of access from Kennet Side. This single access is also shared with car park and servicing access for Grantley Heights.

As Queens Road and Watlington Street are busy distribution roads they can't provide formal access into the site.

Site levels and emergency servicing of the building is another consideration in terms of creating direct access from the south and east of the site.

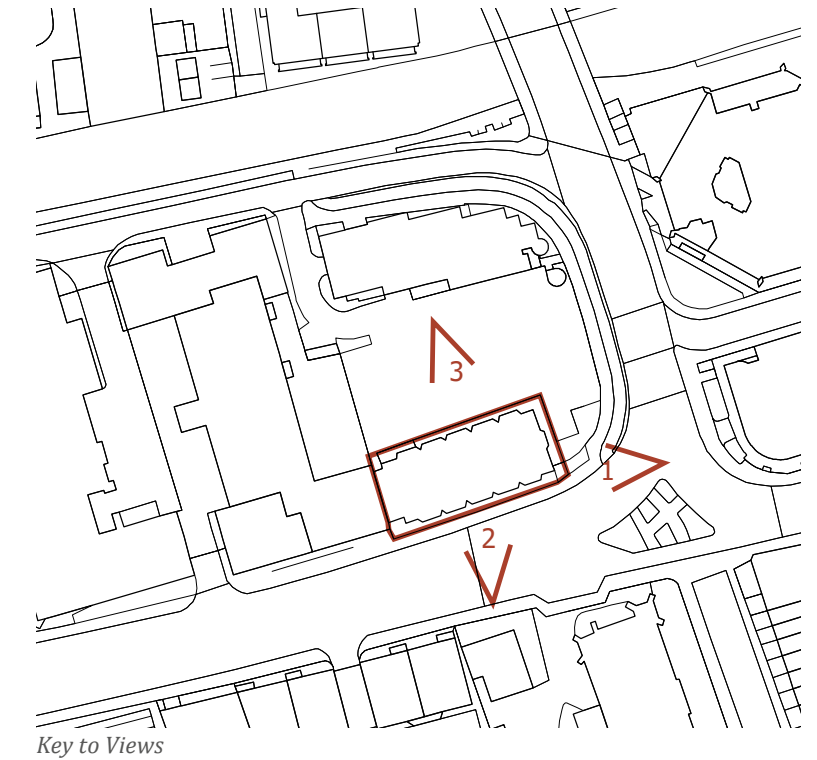
- Car-park entrance
- Constrained site access
- Emergency services
- Level change
- Refuse collection
- Car park entrance Serving Grantley Heights
- Conservation area



3. SITE ANALYSIS

3.2 EXISTING BUILDING

Clarendon House is a 1980's purpose built office block. The building has an open plan layout with internal partitions and has been constructed with a concrete frame and brick cladding. The brick has a flat engineered character with grey mortar. The building elevation has large vertical bays and deep angular recesses. The fenestration is rigorously ordered with wide horizontal windows.



1. Entrance doors and canopy

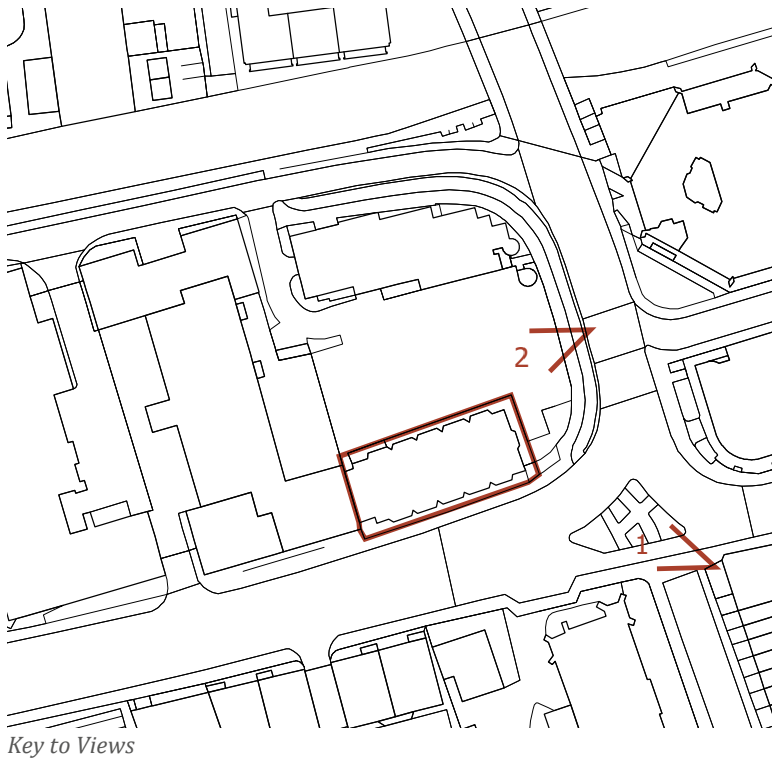


2. Ground floor south facing window



3. Typical window image shows north facing raised ground floor

The windows consist of dark powder coated aluminium windows set within an unfinished aluminium frame. The windows are set in-line with the brick facade giving a flat unarticulated appearance. The ground level facing Queens Road has arched brick details above the windows and canopies over the two entrances.



1. Clarendon House view towards the north-west

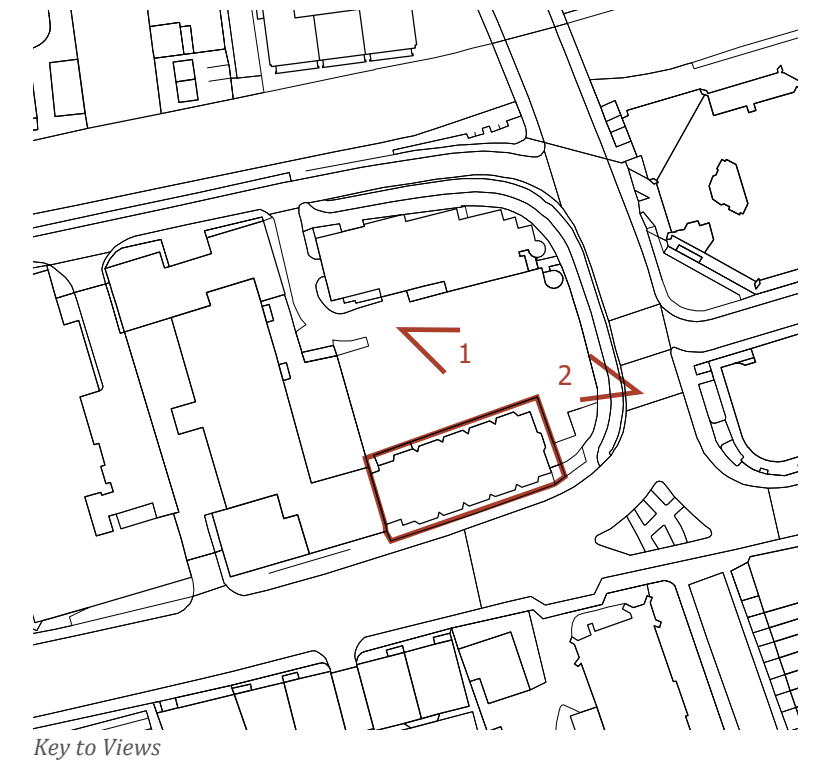


2. View west with showing Clarendon House towards the left

3. SITE ANALYSIS

3.2 EXISTING BUILDING

Clarendon House bounded to the north and east by a car park serving the building. Grantley House the building located immediately to the north has been constructed on the site boundary with residential units looking onto the car park. The ground floor of this building is partly used as a car park which results in a blank wall at ground level.



View south-east towards the Conservation Area



View north-west across the car park to the north of Clarendon House

3. SITE ANALYSIS

3.3 FLOOD RISK

The site is located in close proximity to the Kennet and Avon Canal. Environment Agency (EA) flood mapping shows the site to be located within flood zone 2, being an area assessed as having between a 1 in 100 and 1 in 1,000 annual probability of river flooding (1% – 0.1%), or between a 1 in 200 and 1 in 1,000 annual probability of sea flooding (0.5% – 0.1%) in any year.

Whilst the 2017 Reading Borough Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) indicates the site is not affected by the 1 in 100 year event with current climate change allowances, the EA have advised that the flood model requires verification.

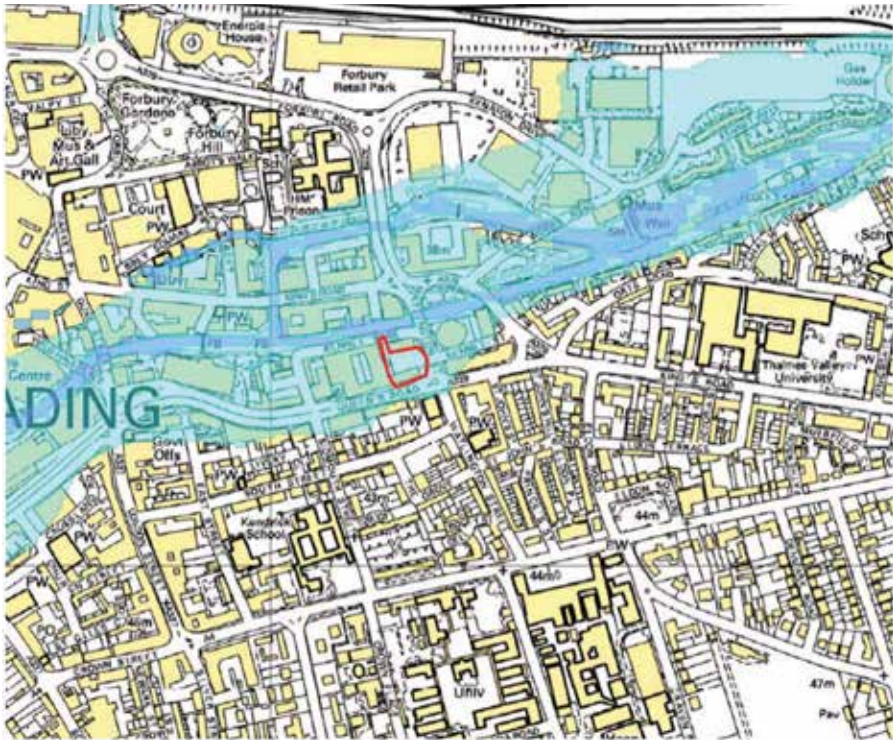
Therefore, minimum floor levels have been set based upon the alternative guidance provided by the EA as outlined within the SFRA. In accordance with the basic approach, floor levels of 500mm above the 1 in 100 year flood level have been adopted. In addition, a 300mm free board has been incorporated. Ground floor units therefore should be protected against flooding from the anticipated 1 in 100 year event with climate change.

As the site is currently comprised wholly of impermeable surfacing, the inclusion of green roofs and green space will reduce the extent of surface water runoff from the site. Betterment is therefore provided in surface water drainage terms resulting in reduced loading on the existing public surface water system.

Further information regarding flood risk can be seen in the Landscape Chapter of Volume I: Chapter 6 Landscape Proposals or Volume III Appendices: Flood Risk Assessment.

Environment Agency Flood Map

Prepared by RPS Group, June 2017, Ref: HLEF53150/001R



Environment Agency Surface Water Flood Map

Site located in Flood Zone 2



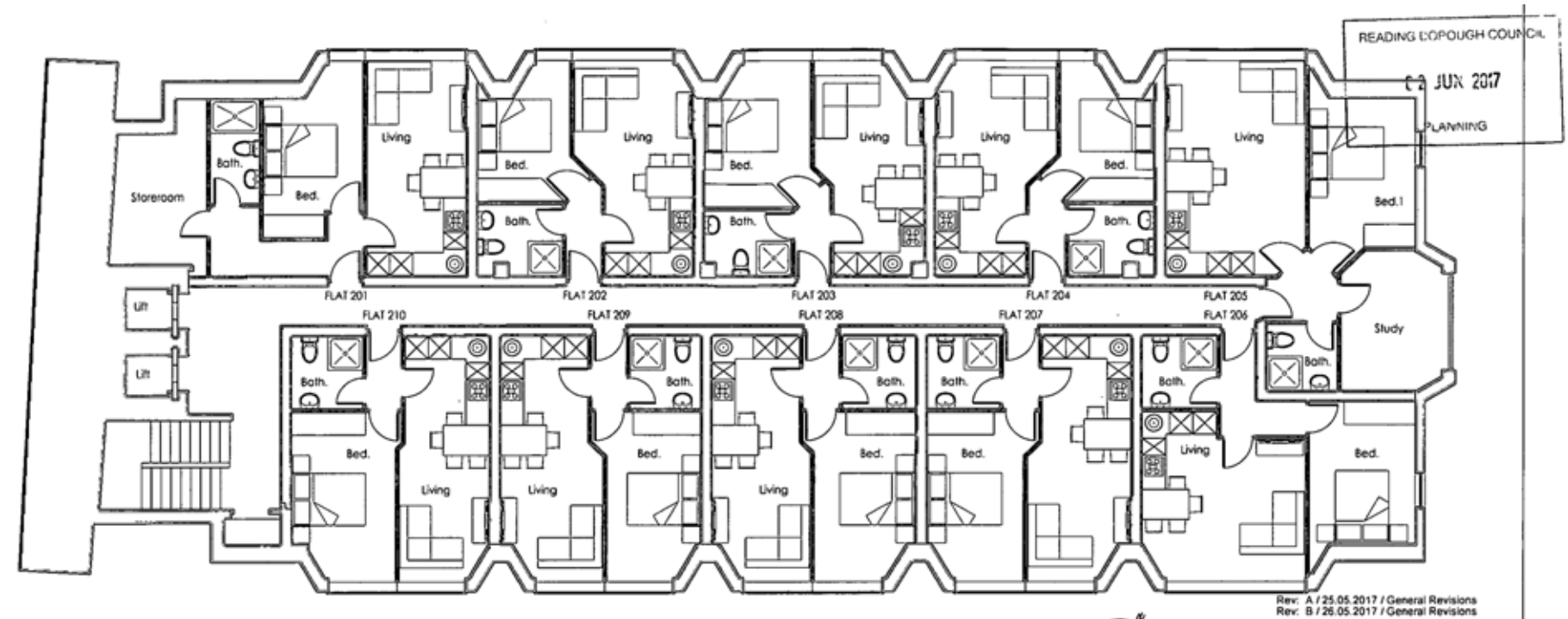
4.0 ASSOCIATED APPLICATIONS

4.1 PERMITTED DEVELOPMENT CONSENT

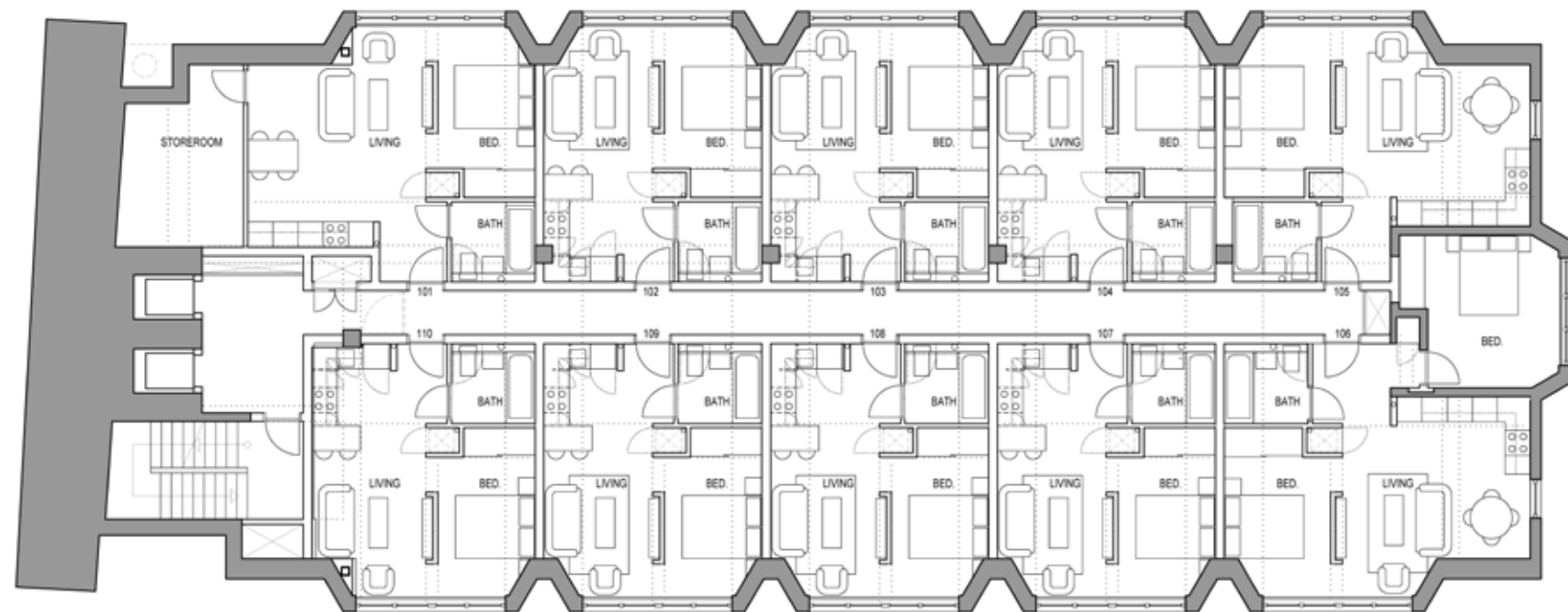
As mentioned in the introduction, the planning boundary includes Clarendon House and the adjacent car park site. Clarendon House was subject to a change of use application, submitted in June 2017 that has been consented through Permitted Development in 2017 (Application No: 170905). A prior approval for change of building use from Class B1(a) (offices) to C3 (dwelling houses) to comprise 49 residential units was granted in July 2017. Amendments to this application were submitted in January 2018 (170905/OPA) and April 2018 which include layout amendments.

The adjacent plans illustrate the scope of amendments, which rationalised the layouts in accordance with the rigid structural layout of the building. The units were then developed to maximise the usable area through open plan loft style dwellings.

In February 2018, following submission of the amendment to the permitted consent, a detailed planning application was submitted for improvements to the external elevation, the scope of this application is outlined in the following pages.



Typical Plan - Original Permitted Development Consent



Typical Plan - Amendment to Permitted Development Consent

4.0 ASSOCIATED APPLICATIONS

4.2 FABRIC IMPROVEMENTS APPLICATION

The planning application for fabric changes to Clarendon House involved simple but important changes to the facade. Changes included the replacement and redesign of all windows, reconfiguration of the ground floor to include a single entrance to the west and redesign of the entrance doors, integration of new full height French doors to the ground floor units and removal of all rainwater pipes on the front facade.

The rendered Elevation to the right show the main design changes which include new window and entrances. A deep frame characterises the new window and door design which has augmented by a continuous shadow gap around the window, separating the new window 'element' from the surrounding brickwork.

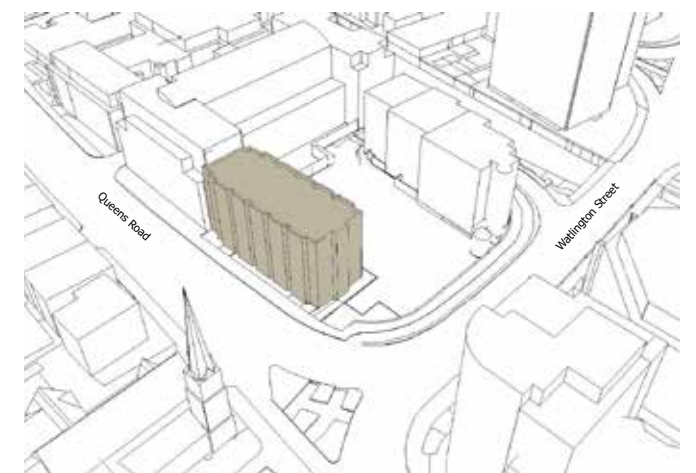
The finishes will be selected to create a 'family of colours' that not only complement but also contrast to make the windows a more defining element of the facade. The simple integration of a louvre allows for air extract and acoustic trickle ventilation to be incorporated within the window.



Rendered Elevation of the proposed entrance door



Rendered Elevation of the proposed windows



Clarendon House

