

Planning Statement

47-49 Church Street, St Martins Centre,
Caversham

March 2018

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Contact

Sara Dutfield

Sara.dutfield@turley.co.uk

Client

Hermes Property Unit Trust

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1. Introduction

1.1 This Planning Statement is submitted by Turley on behalf of Hermes Property Unit Trust ('the Applicant') in support of a full planning application for an extension to one of the existing blocks within St Martins Centre, Caversham.

1.2 The application seeks permission for :

"Extensions and alternations to 47-49 Church Street, St Martins Centre to provide a 5 storey mixed use scheme comprising 16 residential apartments (1x studio, 9 x 1 bedroom, 6 x 2 bedroom), a Cinema / Leisure facility (Use Class D2) and retail units (Use Class A1 and Use Class A3)"

1.3 Further details of the proposed development can be found under Section 3 of this Statement, and within the Design and Access Statement submitted in support of this application.

1.4 This application should be considered with reference to the existing planning consent for the 'wider site' (under reference: 140997), which is currently being implemented as a phased development. The extant permission identifies the site, subject of this application, as Block E which was to provide an extension for the existing Waitrose store. Since the permission a change in circumstances has led to this element being reconsidered and this application seeks a full standalone planning permission for a revised scheme for this element only.

1.5 Whilst these proposals have been submitted as a standalone planning application, they have evolved to ensure that the proposed uses and detailed design complement the wider regeneration of the Centre (approved under ref:140097) and ensure integration with the proposed public square and the wider street scene.

1.6 This Planning Statement is intended to address all the relevant planning policy considerations associated with the proposed development, but should be read in conjunction with the other documents and drawings supported in support of the application, including:

- Application Forms;
- Application Plans;
- Design and Access Statement;
- Transport Statement;
- Energy Statement;
- Noise Assessment;
- Viability Assessment; and
- Heritage Statement.

Report Structure

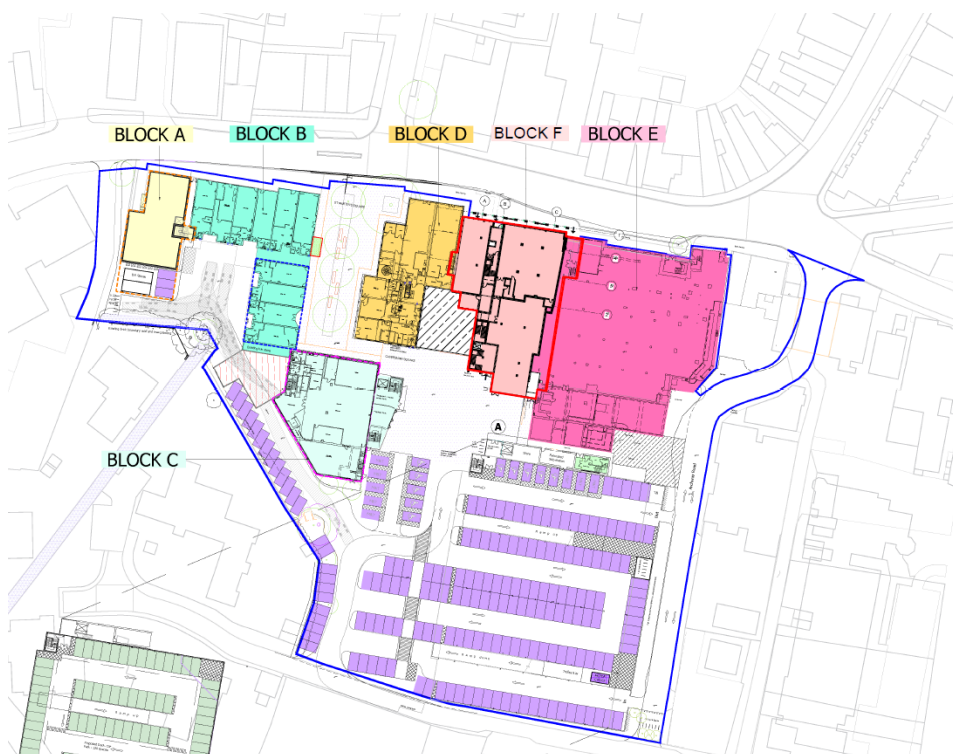
- 1.7 This report is intended to assist Reading Borough Council in its determination of the application and has been prepared in accordance with the requirements set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) and Planning Practice Guidance (PPG). It seeks to evaluate the proposed development against national and local planning policies, and considers the planning justification for the proposed scheme.
- 1.8 The remainder of the report is structured as follows:
- **Section 2:** Describes the site location and details its planning history;
 - **Section 3:** Describes the proposed development and the proposed retail operation;
 - **Section 4:** Sets out the planning policy context against which the proposal should be assessed, including the Framework and Development Plan;
 - **Section 5:** Provides the planning assessment of proposals against the salient planning policy framework; and
 - **Section 6:** Presents our conclusions.

2. The Application Site

Site Location and Context

- 2.1 The site is located within the St Martin's Centre which is a second tier local centre as defined by the Reading Borough Core Strategy. The only centre which ranks higher is Reading town centre itself. The Centre currently provides a range of town centre uses including a number of national and independent retailers.
- 2.2 The existing shopping complex was built during the 1960s, and sits to the south of Church Street. Planning permission was granted in 2015 for the regeneration of the 'wider site' (Ref: 140997), with the work associated with Phase 1B recently completed.
- 2.3 This application site broadly aligns with the area identified as Block E in the original scheme and forms an integral area within the local centre both with regard to its street frontage to Church Street but also its position within the proposed public square (approved under Ref: 140997) .

Figure 2.1: Application Site within Approved Phasing Plan



- 2.4 The site is bound by Church Street along the northern boundary, the existing car park serving the wider site to the south, the Waitrose supermarket to the east and further retail units to the west as well as the existing service yard.
- 2.5 There are no public rights of way over the application site, although there is an established pedestrian walkway along the side of the existing Waitrose store.

- 2.6 Pedestrian access to the site is provided from both Church Street and from within the St Martins Centre complex. The principal vehicular access is via Church Street and Archway Road which will be retained through the extant permission. Parking is to be provided as per the extant permission.
- 2.7 The application site itself lies in Flood Zone 1 as identified utilising the Environment Agency's Flood Map.
- 2.8 There are a number of Grade II listed buildings within the vicinity of the application site including the Caversham Baptist Free Church, and the West Memorial Hall, and notably the Caversham Library to the north of the site.

Planning History

- 2.9 The Site was originally constructed during the 1960s and was acquired by Hermes in 2007, who undertook the following works prior to the approval of planning permission for the wider site (Ref: 140997):
- Refurbishment of residential properties fronting Church Street
 - Replacement of two dead trees within the wider site with large specimens in specialist tree pits
 - Extensive drainage and surfacing repair
 - Essential maintenance such as roof covering exercises
- 2.10 In addition to the above work, the Applicant has shown commitment to the consented regeneration of the wider site with the recent completion of Phase 1b, part of the permitted regenerations scheme (Ref:140997).
- 2.11 A review of the Council's online planning register indicates an extensive planning history on the wider site, although the majority are not relevant to this application.

Wider Site Planning Consent

- 2.12 The most relevant application in relation to the site is that for the St Martins Centre Regeneration which was granted planning permission on 11th February 2015 (Ref:140997) for the following development:
- "Erection of new and extended retail (use class A1) floor space, new restaurant (use class A3), new leisure (use class D2) floorspace, residential apartments (use class C3), car park works (including erection of a single storey deck and reconfiguration at ground level) and associated landscaping, surfacing, public realm and shopfront improvement works."
- 2.13 A Non-material Amendment to Condition 2 of the permission 140997 was determined on the 8th June 2016 under reference 160018, and approved a phasing plan allowing the development to be carried out in stages. The approved phasing plan is shown in Figure 2.2.

Figure 2.2: Approved Phasing Plan (Reference: 160018)



- 2.14 Within Figure 2.2 above the site is identified as Phase 2b (Units 8 and 9)¹ where the consented proposals sought the redevelopment of the existing retail unit (occupied by Superdrug) to facilitate the extension of the existing Waitrose supermarket (Use Class A1) at ground floor level by 448.8sqm.
- 2.15 Since the approval, Waitrose's position has changed and they no longer wish to pursue this opportunity and therefore a revised scheme has been considered, based on appropriate and alternative town centre uses have been considered which can support the viability and vitality of the Centre. The applicant is committed to bringing forward development of the site, as a key component of the wider regeneration, and therefore the proposals have sought to draw upon the objectives and design rationale secured through the extant permission.
- 2.16 The approval of the wider development scheme (Ref: 140997) has established that the principle of Town Centre uses within this location is acceptable and this application aligns with this position and proposes an appropriate mix of uses, enhancing the retail, leisure and residential offer secured under the extant permission.

Reading Borough Council Pre-application Advice

- 2.17 The Applicant sought Pre-application Scoping Advice in relation to this application in August 2017 with a meeting held with Officer's on the 31st August 2017. The advice set out by the Council considered the following key issues:

¹ Phasing Plan (Ref: PP-F-E-00)

- 2.18 **Principle of Development** –confirmed that in light of the location, the proposed cinema and retail uses were acknowledged as defined town centre uses. The Council Officer stated that policy would require the retention of active usage in regards to the ground floor retail units. In regards to the overall scheme, the Council advised that the proposals would be subject to consideration regarding technical matters including further details including on design and parking quantum.
- 2.19 Design: - On design matters, the following comments were raised by the Planning Officer:
- The Council Officer commented that the frontage of the development would need to fit in with the existing streets scene along Church Street and be of an appropriate scale.
 - The Officer commented that there was scope to amend the massing of the proposed development by setting back the top floors (4th and 5th) in order to reduce views from the street.
 - A BREEAM rating of ‘very good’ or ‘excellent’ would be expected for non-residential uses of the development, in line with the 2014 BREEAM Standards.
 - A 19% over TER (Target Emission Rate) would be sought for 50% of the residential units.
- 2.20 **Supporting Documentation:** The Officer advised that a Transport Statement would need to be submitted in support the application to demonstrate that the revised proposals would not result in increased parking need or impact on the highway network. Further, a Noise Assessment would need to be submitted to ensure and demonstrate the suitability of incorporating residential units alongside the cinema facility.
- 2.21 **Existing Planning Consent:** As the proposed development will form part of the wider regeneration scheme for St Martins Centre, the Council advised that conditions of the approved application (Ref: 140997) would need to be complied with and any technical details would need to be addressed.
- 2.22 **Signage:** The Council advised that alongside the planning application, an application for full advertising consent be submitted to the Council.
- 2.23 The pre-application consultation identified that a Section 106 Agreement / Deed of Variation would be required with this application and noted the potential for CIL charges to be applicable to the development.

Consultation

- 2.24 Ahead of the submission of this application a number of consultations with key stakeholders have taken place. This included meetings with the Caversham Traders Association and CADRA, and offers to meet the local ward councillors.

- 2.25 At the meeting with the Traders Association the scheme was presented and the rationale behind the changes to the overall plan were discussed, including the decision by Waitrose not to pursue the extension and the difficulties that the applicant has been experiencing in relation to the Iceland unit (Block C). Some concern was raised about any implications for parking but the general consensus was one of support.
- 2.26 Correspondence with CADRA resulted in a meeting with project architects and planners and two lead members of CADRA where the plans were presented alongside a discussion about the reasons for the changes. Whilst having no objections to the principle of the proposed scheme, and supportive of the inclusion of a cinema into the scheme the members expressed some concerns about the overall height of the building and the palette of materials being proposed.
- 2.27 All of the comments have been taken on board and refinements have been made to the scheme as a result. Further information on the materials on the design and the materials is included within the submitted Design and Access Statement.

3. The Proposed Development

- 3.1 As discussed within Section 2, this planning application has come forward to provide an alternative proposal for Block E (also known as Phase 2B) of the extant permission, on account of a change in commercial circumstances.
- 3.2 Having reviewed a number of options, the scheme proposed builds upon the interest of a potential occupier, as well as the retention of 'Superdrug' and a small extension to Waitrose.

Description of Development

- 3.3 The proposed development seeks full planning permission for the following:

“Extensions and alternations to 47-49 Church Street, St Martins Centre to provide a 5 storey mixed use scheme comprising 16 residential apartments (1xstudio, 9x1 bedroom, 6x2 bedroom), a Cinema / Leisure facility (Use Class D2) and retail units (Use Class A1 and Use Class A3)”

Development Quantum

- 3.4 The revised proposals for the site seek to optimise the quantum of development accommodated on site and respond to the prevailing building heights and design rationale established through the extant permission. The revised design is considered to be more in keeping and aesthetically an improvement on the approved scheme, which was designed specifically with the end user (Waitrose) in mind.
- 3.5 The prominent position of the site frontage along Church Street in addition to the site's rear elevation onto the proposed public square has been a key consideration in considering the quantum of development that would be accommodated and ensuring that this part of the site forms a key anchor of St Martins Centre.
- 3.6 The proposed building will extend to four storeys (ground floor plus 3) and will accommodate 16 residential flats, three ground floor retail units (2 x A1 and 1x A3) and a cinema (D2) facility. The extension to the building will result in the loss of 106sqm of A1 retail (through the reconfiguration of the first floor storage and the creation of the new residential units entrance), the provision of 283sqm of A3 uses and a cinema of 1108sqm.
- 3.7 The existing retail units, which front onto Church Street will be mainly retained and will continue to be accessed directly from Church Street maintaining an active frontage within the Centre with associated servicing contained to the rear of the site.
- 3.8 A small area will be lost along the frontage to provide access to the residential units on upper floors albeit this is offset by the creation of a new A3 unit fronting onto Caversham Square, which will complement the wider District Centre uses as a whole.
- 3.9 The existing service yard will be reconfigured but will continue to serve the existing retail units as well as the new A3 unit.

- 3.10 The development will incorporate a cinema / leisure facility (Use Class D2) which will be accessed from a new lobby/entrance directly off Caversham Square. The cinema itself will be on the first and second floors extending.
- 3.11 The residential apartment are proposed on the first, second, third and fourth floors , distributed as shown below:
- First Floor - 1 x Studio Apartment
 - Second Floor - 4 x One Bedroom Apartments and 1 x Two Bedroom Apartment
 - Third Floor - 4 x One Bedroom Apartments and 1 x Two Bedroom Apartment
 - Fourth Floor - 1 x One Bedroom Apartment and 4 x Two Bedroom Apartments
- 3.12 The studio and one bedroom apartments range between 43m² and 51m². The proposed two bedroom flats range between 68m² and 77m². Access to the residential units is provided via a new and dedicated entrance from Church Street, with means of escape egress onto Caversham Square.
- 3.13 Appropriate amenity space will be provided for the residential units in the form of private balconies with private bicycle storage provide at ground floor level.

Height

- 3.14 The building is proposed to extend to a height of 17.1m, with the proposed façade of the ground to third floors aligning with the approved building heights under the extant permission to the east (Block A). The fourth floor is set back from the Church Street façade and will extend to the same height as Block A of the extant permission.

Design & Layout

- 3.15 The design and layout of the proposals have sought to follow the principles established through the extant permission especially with regard to building massing and heights, in addition to proposing appropriate façade treatments that will ensure the revised proposals successfully integrate with the wider scheme.
- 3.16 The applicant considers that this part of the wider site represents a significant opportunity to further enhance the architectural composition of Church Street (above that previously consented) and to deliver a building which delivers much needed dynamism to both facades which abut key vistas within the consented scheme.
- 3.17 Further details of the proposed design can be found in the Design and Access Statement submitted in support of this application which discusses the overarching design rationale for this part of the site and the design evolution process which has led to the submitted proposals.

- 3.18 In addition, the proposed site layout in relation to the wider site and regeneration scheme can be seen on Site Plan (26669 PP-F-00).

Access & Parking

- 3.19 The existing access to the A1 units will be retained from Church Street, A further entrance to the building will be provided from Church Street between units 47 and 49 on the ground floor providing an entrance lobby to the residential units above.
- 3.20 Access to the proposed restaurant will be taken from Caversham Square to the rear of the building, with a further separate access to the cinema on the first and second floors.
- 3.21 The main vehicular access to the site will be provided via the existing route leading from Archway Road providing access to the public car parking area. As part of the wider approved scheme this access route will be subject to improvement works which are not considered within this application.
- 3.22 The wider site is served by an existing car park located to the rear which is proposed to be enhanced through the implementation of the extant permission. It is considered that this enhanced provision will be sufficient to serve the parking requirements of these proposals.
- 3.23 Appropriate servicing will be provided through the existing servicing bays to the south of the site which incorporating appropriate bin storage.

4. Planning Policy Context

Introduction

- 4.1 The following section provides a summary of the key elements of national and local planning policy relevant to the proposed development at the application site.
- 4.2 In accordance with Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, applications are to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The Development Plan in this instance comprises the Core Strategy, adopted in 2008 and altered in 2015, the Sites and Detailed Policies Document, adopted in 2012 and altered in 2015. These are accompanied by the adopted Proposals Map which indicates the spatial extent of the policies of the development plan documents.
- 4.3 In addition, overarching planning policy guidance is contained within the National Planning Policy Framework and the National Planning Practice Guidance of which relevant details are also outlined below.
- 4.4 Furthermore consideration will also be given to the emerging Local Plan that will replace current development plan documents and set out a new development strategy for Reading up to 2036. Consultation on the Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan concluded on the 26th January 2018. Guidance is clear that where there is an emerging plan, the weight to be afforded to the plan is dependent upon the stage of preparation and also on the number of unresolved issues associated with a specific matter.
- 4.5 Whilst the applicant has made representations to the emerging plan in respect of the wider St Martins Centre, objecting in part to some of the policies Recognition is given to the advanced stage of the emerging Plan and accordingly it is considered appropriate to afford some weight to the policies contained within it.

National Planning Policy Framework

- 4.6 The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) was published on 27th March 2012 and forms the overarching planning framework for England. Framework

Presumption in Favour

- 4.7 The Framework sets out the Government's economic, environmental and social planning policies for England, with paragraph 8 setting out the requirement of the planning system to "...play an active role in guiding development to sustainable solutions" (para. 8).
- 4.8 A 'presumption in favour of sustainable development' is central to the Framework. Paragraph 14 of the Framework states that:

"At the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which should be seen as a golden thread running through both plan-making and decision-taking."

4.9 Paragraph 14 of the Framework requires that for decision-taking this means:

- approving development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay;
- and where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out-of-date, granting permission unless:
 - any adverse impacts of doing so would significant and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole; or
 - specific policies in this Framework indicate development should be restricted.

4.10 Paragraph 47 of the Framework requires the LPAs to ‘boost significantly’ their supply of housing with paragraph 49 setting out that applications for housing should be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Core Policies

4.11 Paragraph 17 of the Framework identifies 12 core land-use planning principles. The elements of these principles of particular relevance to this application (either in terms of plan-making or decision-taking) include:

- encouraging effective use of land by reusing previously developed land not of high environmental value;
- taking account of the different roles and character of different areas; proactively driving and supporting sustainable economic development;
- making every effort to identify objectively the development needs of an area; responding positively to wider opportunities for growth and promoting mixed use development;
- taking account of market signals;
- setting clear strategies for allocating sufficient land suitable for development taking account of the needs of communities;
- delivering sufficient community and cultural facilities to meet local needs;
- focusing significant development in locations that are or can be made sustainable.

Building a Strong, Competitive Economy

4.12 The Framework sets out the Government’s commitment to ensuring that the planning system does everything it can to support economic growth, and that planning should operate to encourage and not act as an impediment to sustainable growth (paragraph 19).

- 4.13 Importantly, paragraph 21 states that investment in business should not be overburdened by the combined requirements of planning policy expectations.
- 4.14 Paragraph 22 of the Framework advises that planning policies should avoid the long term protection of employment sites where there is no reasonable prospect of sites being used for that purpose.
- 4.15 Additionally, in preparing plans, the Framework advises that LPA's should recognise the needs of a range of economic development (which includes retail development) and should work closely with the business community to understand existing business needs and changes in the market (Paragraphs 160 & 161).

Ensuring the Vitality of Town Centres

- 4.16 Paragraphs 23-27 of the Framework set out the national planning policy applying to proposals involving retail development is set out, seeking to promote and ensure the vitality of existing town centres.
- 4.17 In the plan-making process, paragraph 23 identifies the priorities that local planning authorities should pursue:
- Recognise town centres as the heart of their communities and pursue policies to support their vitality and vitality;
 - define a network and hierarchy of centres that is resilient to anticipated future economic changes;
 - define the extent of town centres and primary shopping areas, based on a clear definition of primary and secondary frontages in designated centres, and set policies that make clear which uses will be permitted in such locations;
 - promote competitive town centres that provide customer choice and a diverse retail offer and which reflect the individuality of town centres;
 - retain and enhance existing markets and, where appropriate, re-introduce or create new ones, ensuring that markets remain attractive and competitive
 - allocate a range of suitable sites to meet the scale and type of retail, leisure, commercial, office, tourism, cultural, community and residential development needed in town centres. It is important that needs for retail, leisure, office and other main town centre uses are met in full and are not compromised by limited site availability. Local Planning authorities should therefore undertake an assessment of the need to expand town centres to ensure a sufficient supply of suitable sites;
 - allocate appropriate edge of centre sites for main town centre uses that are well connected to the town centre where suitable and viable town centre sites are not available. If sufficient edge of centre sites cannot be identified, set policies for meeting the identified needs in other accessible locations that are well connected to the town centre;

- set policies for the consideration of proposals for main town centre uses which cannot be accommodated in or adjacent to town centres;
- recognise that residential development can play an important role in ensuring the vitality of centres and set out policies to encourage residential development on appropriate sites; and
- where town centres are in decline, local planning authorities should plan positively for their future to encourage economic activity.

Promoting Sustainable Transport

- 4.18 Chapter 4 of the Framework guides the important role transport plays in achieving sustainable development, seeking to maximise sustainable transport solutions.
- 4.19 Paragraph 30 sets out that transport solutions that seek to reduce and minimise gas emissions and commissions should be encouraged and should be supported through the planning system.
- 4.20 All developments that have the potential to increase movements on the transport network should be supported by a Transport Statement or Assessment, as guided by paragraph 32.
- 4.21 Paragraph 34 highlights that through the decision-making process, local planning authorities should encourage developments where the need to travel will be minimised and where significant opportunities for the use of sustainable transport modes exist.
- 4.22 Paragraph 35 sets out a number of objectives that are encouraged for developments including the need to prioritise pedestrians and cycles, provide access to high quality sustainable transport, provide facilities such as charging points for low-emission vehicles and to consider those with disabilities by all modes of transport.
- 4.23 In order to implement some of the measures encouraged, travel plans should be submitted for all developments generating significant movement (paragraph 36).
- 4.24 Local planning authorities are encouraged to adopt local parking standards for development that reflect the accessibility, type and mix of uses, as well as the opportunities for the use of public transport and an overall need for the reduction of high-emission vehicles.

Delivering a Wide Choice of High Quality Homes

- 4.25 Chapter 6 of the Framework sets out the need for the delivery of high quality homes meeting affordable and market housing needs, with paragraph 47 setting out that local planning authorities should ensure that they boost significantly the supply of housing.
- 4.26 Paragraph 49 sets out that applications for housing should be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

4.27 Paragraph 50 sets out the following requirements of the role of local planning authorities in the delivery of a wide choice of high quality homes:

- plan for a mix of housing based on current and future demographic trends, market trends and the needs of different groups in the community (such as, but not limited to, families with children, older people, people with disabilities, service families and people wishing to build their own homes);
- identify the size, type, tenure and range of housing that is required in particular locations, reflecting local demand; and
- where they have identified that affordable housing is needed, set policies for meeting this need on site, unless off-site provision or a financial contribution of broadly equivalent value can be robustly justified (for example to improve or make more effective use of the existing housing stock) and the agreed approach contributes to the objective of creating mixed and balanced communities. Such policies should be sufficiently flexible to take account of changing market conditions over time.

Requiring Good Design

4.28 The Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for people (paragraph 56).

4.29 Paragraph 58 sets out the functions that high quality design should achieve including the need to establish a strong sense of place, improve the long-term quality of the area, optimise the development potential of the site, respond to local character and history, safe developments that discourage crime and disorder, as well as visually attractive development.

4.30 Paragraph 60 sets out guidance that planning decisions should not attempt to impose architectural styles or particular tastes and they should not stifle innovation, originality or initiative through unsubstantiated requirements to conform to certain development forms or styles. It is, however, proper to seek to promote or reinforce local distinctiveness.

4.31 Securing high quality design goes further than aesthetic considerations and thus planning policies and decisions should address connections between people and places, and ensure the integration of new development into the natural, built and historic environment, in line with paragraph 61.

4.32 In line with paragraph 63, local planning authorities are encouraged to afford great weight to outstanding, innovative design which would help to increase the overall quality of the area.

4.33 Design proposals that demonstrate high attainment of sustainability by engaging good design, should not be refused solely due to concerns relating to compatibility with an existing townscape (paragraph 65).

- 4.34 Paragraph 66 encourages developers to engage the local community within the design process for new development.

Promoting Healthy Communities

- 4.35 Local planning authorities are expected to promote places that achieve community interaction through the use of mixed-use developments, safe and accessible developments that provide high quality public space and discourage crime (paragraph 69).
- 4.36 Paragraph 70 sets out that planning policies and decisions should ensure established shops and facilities are able to develop and modernise in a way that is sustainable, and retained for the benefit of the community, and that an integrated approach is pursued for the consideration of the location of housing, economic uses and community facilities and services.

Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change, Flooding and Coastal Change

- 4.37 Chapter 10 of the Framework sets out the Government's priority to ensure that planning aids in minimising and providing resilience against the impacts of climate change, through encouraging renewable energy and the delivery of associated infrastructure.
- 4.38 Paragraph 96 sets out that new development should comply with local policy requirements on decentralised energy supply, unless the applicant can demonstrate that this would be unviable in relation to the type and design of development.

Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment

- 4.39 Chapter 10 of the Framework sets out the importance for development proposals to consider and to minimise impacts on the natural environment, and to pursue opportunities for its enhancement where appropriate.
- 4.40 Paragraph 111 encourages the effective use of brownfield land, provided that it is not of high environmental value.
- 4.41 In line with paragraph 120, planning policies and decisions should seek to ensure new development is appropriate for its location, ensure the prevention of unacceptable risks from pollution and land instability.
- 4.42 Through the implementation of good design, paragraph 125 sets out that planning decisions should limit the impact of light pollution on local amenity.

Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment

- 4.43 Chapter 12 sets out the importance for a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment.
- 4.44 In line with paragraph 128, planning applications should describe the significance of any heritage asset affected by development, including any contribution made by their

setting, with the level of detail reflecting the significance of the asset and the potential impact.

4.45 Paragraph 129 sets out that local planning authorities should seek to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposed development.

4.46 In the determination of planning applications, local planning authorities should take account of the following, in line with paragraph 131:

- the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
- the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and
- the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

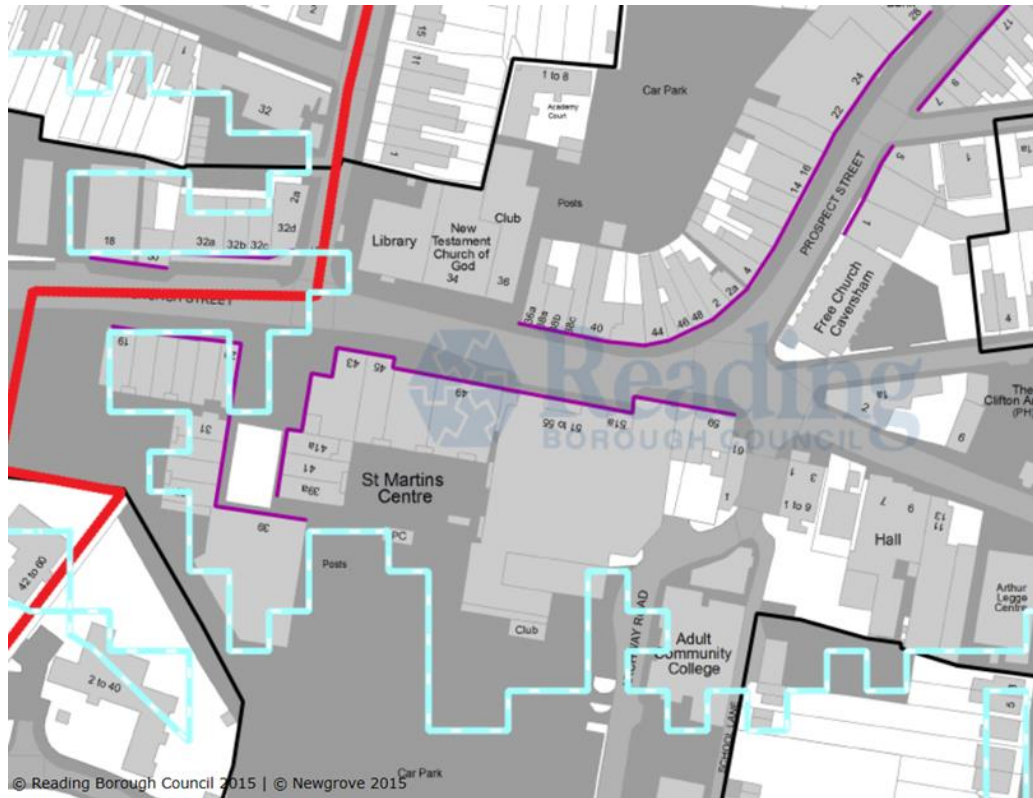
4.47 Paragraph 143 explains that where development proposals are considered to have 'less than substantial harm' upon an asset's significance, such harm should be weighed against the benefits of the proposed development' including the importance to secure its optimum viable use.

Adopted Development Plan

4.48 The development plan is formed of the Core Strategy and the Sites and Detailed Policies Document. These core documents set out numerous policies which are of relevance to the proposals set out within this application.

Reading Borough Council adopted the Proposals Map in October 2012, and it sets out geographically where the policies contained within the adopted development plan documents should be applied. An extract of the Proposals Map is shown below which identifies the site within the key retail frontage of Caversham District Centre.

Figure 4.1: Reading Borough Council Proposals Map (2012)



The Core Strategy

- 4.49 The Core Strategy is the key development plan document, adopted by Reading Borough Council in 2008, with alterations to the document adopted on the 27th January 2015. Core Strategy policies relevant to the determination of this application are set out below:
- 4.50 **Policy CS1: Sustainable Construction and Design** sets out that proposals for new development, including the construction of new buildings and the redevelopment and refurbishment of existing building stock, will be acceptable where the design of buildings and site layouts use energy and other natural resources appropriately, efficiently and with care and take account of the effects of climate change. All new commercial development will be required to be BREEAM Very Good as a minimum standard.
- 4.51 **Policy CS4: Accessibility and the Intensity of Development** seeks to ensure the scale and density of development within the Borough will be related to its level of accessibility by walking, cycling and public transport to a range of services and facilities.
- 4.52 **Policy CS5: Inclusive Access** states that all buildings should be located, site and designed to provide suitable access for all potential users, including disabled people, so that they can use them safely and easily.

- 4.53 **Policy CS9: Infrastructure, Services, Resources, and Amenities** sets out that proposals will not be permitted unless the local planning authority is satisfied that infrastructure, services, resources, amenities or other assets lost or impacted upon as a result of the development or made necessary by the development will be provided.
- 4.54 **Policy CS16: Affordable Housing** sets out that development of 15 dwellings and above will provide 30% of the total number of dwellings as affordable housing units to meet the needs of the area.
- 4.55 **Policy CS20: Implementation of The Reading Transport Strategy (Local Transport Plan 2006-2011)** states that planning permission will not be granted unless proposed development appropriate contributes to the provision of a balanced transport network as outlined in the Reading Transport Strategy.
- 4.56 **Policy CS22: Transport Assessments** guides development proposals to ensure adequate and appropriate provision of works and contributions to ensure an adequate level of accessibility and safety by all modes of transport from all parts of the development, particularly by public transport, walking and cycling, in accordance with an agreed transport assessment submitted as part of the application.
- 4.57 **Policy CS26: Network and Hierarchy of Centres** sets out the network and hierarchy of the centres identified within the district. Reading town centre is the 'regional centre', with Caversham identified as a 'district centre, noting the importance of local centres in achieving sustainable development.
- 4.58 **Policy CS27: Maintaining the Retail Character of Centres** seeks to ensure a strong retail character is maintained in the centres identified as being part of the network.
- 4.59 **Policy CS33: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment** states that Listed Buildings and other elements of the historic environment, including their settings, will be protected and where appropriate enhanced.

Sites and Detailed Policies Document

- 4.60 The Sites and Detailed Policies document is 'intrinsically linked to Reading's adopted Core Strategy', setting out the detailed policies and allocated sites necessary to deliver the Core Strategy. The document was adopted in 2012, with alterations adopted on the 27th January 2015.
- 4.61 **Policy SD1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development** sets out that the Council will pursue a positive approach to considering development proposals reflecting the presumption in favour of sustainable development set out by the Framework
- 4.62 **Policy DM1: Adaption to Climate Change** states that all development need to demonstrate how they have been designed to incorporate measures to adapt to climate change.

- 4.63 **Policy DM2:** Decentralised Energy requires that appropriate provision is made to secure energy for the development to assist in meeting the required BREEAM standards.
- 4.64 **Policy DM3: Infrastructure Planning** sets out that development should make an appropriate provision towards infrastructure, services, resources and amenities. Such provision will be secured through planning obligations and / or the Community Infrastructure Levy as relevant.
- 4.65 **Policy DM4: Safeguarding Amenity** sets out the need for development to not result in significant detrimental impacts to the living environment of existing or new residential properties, in terms of:
- Privacy and overlooking;
 - Access to sunlight and daylight;
 - Visual dominance and overbearing effects of a development;
 - Noise and disturbance;
 - Artificial lighting;
 - Vibration;
 - Dust and fumes;
 - Smell; or
 - Crime and Safety.
- 4.66 **Policy DM5: Housing Mix** sets out the target for 50% of dwellings to be 3 bedrooms or more, for developments over 10 dwellings and that Planning decisions will ensure that all new-build dwellings in any location will be built to 'Lifetime Homes' standards, having regard to all other material considerations.
- 4.67 **Policy DM6: Affordable Housing** for development sites of less than 15 dwellings, the following affordable housing targets will be sought:
- On sites of 10- 14 dwellings – 30% provision
 - On sites of 5-9 dwellings – 20% provision
 - On sites of 1-4 dwellings, a financial contribution will be made that will enable the equivalent of 10% of the housing to be provided as affordable housing elsewhere in the Borough.
- 4.68 **DM12: Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters** states that proposals involving a new or altered access onto the transport network, improvements to the transport network, the creation of new transport infrastructure or the generation of additional trips on the transport network, will be determined with consideration given to the

effect on safety, congestion and the environment. Development will be permitted where the following criteria are met:

- Accesses and works to the highway comply with the adopted standards of the Transport Authority;
- The development would not have a material detrimental impact on the functioning of the transport network;
- The proposals would not be detrimental to the safety of users of the transport network, including pedestrians and cyclists.
- The proposal would not generate regular movement of heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) on unsuitable roads, or on roads without easy access to the Classified Highway Network; and
- For non-residential uses, or new dwellings on classified roads, off-street servicing would be provided.

4.69 **Policy DM13: Vitality and Viability of Smaller Centres** sets out that within district, major and local centres, development will be permitted where the following criteria are met:

- There would be no more than 2 consecutive A5 takeaways, and no more than 30% of the length of Key Frontage would be in takeaway use; and
- There would be no net loss of 'centre uses' for 'non-centre uses' at the ground floor (apart from entrances to upper floors) except in exceptional circumstances. On upper floor, other uses including residential ('living over the shops') will be acceptable.

4.70 **Policy DM19: Air Quality** sets out the requirements for development to reduce the effects of poor air quality.

4.71 **Policy SA15: District and Local Centres** identifies that development will be directed towards district and local centres. The policy identifies Caversham as a District Centre.

Emerging Development Plan

Reading Borough Local Plan

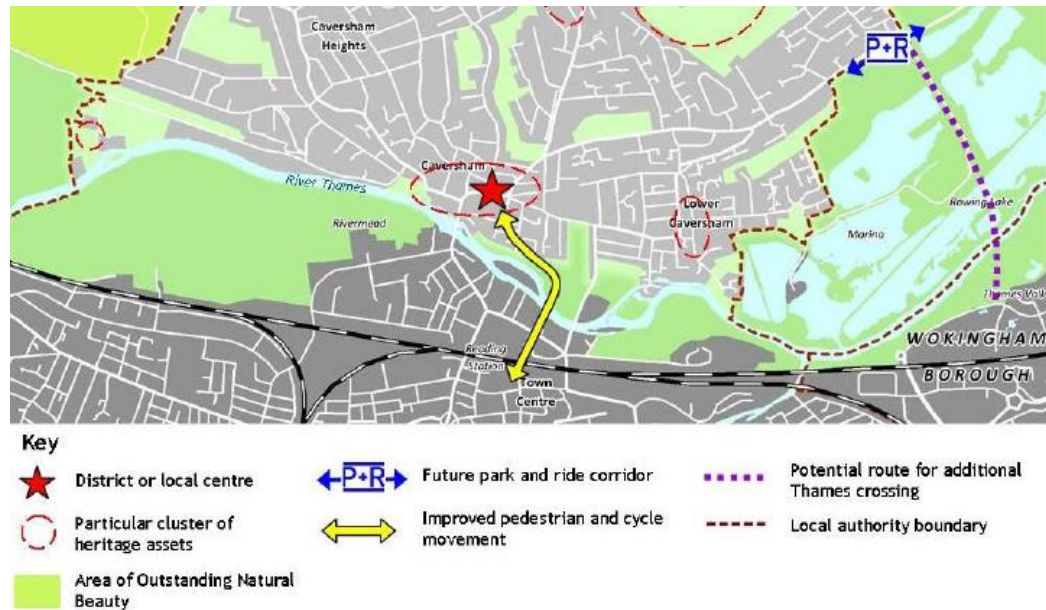
4.72 Reading Borough Council are in the process of preparing a new local plan for the borough up to 2036, which will replace all existing adopted development plan documents.

4.73 The most up to date Local Development Scheme (published November 2016) sets out that the expected adoption date for the new Plan is January 2019. With planned consultations for April to June, and November to December of 2017. Thus far, the timescales of these consultations has been met by the Council, and the pre-submission draft of the Reading Borough Local Plan has recently concluded.. We do not, therefore,

anticipate a slip to the programme and given the advanced nature of the plan afford it some weight in the consideration of the proposals forming this application.

- 4.74 Chapter 8 of the emerging plan sets out the Area Strategy for the development of Caversham and Emmer Green and states that it is proposed to accommodate 700 homes over the period to 2036, although this is an indicative capacity and not a proposed target.

Figure 4.2: Reading Borough Council Proposed Area Strategy, Caversham and Emmer Green



Reference is also made to those sites which already benefit from extant planning permissions, including St Martins Centre (Ref:140997) and states that ‘any future applications on these sites will be acceptable where they are substantially the same as the existing permission’ with reference to new applications that do come forward being considered against policies in the plan, in particular whether it would adversely impact the likelihood of meeting Reading’s identified development needs. The supporting text advises that the permission establishes the principle of development in this location and therefore an allocation is not required.

- 4.75 The emerging plan also contains a number of cross cutting policies, which will apply to the whole of the Borough. Those of reference to this application are detailed below:
- 4.76 **Policy CC1: Presumption in favour of Sustainable Development** states that the Council will continue to adopt a positive approach to considering development proposals reflecting the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 4.77 **Policy CC2: Sustainable Design and Construction** seeks to ensure development proposals, including the redevelopment of existing buildings, where the design and proposed site layout uses energy, water, minerals, materials and other natural resources appropriately and efficiently, accounting for the effects of climate change. Reference is made to “all major non-residential development or conversion to

residential are required to meet the most-up to date BREEAM 'Excellent' standards, where possible'.

4.78 **Policy CC3: Adaption to Climate Change** sets out the measures that must be incorporated into all new developments:

- New buildings shall be orientated to maximise the opportunities for both natural heating and ventilation and reducing exposure to wind and other elements;
- Proposals involving both new and existing buildings shall demonstrate how they have been designed to maximise resistance and resilience to climate change for example by including measures such as solar shading, thermal mass, heating and ventilation of the building and appropriately coloured materials in areas exposed to direct sunlight, green and brown roofs, green walls, etc;
- Use of trees and other planting, where appropriate as part of a landscape scheme, to provide shading of amenity areas, buildings and streets and to help to connect habitat, designed with plants that are carefully selected, managed and adaptable to meet the predicted changed climatic conditions; and
- All development shall minimise the impact of surface water runoff from the development in the design of the drainage system, and where possible incorporate mitigation and resilience measures for any increases in river flooding levels as a result of climate change

4.79 **Policy CC4: Decentralised Energy** proposes that for non-residential developments over 1,000 sq m. shall consider the inclusion of a CHP plant, or other forms of decentralised energy within the site, unless it can be demonstrated that this is not suitable, feasible or viable.

4.80 **Policy CC5: Waste Minimisation and Storage** sets out that development should incorporate measures to minimise waste generation from the construction stage and throughout the life of buildings as well as promoting more sustainable approaches to waste management.

4.81 **Policy CC6: Accessibility and Intensity of Development** seeks to ensure development that is of a scale and density related to its level of accessibility by walking, cycling and public transport to a range of services and facilities, and that the densest and largest development should be located in the most accessible of areas.

4.82 **Policy CC7: Design and the Public Realm** sets out that development must be of high design quality that maintains and enhance the character of the area in Reading where it is located. Major developments will need to be supported by Design and Access Statements. Developments will be assessed to ensure they meet the following criteria:

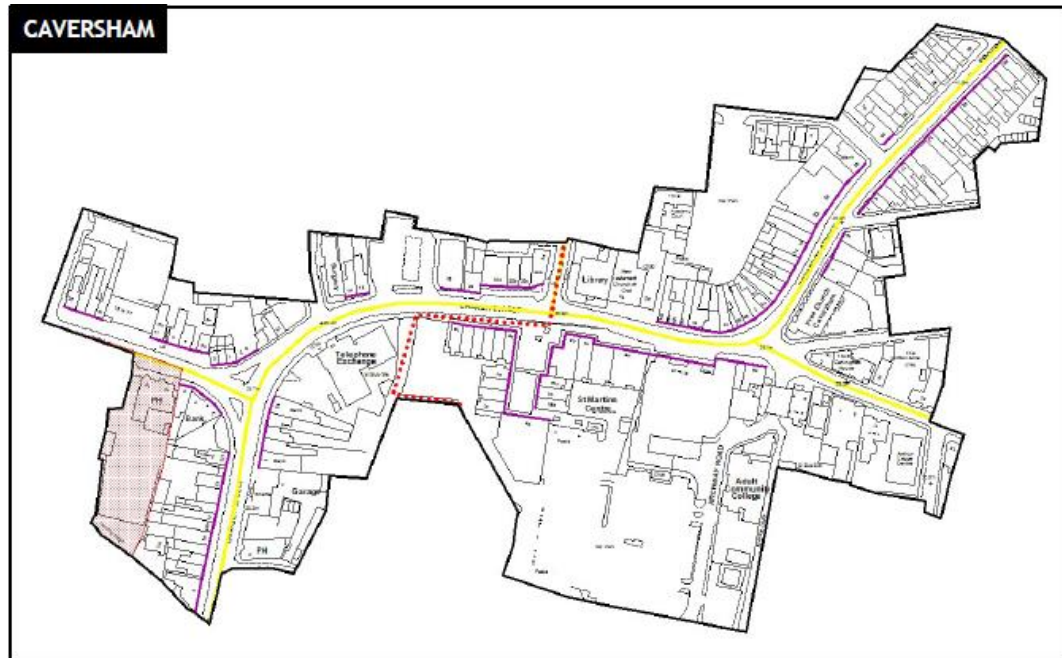
- Respond positively to their local context and create or reinforce local character and distinctiveness, including protecting and enhancing the historic environment of the Borough and providing value to the public realm;

- Create safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder or fear of crime does not undermine quality of life or community cohesion
 - Address the needs of all in society and are accessible, usable and easy to understand by them, including providing suitable access to, into and within, its facilities, for all potential users, including disabled people, so that they can use them safely and easily
 - Are visually attractive as a result of good high quality built forms and spaces, the inclusion of public art and appropriate materials and landscaping.
- 4.83 **CC8: Safeguarding Amenity** seeks to ensure that development does not have a detrimental impact on the living environment of existing residential properties or unacceptable living conditions for new residential properties.
- 4.84 **CC9: Securing Infrastructure** sets out that proposals will not be permitted unless infrastructure, services, resources, amenities or other assets lost or impacted upon as a result of the development or made necessary by the development will be provided through direct provision or financial contributions.
- 4.85 **Policy EN1: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment** elements of the historic environment, including their settings will be protected and where possible enhanced including Listed Buildings.
- 4.86 **Policy EN4: Locally Important Heritage Assets** states that development proposals affecting locally important heritage assets will demonstrate that development will conserve architectural, archaeological, or historical significance which may include the appearance, character and setting of the asset. In cases where a proposal could result in harm to a locally important heritage asset, only where it can be demonstrated that the benefits of the development significantly outweigh the asset's significance.
- 4.87 **Policy EN6: New Development in a Historic Context** states that areas characterised by heritage assets, the historic environment will inform and shape new development, which should contribute to the historic character of the area by respecting and enhancing its architectural and visual qualities and considering how heritage considerations can influence the design of new development.
- 4.88 **Policy EN17: Noise Generating Equipment** sets out that where noise generating equipment is proposed, the noise source rating level (plant noise level) should be at least 10dBA below the existing background level as measured at the nearest noise sensitive receptor.
- 4.89 **Policy H1: Provision of Housing** identifies the need for the delivery of an additional 15,433 homes in Reading Borough for the period 2013 to 2036. Furthermore, it sets out that the Council will work with neighbouring authorities within the Western Berkshire Housing Market Area to ensure the delivery of the shortfall of 644 dwellings that cannot be met in Reading.
- 4.90 **Policy H2: Density and Mix** sets out that the appropriate density of residential development will be informed by the character and mix of uses in the area, including

housing mix, as well as the consideration of nearby heritage assets or townscape areas. The policy states that densities below 30 dwellings per hectare will not be considered acceptable.

- 4.91 **Policy H3: Affordable Housing** sets out the need for residential development to deliver affordable housing, setting a target for the provision of 30% affordable units on housing sites of 10 or more dwellings.
- 4.92 **Policy H5** sets out standards for new housing that will be demonstrated through planning applications.
- 4.93 **Policy RL1: Network and Hierarchy of Centres** sets out that Caversham is a District Centre for the purposes of the Development Plan where the vitality and viability of these Centres should be maintained with the following improvements acceptable in all centres:
- Accessibility and transport improvements;
 - Broadening range of facilities;
 - Residential use of upper floors; and
 - Environmental enhancements.
- 4.94 **Policy RL2: Scale and Location of Retail and Leisure Development** states the target provision for 34,900 sq m of retail and related facilities over the period to 2036, together with new leisure facilities.
- 4.95 **RL3: Vitality and Viability of Smaller Centres** sets out that within district, major local and local centres, development will be permitted provided that no net loss of centre uses at the ground floor and along key frontages the loss of A1 retail will only be permitted where there are no more than 3 consecutive units which are not in A1 or A2 retail use.

Figure 4.3: Reading Borough Council Emerging Proposals Map – Caversham District Centre



- 4.96 It should be noted that the applicant has submitted representations to the emerging Local Plan in respect of some specific policies.

5. Planning Analysis

- 5.1 This section assesses the key considerations associated with the Proposed Development having regard to the planning policy context outlined in Section 4.

Principle of Development

- 5.2 The Framework adopts a clear pro-growth stance and introduces a presumption in favour of sustainable development. It identifies that planning should proactively drive and support sustainable economic development to deliver the homes, business and industrials units, infrastructure and thriving local places the country needs.
- 5.3 The extant permission for St Martin's Centre established the acceptability of further retail development across the site (including that part of the site identified as Block E) consistent with supporting the objectives for enhancing the vitality and viability of the District Centre. As discussed within Section 2, the approved development for Block E was designed to meet the specific retail requirements of Waitrose who, at the time, were seeking to expand further within the District Centre. Since the approval, Waitrose's position has changed and they no longer wish to pursue this opportunity and therefore a revised scheme has been considered, based on appropriate and alternative town centre uses being considered which can support the viability and vitality of the Centre.
- 5.4 Given the above, the applicant is keen to secure an appropriate alternative scheme that will build upon the original principles established through the extant permission and further increase the retail and leisure offer within the District Centre. Market signals have been considered through the conceptualisation of the revised proposals for this site in order to deliver a viable addition to the wider permitted scheme at St Martins Centre which is currently being implemented.
- 5.5 Chapter 2 of the Framework (Ensuring the vitality of town centres) sets out that local planning authorities should 'promote competitive centres that provide customer choice and a diverse retail offer and which reflect the individuality of town centres'. As the site is within Caversham District Centre and within a key retail frontage, the proposal seeks to further enhance the retail and leisure offers which will further enhance the services and facilities for residents within the local area.
- 5.6 The Core Strategy at policy CS26 sets out that the vitality and viability of District Centres should be maintained and enhanced, which is consistent with the Framework. There is further reference to District Centre's increasing the range of facilities available to allow them to be '*capable of acting as alternatives to the centre of Reading*'. The provision of additional retail and leisure facilities will certainly assist in meeting this objective and build upon enhancing a strong retail offer within the Centre and the principles established through the extant permission.
- 5.7 Sites and Detailed Policies DPD Policy DM13 focusses on ensuring that proposals do not result in a net loss of A1 uses to other 'centre uses' within the town centre with a focus on ensuring that all new development provides some 'centre uses' at the ground floor. In this context, the existing A1 units on the ground floor will be retained and

enhanced with the new A3 unit fronting the public square increasing the proportion of 'centre' uses at ground floor level within the wider centre. The proposed Cinema as a D2 class is further defined as a 'centre use' which will be delivered on the first to third floors and therefore is considered to be an acceptable use for the town centre. Supporting paragraph 7.1.5 considers that upper floors are more appropriate for a wide mix of uses including residential - which is entirely consistent with our proposals.

- 5.8 Pre-application advice from Reading Borough Council regarding this application concluded that the revised proposals for the application site would be acceptable in principle, subject to compliance with all other relevant material considerations as discussed later in this Statement.
- 5.9 As discussed within the Council's Emerging Plan (paragraph 8.3.5), the planning permission for St Martins Centre (Ref: 140997) has established the principle of development. Whilst the proposed uses in this application differ from those permitted, at this part of the site they further enhance the offer of 'centre uses', including at ground floor level, within the District Centre with uses that will reduce the need to travel to the centre of Reading for retail and leisure needs. The proposals will deliver viable town centre uses that will support the vitality of St Martins Centre and make the best and most viable use of land. This accords with paragraphs 160 and 161 of the Framework that recognise the need for LPA's to recognise the needs of economic development and to understand changes in the market.

Retail

- 5.10 In accordance with adopted policies, the proposal will seek to reinforce the status of Caversham as a District Centre within the Borough by enhancing the retail offer at ground floor level complying with the requirements of policy CS27 and DM13 with the retention of the A1 use along the key frontage of Church Street. The delivery of a new A3 unit fronting the new Caversham Square will assist in addressing the limited number of comparison retail outlets identified within the West Berkshire Retail and Leisure Study 2017 and increasing the number of comparison retail outlets within the District Centre².
- 5.11 The emerging Local Plan seeks to make provision for up to 34,900 sqm of retail and related facilities in Reading to 2036, together with new leisure facilities and the proposals would assist in meeting this policy objective.
- 5.12 Overall, the proposed development will result not only in an uplift to the existing ground floor retail space currently on site but also enhance the retail floorspace secured through the extant planning permission which will further contribute to the diverse offer of town centre uses within Caversham District Centre. It is recognised that a small part of the A1 frontage will be lost along Church Street to provide access to the upper floor residential units although this principle is acceptable under policy DM13 and the provision of an A3 unit to the rear of the site will deliver new active frontages within the Centre.

- 5.13 As such, it is considered that the proposal will comply with policy CS27, DM13 and emerging policy RL1.

Leisure

- 5.14 The Framework at paragraph 23 requires that the needs for leisure are met in full and are not compromised by site availability. At present, there is no cinema facility within the District Centre, but permission exists for one as part of the extant consent. The extant permission allowed for the change of use of part of the upper floors of Block C to provide a cinema. Since then, a cinema operator has expressed an interest in locating within St Martin's Centre although requires a greater floor area than that permitted. Furthermore, the consented proposals for Block C cannot currently be implemented as the upper floors of Block C are within the demise of 'Iceland', with an ongoing lease that they are not willing to negotiate. As such, the application will seek to ensure the deliverability of a new cinema with commitment from an interested occupier to bring forward the proposals as soon as possible.
- 5.15 The Core Strategy recognises (at paragraph 8.7) that the most suitable location for retail, leisure and cultural development is within existing centres. However, since this policy was adopted, RBC has commissioned the Western Berkshire Retail and Commercial Leisure Assessment 2016 (April 2017) pursuant to the emerging Local Plan (Pre-submission Version 2018) which discusses that 'commercial leisure' facilities which includes cinema uses, are *'becoming an increasingly important contributor to the vitality and viability of town centres'*³. Furthermore the study recognises that *'leisure is becoming an increasingly important component in town centre regeneration schemes'* (paragraph 4.23) - particularly relevant given the on-going regeneration of St Martin's Centre which is currently being implemented by the Applicant.
- 5.16 The Assessment specifically identifies that there is an under provision for cinema and family entertainment, in particular parts of the survey area, especially with regard to the small scale/boutique offer within Reading and demand for ideally an independent cinema facility.
- 5.17 The proposals the subject of this application will deliver a 932sq.m cinema / leisure (D2) facility which will complement the proposed A3 uses within the District Centre, contributing towards addressing the 'identified' shortfall of 'commercial leisure' facilities within Reading, ensuring a more diverse offering within the centre and providing evening activity within the centre.
- 5.18 The proposed cinema facility will play a role in meeting the identified need for additional entertainment facilities in the Borough⁴ in accordance with paragraph 23 of the Framework which highlights the importance of meeting leisure needs. It will further reduce the need for residents to travel to Reading town centre for such services and assist in establishing Caversham as a leisure destination for local residents. The proposed cinema can play a role as an anchor to the site and the wider scheme helping to ensure the vitality of the District Centre in the long term, especially given its positioning and frontage onto the proposed Caversham Square.

³ Paragraph 4.23 of the West Berkshire Retail and Leisure Study 2016

⁴ Western Berkshire Retail & Commercial Leisure Assessment 2016

- 5.19 As such, it is considered that the proposals will deliver new leisure facilities within an existing District Centre, addressing an identified need and will accord with policy CS25, and with emerging policy RL2.
- 5.20 In relation to the extent consent for the cinema above Block, it is not currently possible to bring that forward. Whilst approval of this application will, therefore, technically mean that there could be permission for 2 cinemas on the site it would clearly not be in the applicants commercial interest for this to happen and as such they would be willing to enter into discussions regarding a legal agreement or condition to ensure that only one cinema is delivered within the District Centre.

Residential

- 5.21 Paragraph 47 of the Framework requires LPAs to 'boost significantly' the supply of housing with recognition at paragraph 23 of the Framework that residential development plays an important role in supporting the vitality and viability of the town centre. The Core Strategy identifies a requirement of 521 dwellings per annum as identified at policy CS14 with a focus on new residential development coming forward within areas of high accessibility and with access to efficient and effective public transport. Paragraph 6.10 further recognises how residential and mixed use development can bring significant regeneration benefits, a principle which has already been established through the extant permission at St Martins Centre.
- 5.22 In addition, the emerging Local Plan sets out the target for the delivery of 15,433 in Reading Borough over the 2013 to 2036 period. This will include a target for 700 homes in the Caversham and Emmer Green sub-area and the proposal will make a contribution to meeting this target.
- 5.23 Paragraph 8.2.4 of the emerging Local Plan further recognises the limited development capacity within Caversham and Emmer Green. On this basis, it is considered that the District Centre is an appropriate location to deliver a mix use development incorporating further residential accommodation to support the needs of the local area with residential development on upper floors being acceptable within emerging policy RL3.
- 5.24 The proposed development will deliver 16 residential units providing a mix of studios, 1 and 2 bedroom apartments which seeks to accord with policy CS15 given the proposed mix of units is appropriate to the District Centre location. Access to the residential dwellings will be via an entrance from Church Street, which is considered acceptable in line with point (ii) of policy DM13 and will retain the retail character of the centre given the enhanced provision of 'centre uses' being proposed.
- 5.25 Whilst it is appreciated that there is a requirement under Policy CS16 for the provision of 30% affordable housing on sites proposing 15 dwellings and above subject to viability considerations. As part of this application, we have submitted a Viability Assessment to justify the provision of no affordable housing on site in line policy DM6. .
- 5.26 Whilst the specific design of the residential element of the proposal is discussed further at paragraph 5.29 and within the supporting Design and Access Statement, the positioning of the residential units has been designed to ensure that a high level of

amenity will be retained for future residents. The location of these units within the District Centre on upper floors ensures that new residential development is focussed within areas of high accessibility to local facilities and will ensure an effective use of brownfield land in a highly sustainable location according with emerging policy CC6.

Summary

- 5.27 In line with national planning policy and the pre-application advice received from Reading Borough Council, the principle of development for appropriate town centre uses on the site is acceptable. The proposals will deliver an uplift in retail floor space above both the existing provision and the extant consent relating to Block E and will provide a small scale cinema facility helping to meet the identified needs and ensuring the vitality of this town centre location. The delivery of residential units on the upper floors of the development maximises the viability of the scheme and makes the best use of the site.
- 5.28 The proposals have evolved within the context of the extant planning permission and seek to ensure that the proposed uses complement the provision secured across St Martin's Centre and further enhance its viability and vitality. The proposals respond not only to the increased housing requirements identified for Caversham/ Emmer Green through the emerging Local Plan, but also respond to a specific need for smaller scale leisure facilities within Reading in the form a boutique cinema which responds specifically to market requirements.
- 5.29 As such, it is considered that the proposals respond to the objectives of the Framework with regard to the vitality and viability of town centres and will further meet relevant policies of the adopted and emerging Development Plan.

Requiring Good Design

- 5.30 Paragraph 56 of the Framework states that the Government attaches great weight to the design of the built environment and that good design is indivisible from good planning. With this position confirmed at a local level through Policy
- 5.31 The Applicant acknowledges the importance placed on good design and seeks to deliver a high quality regeneration of St Martins Centre through this application and the wider consented scheme (Ref: 140997). The proposals for the site will respect and enhance the existing and proposed surrounding environmental and design context.
- 5.32 The Design and Access Statement, provides detailed information of the design rationale for the scheme having regard to national planning policy guidance and design policies set out within the adopted Core Strategy and Sites and Detailed Policies DPD.

Character

- 5.33 The design of the proposed development will be complimentary to the existing character in Caversham District Centre and build upon the design principles established through the extant permission to deliver a high quality design that enhances the legibility of the Centre. The proposals seek to optimise the development capacity in a sensitive manner than further diversifies the range of uses and complements the street

scene. The proposed building height reflects that previously approved at Block A of the extant permission and creates a new strong identity for a key frontage along Church Street.

- 5.34 Consideration has been given to how the bulk and mass responds to Church Street, with the fourth and fifth floors set back from the Church Street. This will ensure that views from Church Street are minimised and to ensure the amenity of neighbouring properties is retained in line with Policy DM4.
- 5.35 The proposed development further provides a significant enhancement of how the site would front onto Caversham Square and will provide a stronger and more active frontage than was previously proposed through the extant permission. The scheme will deliver a vibrant with opportunities for further activating the retail frontage onto Church Street delivering a more vibrant and active design.
- 5.36 Overall, the redesigned Block E will play a role in improving the frontage along Church Street helping to enhance the character of the district centre and maintaining the retail environment at street level. The proposed materials will reflect those approved through the extant permission thus ensuring that the revised scheme seamlessly integrates with surrounding phases of the scheme.

Design Summary

- 5.37 The design concept for the development has been carefully considered and will have no detrimental impact on the existing built environment within Caversham District Centre, seeking to deliver high quality design. A detailed review of the design evolution and principles of the revised scheme are included within the supporting Design and Access Statement.
- 5.38 In summary it is considered that the proposals fully accord with the principles laid out by the Framework, and relevant local planning policy.

Promoting Sustainable Transport

- 5.39 The Framework states at paragraph 29 that the transport system needs to be balanced in favour of sustainable transport modes, giving people a real choice about how they travel. Further, in accordance with the Framework at paragraph 35, developments should be located and designed, where practical, to:
- Accommodate the efficient delivery of goods and supplies;
 - Give priority to pedestrian and cycle movements, and have access to high quality public transport facilities;
 - Create safe and secure layouts which minimise conflicts between traffic and cyclists or pedestrians, avoiding street clutter and where appropriate establishing homes zones;
 - Incorporate facilities for charging plug-in and other ultra-low emission vehicles; and

- Consider the needs of people with disabilities by all modes of transport.
- 5.40 Parking and vehicular access for the proposal will not be delivered through this application and will be provided in line with the approved planning consent (under reference 140997). The site will be accessed via the existing route leading from Archway House, and will benefit from the permitted improvements that will be implemented as part of the wider regeneration of St Martins Centre.
- 5.41 In line with Policy CS22 and the Pre-Application Advice received from Reading Borough Council, a Transport Statement has been prepared in support of this application to assess the transport and highway implications of the proposed development.
- 5.42 As accepted through the extant planning permission, the site is within a highly sustainable location and is well located to integrate into the local pedestrian, cycle and public transport network with opportunities for sustainable transport modes optimised within this location.
- 5.43 The proposals will not seek to amend the vehicle access strategy agreed under planning permission 140097 access for St Martin's Centre with the main vehicle general traffic and service deliveries from Archway Road. A secondary service access will be provided from Abbotsmead Place and onto Church Street. The proposed development would seek to utilise this arrangement.
- 5.44 As part of this application, further tracking has been undertaken to ensure that rigid and articulated HGV servicing vehicles can be accommodated to meet the needs of the proposed occupiers.
- 5.45 With regard to parking provision, it is considered that the extant permission makes sufficient provision for car parking to be accommodated within the wider site where a new car park is proposed. The extant planning permission allowed for the delivery of 308 parking spaces with 10 'disabled' spaces and 8 as 'parent and toddler' which was in excess of the Council's adopted parking requirements by 56 spaces. As such, there is sufficient provision within the parking provision to accommodate the requirements of the proposed residential units and to satisfy the requirements of the uplifted floorspace associated with the cinema.
- 5.46 With regard to cycle provision, whilst the extant permission has secured covered cycle facilities across St Martin's Centre, the proposed development will incorporate a 21sqm bicycle storage room to meet the minimum of 8 cycle units associated with the proposed residential units.
- 5.47 The Transport Statement further considers the impact on traffic generation arising from the proposals. The Statement concludes that the net impact will be 25 two-way vehicles over the peak hours. It is considered that the development traffic associated with the site will not result in any significant impacts on the operation of the local highway network. In the context of paragraph 32 of the National Planning Policy Framework, the residual cumulative impacts of the development will not be severe.

Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment

- 5.48 Chapter 10 of the Framework highlights the importance for developments to minimise impacts on the natural environment and development appropriate to its location, encouraging the effective re-use of previously developed land, provided it is not of high environmental value.
- 5.49 The proposed development maximises the use of this town centre location and the brownfield site. The proposals have taken national and local planning guidance into account throughout the preparation of development proposals and this is summarised below.

BREEAM

- 5.50 In accordance with Policy CS1 and advice from Reading Borough Council during the pre-application consultation, BREEAM Pre-Assessments have been prepared for D1 element and the retail elements of the proposals and support the application.
- 5.51 With regard to the D2 element of the scheme, it is considered that a minimum of BREEAM Very Good can be achieved. The position is also reflective of the proposed retail elements.
- 5.52 This rating will seek to minimise the energy usage and impact on the natural environment.

Light

- 5.53 In line with paragraph 125, careful consideration of the impact of light pollution has been considered through the design of the development.
- 5.54 It is considered that appropriate conditions on any future conditions could ensure that the proposal accord with relevant policy requirements under DM4 with regard to artificial lighting.

Air quality

- 5.55 The Air Quality Assessment submitted under the approved planning application for the demonstrated the likely air quality impacts resulting from the scheme. It is considered that the revised proposals for Block E will not have a material impact and will accord with adopted policy DM4.

Noise

- 5.56 The design of the proposed has sought to ensure that the amenity of existing and new residents is retained through the proposed development with specific regard given to the relationship of the proposed cinema and the new residential apartments. A supporting Noise Assessment considers the location of proposed plant and the appropriate noise mitigation required to be incorporated in to the scheme. It is considered that the proposals are in line with adopted policy DM4.

Flooding and Drainage

Paragraph 103 of the Framework requires that when determining planning applications, local planning authorities should ensure flood risk is not increased elsewhere and only considered development appropriate in areas at low risk of flooding, where, informed by a specific flood risk assessment.

Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment

- 5.57 A Heritage Statement has been prepared to support this application in line with the requirements of policy CS33 with regard to the assessing the impact of the proposed development on the setting of adjacent listed buildings.

Summary

- 5.58 On the basis of the above, we consider that the application proposal complies fully with the relevant planning policy criteria and will deliver a design that responds to and enhances the design approved through the extant permission. We have demonstrated that there are no adverse impacts that would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits brought about as a result of this proposal.

6. Conclusions

- 6.1 This application seeks planning permission for an appropriate and alternative development for part of Block E of extant permission 140997, in light of changing circumstances upon which there is no longer a requirement for this part of the scheme to be developed as consented.
- 6.2 Hermes is committed to delivering on the regeneration of the District Centre and have worked to deliver a revised scheme that will complement and further enhance the built form and character. The revised proposals for this element of the St Martin's Centre regeneration seeks to further ensure the viability and vitality of the District Centre through delivery a more efficient use of the site through a mix of town centre uses including leisure, retail and residential. It is considered such uses are wholly appropriate in this location and supported by the adopted and emerging development plan.
- 6.3 From a design perspective, the design approach seeks to optimise the development opportunities across the site and deliver more appropriate opportunities to enhance the retail frontages along Church Street and onto Caversham Square. The external design has sought to deliver a landmark development for the District Centre which creates a focal point and responds to the material palette approved through the extant permission.
- 6.4 It is considered that the baseline parameters secured through the extant permission with regard to flooding, archaeology, ecology, noise and transport equally apply to the proposed development and the proposal is acceptable in this context.
- 6.5 A range of new technical material has been produced to reflect the revised proposals and which demonstrate that the proposed scheme can not only achieve BREEAM Very Good and not give rise to significant transport impacts but also will not give rise to any amenity issues from a noise or air quality perspective.
- 6.6 It is considered that the proposed development accords with the relevant policies of the adopted and emerging development plan and should be approved without delay.

