

APPENDIX 8.1 BUILT HERITAGE STATEMENT

Built Heritage Statement

Appendix 8.1 to ES Chapter: Built Heritage and Townscape and Visual

Yield Hall Place 1 & Yield Hall Place 2, The Oracle, Reading

February 2024

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1. Introduction

Background and Purpose of this Report

- 1.1 This Built Heritage Statement report has been prepared by Turley to accompany a full planning application for 'Proposed Development' at former Debenhams store and Vue cinema within The Oracle complex within the town centre of Reading ('the Site'). This report has been prepared on behalf of The Oracle Limited Partnership (the 'Applicant') to provide appropriate and proportionate information to the local planning authority (Reading Borough Council or 'RBC') with regard to the understanding and appreciation of the significance (and any contribution of the setting to that significance) of the identified built heritage assets, and also then to describe the likely heritage impacts of the Proposed Development on Site.
- 1.2 This report also serves as Appendix 8.1 to Environmental Statement (ES) Chapter 8: Built Heritage and Townscape and Visual as part of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process for this application.
- 1.3 In summary, planning permission is sought for the repurposing and redevelopment of sites at the eastern end of the Oracle to provide a mixed use development comprising residential and town centres uses. The Proposed Development focuses around two separate development parcels that together comprise the Site for the purposes of this report, which are:
 - Former Debenhams department store at the eastern end of the Oracle shopping centre building and northern side of the River Kennet, to be known as Yield Hall Place 1; and
 - Vue cinema building on the southern side of the River Kennet and to the east of the Oracle Riverside multi storey car park, to be known as Yield Hall Place 2.
- 1.4 Alongside the Proposed Development on the two sites identified above, a suite of public realm enhancements is proposed within the vicinity of The Oracle, including at the junction with London Street and Inner Distributor Road; Yield Hall Place from junction of London Street to Minister Street; and Oracle Riverside.
- 1.5 Two detailed planning applications have been submitted; one application for Yield Hall Place 1 and one for Yield Hall Place 2. These applications have been submitted concurrently to RBC and are expected to be considered and determined in this way by that local planning authority. This report is submitted in respect of both applications and assesses the proposals as a single scheme for the purpose of the technical assessment undertaken. An illustrative plan is submitted with both applications which identifies the full extent of the Proposed Developments, and the schemes assessed for the purposes of this report. Where matters only pertain to one of the application sites, these are specifically identified within the report.
- 1.6 These applications were made valid by RBC on 19 December 2022 and 5 January 2023 respectively, and the Proposed Development for the Site (both sites) is described as:

“Yield Hall Place 1 (Former Debenhams):

Mixed use development comprising part demolition of former department store and erection of new building comprising build to rent residential use (Class C3) and commercial uses within Uses Class E. Reconfiguration and change of use of remaining department store floorspace (Class E) to uses with within Use Class E and / or bar (Sui Generis Use) and / or experiential leisure use (Sui Generis Use). Associated public realm, infrastructure works and external alterations to shopping centre, including creation of new shopping centre entrance.

(RBC application reference number: 221916)

[and]

Yield Hall Place 2 (Vue Cinema):

Mixed use development comprising demolition of existing buildings and erection of new building comprising build-to-rent residential use (Class C3), cinema (Sui Generis) and ground floor commercial uses within Use Class E. Associated public realm and infrastructure works.

(RBC application reference number: 221917)”

- 1.7 These application submissions have been informed by a constructive process of pre-application engagement with RBC and their officers. A process that has also included presentation to, and discussion with, other key stakeholders including RBC’s Urban Place Lab (UPL) advisory group and Design South East (acting as the Design Review Panel (DRP) and adviser to RBC). Turley has earlier prepared a combined Preliminary Built Heritage, Townscape and Visual Impact Appraisal report, which has been shared with stakeholders as the design evolved during the pre-application stage. This report was also used actively to assist in determining the scope of baseline appraisal work, as well as the approach and methodology to assessing not only built heritage impacts, but also related townscape, and visual impacts. The findings of that report also provided advice to the project team to support the design development process.
- 1.8 Further discussions have been had with officers (and their advisers) at RBC during the determination period of the application. As a result, a number of changes have been made to the design of the Proposed Development, and it is this revised scheme that is the subject of the technical assessment in this report. This process of design evolution during the application period is fully described in the Revised Design and Access Statement (DAS) prepared by the appointed architects for this scheme.
- 1.9 The requirement for this report stems from section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 that places a duty upon the local planning authority in determining applications for development affecting listed buildings to pay special regard to the desirability of preserving the building’s special interest or its setting. Under section 72, the Act also requires that special attention be given to preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area. However, the setting of a conservation area is not protected by statute.

- 1.10 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2021 provides the Government’s national planning policy for the conservation of the historic environment. In respect of information requirements, it sets out that

‘In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets’ importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance.’¹

- 1.11 Paragraph 201 then sets out that local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of heritage assets that might be affected by proposals, including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset. They should take this assessment into account when considering the impact of proposals in order to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset’s conservation and any aspect of the proposal.

Contents of this Report

- 1.12 Firstly, the relevant heritage legislative and planning policy and guidance context, which should be borne in mind in considering the Proposed Development on Site, is summarised in **Section 2**.
- 1.13 In accordance with these legislative and policy requirements, **Section 3** of this report identifies the location and type of the heritage assets within the Site or the local area as relevant to the Proposed Development. This is our scoping of the relevant built heritage assets, which has also been directly informed by pre-application discussions with officers.
- 1.14 A **Heritage Assets Plan** (HAP) is provided as part of this section to illustrate the location of potential built heritage asset receptors (both scoped in or out) within the surrounding area of the Site and Reading town centre.
- 1.15 An overview of the historical development of the Site and its buildings / spaces is provided in the next **Section 4** of this report; to provide context to further analysis and discussion of the built heritage asset considerations.
- 1.16 This leads into **Section 5** and our proportionate assessments of the significance of each of the designated and or non-designated heritage assets, all in light of relevant national planning criteria and best practice guidance. The contribution made by the setting (including the Site as an element of setting, or as part of the designated area of a conservation area) of the relevant heritage asset to that significance is also described as part of this section.
- 1.17 This analysis has been informed by desktop review of published sources and available archival information in relation to the Site and local area. Site visits and visual survey have also been undertaken by our team as part of this analysis. In addition, the relevant Historic Environment Record (HER) for Berkshire has been consulted as part of

¹ MHCLG, National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2021 – para. 200

our analysis. This is our built heritage baseline appraisal.

- 1.18 The relevant heritage legislative and planning policy context, which should be borne in mind in considering the Proposed Development on Site, are set out in full in Appendix 2. This includes the statutory duties of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, national policy in the NPPF 2023 and supported by the NPPG, and other local planning policy and guidance.
- 1.19 **Section 6** provides an assessment of the likely impacts of the Proposed Development on Site on the described baseline conditions; with regard to the significance (and setting) of the heritage assets. Again this assessment has been informed by review of the full application design material prepared by others, including the architect's Revised Design and Access Statement (DAS), Landscape Strategy, and Accurate Visual Representations (AVRs) for the agreed representative viewpoints. These heritage impacts are then assessed in overall terms in light of the relevant legislative and national and local planning policy context (including the Development Plan).
- 1.20 **Section 7** finally draws together a summary of the findings and conclusions of this report with regard to built heritage asset impacts.
- 1.21 It is to be noted that assessment of development impacts on the archaeological resource (i.e. below ground heritage assets) within the Site or surrounding area falls outside the remit of this report.

2. Legislation, Policy and Guidance Context

Introduction

- 2.1 This section sets out in summary the legislation and national and local policy and guidance relevant to the application and the Proposed Development on Site and in relation to the heritage assets; their significance and setting.

Statutory Duties

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

- 2.2 Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 imposes a general duty as respects listed buildings in the exercise of planning functions. Subsection (1) provides that:

“In considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.”

- 2.3 It has been confirmed² that Parliament’s intention in enacting section 66(1) of the 1990 Act was that decision-makers should give ‘considerable importance and weight’ to the desirability of preserving the setting of listed buildings, where ‘preserve’ means to ‘to do no harm’. This duty must be borne in mind when considering any harm that may accrue and the balancing of such harm against public benefits as required by national planning policy. It has been confirmed that this weight can also be applied to the statutory tests in respect of conservation areas.³ The Secretary of State has confirmed⁴ that ‘considerable importance and weight’ is not synonymous with ‘overriding importance and weight’.

- 2.4 It is also a statutory duty for the decision maker when determining applications for planning permission within conservation areas that (Section 72):

“In the exercise, with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area, of any powers under any of the provisions mentioned in subsection (2), special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.”

- 2.5 Importantly, it has been confirmed that this weight can also be applied to the statutory tests in respect of conservation areas.⁵ The Secretary of State has confirmed⁶ that

² Barnwell Manor Wind Energy Limited and (1) East Northamptonshire District Council (2) English Heritage (3) National Trust (4) The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Governments, Case No: C1/2013/0843, 18th February 2014.

³ The Forge Field Society v Sevenoaks District Council [2014] EWHC 1895 (Admin); North Norfolk District Council v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government [2014] EWHC 279 (Admin).

⁴ APP/H1705/A/13/2205929.

⁵ The Forge Field Society v Sevenoaks District Council [2014] EWHC 1895 (Admin); North Norfolk District Council v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government [2014] EWHC 279 (Admin).

⁶ APP/H1705/A/13/2205929.

‘considerable importance and weight’ is not synonymous with ‘overriding importance and weight’. It has been demonstrated that section 72 requires attention to be directed to the effect on the conservation area as a whole rather than on particular parts of it.⁷ The setting of a conservation area is not however protected by statute.

National Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2023

- 2.6 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was first published in March 2012 and updated in July 2018, February 2019, July 2021, September and December 2023. The new NPPF provides a full statement of the Government’s planning policies. Chapter 16 Conserving and enhancing the historic environment, sets out the Government’s policies regarding planning and the historic environment.
- 2.7 Paragraph 200 requires the significance of the heritage assets, which may be affected by the proposals to be described as part of any submission, ideally as part of a Heritage Statement report. The level of detail should be proportionate to the importance of the assets and sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposals on their significance. Paragraph 201 sets out that local planning authorities should also identify and assess the particular significance of heritage assets that may be affected by proposals. They should take this assessment into account when considering the impact of proposals in order to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset’s conservation and any aspect of the proposal.
- 2.8 Paragraph 203 states that local planning authorities should take account of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of all heritage assets and putting them into 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.
- 2.9 Paragraph 205 further outlines that local planning authorities should give great weight to the asset’s conservation when considering the impact on a Proposed Development on the significance of a designated heritage asset. The more important the heritage asset, the greater the weight should be. Noting that Annex 2 of the NPPF defines “conservation” as:
- “The process of maintaining and managing change to a heritage asset in a way that sustains and, where appropriate, enhances its significance.”*
- 2.10 Paragraph 206 specifies that any harm to, or loss of, significance of a designated heritage asset should require clear and convincing justification. Paragraph 201 outlines that local planning authorities should refuse consent where a proposal will lead to substantial harm or total loss of significance, unless it can be demonstrated that this is necessary to deliver substantial public benefits that outweigh such harm or loss, or a number of other tests can be satisfied. Paragraph 208 concerns proposals which will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset.

⁷ South Oxfordshire DC v SSE & J Donaldson [1991] CO/1440/89.

Here harm should be weighed against the public benefits, including securing the optimum viable use.

- 2.11 Paragraph 209 sets out that the effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.
- 2.12 Paragraph 212 states that proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to or better reveal the significance of a heritage asset should be treated favourably. It outlines that local planning authorities should also look for opportunities for new development within the setting of heritage assets to enhance or better reveal their significance.
- 2.13 Paragraph 213 confirms that not all elements of a conservation area will necessarily contribute to its significance. Loss of a building (or other element) which makes a positive contribution to the significance of the conservation area should be treated either as substantial harm under paragraph 207 or less than substantial harm under paragraph 208, as appropriate, taking into account the relative significance of the element affected and its contribution to the significance of the area as a whole.

The local Development Plan

- 2.14 The Development Plan for this local planning authority area comprises the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019) and other published SPD and SPG. These documents provide local guidance with regard to development affecting heritage assets, and should accord with the statutory duties and the general principles outlined in the NPPF.

Reading Borough Local Plan 2019

- 2.15 The new Reading Borough Local Plan was adopted on 4 November 2019. This document sets out local planning policies for development in Reading up to 2036, and are the main considerations in deciding planning applications. The Local Plan replaces previous development plans - the Core Strategy, Reading Central Area Action Plan and Sites and Detailed Policies Document - which no longer apply.
- 2.16 The relevant Local Plan policies for the development of the Site and built heritage matters include:
- *Policies EN1 (Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment),*
 - *EN3 (Enhancement of Conservation Areas),*
 - *EN4 (Locally Important Heritage Assets),*
 - *EN5 (Protection of Significant Views with Heritage Interest), and*
 - *EN6 (New Development in an Historic Context).*

Other Material Considerations

National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)

- 2.17 National Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) was first issued by the Government in 2014 as a web based resource and living document. This is intended to provide more detailed guidance and information with regard to the implementation of national policy set out in the NPPF. The most recent updates date from 2019.

Department of Culture, Media and Sport Circular: Principles of Selection for Listing Buildings 2018

- 2.18 The Principles of Selection for listing buildings sets out the general criteria for assessing the special interest of a building in paragraph 16, as below:

“Architectural Interest. To be of special architectural interest a building must be of importance in its architectural design, decoration or craftsmanship; special interest may also apply to nationally important examples of particular building types and techniques (e.g. buildings displaying technological innovation or virtuosity) and significant plan forms;

- 2.19 Historic Interest. To be of special historic interest a building must illustrate important aspects of the nation’s social, economic, cultural, or military history and/or have close historical associations with nationally important people. There should normally be some quality of interest in the physical fabric of the building itself to justify the statutory protection afforded by listing. When making a listing decision, paragraph 17 sets out that the Secretary of State may also take into account:

“Group value: The extent to which the exterior of the building contributes to the architectural or historic interest of any group of buildings of which it forms part, generally known as group value. The Secretary of State will take this into account particularly where buildings comprise an important architectural or historic unity or a fine example of planning (e.g. squares, terraces or model villages) or where there is a historical functional relationship between the buildings. Sometimes group value will be achieved through a co-location of diverse buildings of different types and dates.

- 2.20 Fixtures and features of a building and curtilage buildings: The desirability of preserving, on the grounds of its architectural or historic interest, any feature of the building consisting of a man-made object or structure fixed to the building or forming part of the land and comprised within the curtilage of the building.
- 2.21 The character or appearance of conservation areas: In accordance with the terms of section 72 of the 1990 Act, when making listing decisions in respect of a building in a conservation area, the Secretary of State will pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.”
- 2.22 General principles for selection are also set out in this advice, in paragraphs 18-23. These include: Age and rarity; Buildings less than 30 years old; Aesthetic merits; Selectivity; and National interest, although State of repair will not usually be a relevant consideration.

- 2.23 In addition to the criteria and general principles set out in the guidance, a number of Selection Guides for different building types have been published by Historic England, first in 2011 and then later updated. These Selection Guides provide further information regarding each building type, and demonstrate what features are considered significant and likely to make a building of special architectural or historic interest when assessing each building type.
- 2.24 In addition, comparable Selection Guides have also been published by Historic England since 2018 in relation to the designation of scheduled monuments and their different types.

Historic England: Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 2: Managing Significance in Decision Taking in the Historic Environment 2015

- 2.25 GPA Note 2 provides information to assist in implementing historic environment policy in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the related guidance given in the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG). These include; assessing the significance of heritage assets, using appropriate expertise, historic environment records, recording and furthering understanding, neglect and unauthorised works, and marketing. It provides a suggested staged approach to decision-making where there may be a potential impact on the historic environment:

- 1. Understand the significance of the affected assets;*
- 2. Understand the impact of the proposal on that significance;*
- 3. Avoid, minimise and mitigate impact in a way that meets the objectives of the Framework;*
- 4. Look for opportunities to better reveal or enhance significance;*
- 5. Justify any harmful impacts in terms of the sustainable development objective of conserving significance and the need for change;*
- 6. Offset negative impacts on aspects of significance by enhancing others through recording, disseminating and archiving archaeological and historical interest of the important elements of the heritage assets affected.*

- 2.26 With particular regard to design and local distinctiveness, advice sets out that both the NPPF (section 7) and NPPG (section ID26) contain detail on why good design is important and how it can be achieved. In terms of the historic environment, some or all of the following factors may influence what will make the scale, height, massing, alignment, materials and proposed use of new development successful in its context:

- *“The history of the place.*
- *The relationship of the proposal to its specific site.*
- *The significance of nearby assets and the contribution of their setting, recognising that this is a dynamic concept.*
- *The general character and distinctiveness of the area in its widest sense, including the general character of local buildings, spaces, public realm and the landscape, the grain of the surroundings, which includes, for example the street pattern and plot size.*
- *The size and density of the proposal related to that of the existing and neighbouring uses.*
- *Landmarks and other built or landscape features which are key to a sense of*

- place.
- *The diversity or uniformity in style, construction, materials, colour, detailing, decoration and period of existing buildings and spaces.*
- *The topography.*
- *Views into, through and from the site and its surroundings.*
- *Landscape design.*
- *The current and historic uses in the area and the urban grain.*
- *The quality of the materials.”*

Historic England: Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets 2017 (2nd Edition)

2.27 GPA Note 3 provides information to assist in implementing historic environment policy with regard to the managing change within the setting of heritage assets, and also now views analysis. This also provides a toolkit for assessing the implications of development proposals affecting setting and views. A series of stages are recommended for assessment, these are:

- *“Step 1: identifying the heritage assets affected and their settings.*
- *Step 2: assessing whether, how and to what degree these settings make a contribution to the significance of the heritage asset(s).*
- *Step 3: assessing the effect of the Proposed Development.*
- *Step 4: maximising enhancement and minimising harm.*
- *Step 5: making and documenting the decision and monitoring outcomes.”*

Historic England: Advice Note 1: Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management 2019 (2nd Edition)

2.28 This Historic England Advice Note supports the NPPF and NPPG and is intended to set out ways to manage change in a way that conserves and enhances historic areas through conservation area designation, appraisal and management. It seeks to offer advice to all those involved in managing conservation areas so that the potential of historic areas worthy of protection is fully realised, the need for community and owner consultation examined, and the benefits of management plans to manage change, and achieve regeneration and enhancement, fully exploited. Advice on appraisal of conservation areas is also given, as assistance in demonstrating special interest and articulating character, guiding investment, and in developing a management plan.

Historic England: Advice Note 2: Making Changes to Heritage Assets 2016

2.29 This advice note provides general advice according to different categories of intervention in heritage assets, including repair, restoration, addition and alteration, as well as on works for research alone. This covers different types of heritage assets, including buildings and other structures; standing remains including earthworks; buried remains and marine sites; as well as larger heritage assets including conservation areas, registered landscapes, and World Heritage Sites.

Historic England: Advice Note 4: Tall Buildings 2022 (2nd Edition)

2.30 This Historic England Advice Note updates previous guidance by English Heritage and CABE produced in 2007. It seeks to guide people involved in planning for and designing tall buildings so that they may be delivered in a sustainable and successful way through the development plan and development management process. It states that the advice

is for all relevant developers, designers, local authorities and other interested parties. Advice on making a planning application for a tall building, as well as assessing the impact of development proposals is set out.

Historic England: Advice Note 7: Local Heritage Listing 2021 (2nd Edition)

- 2.31 Historic England provides information on local heritage listing of heritage assets such as buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas or parks, gardens and other designed landscapes, to assist community groups, owners, applicants, local authorities, planning and other consultants, and other interesting parties in implementing historic environment legislation, the policy in the NPPF and the related guidance in the PPG.

Historic England: Advice Note 12: Statements of Heritage Significance 2019

- 2.32 This Historic England Advice Note provides general advice with regard to preparing statements of heritage significance and also the analysing of significance for the full range of heritage assets. This is designed primarily for applicants proposing changes to heritage assets and accords with the Framework as revised.

English Heritage (now Historic England): Conservation Principles: Policies and Guidance 2008

- 2.33 This guidance document sets out Historic England's approach to making decisions and offering guidance about all aspects of England's historic environment. The contribution of elements of a heritage asset or within its setting to its significance may be assessed in terms of its "heritage values". A draft has been released for public consultation and subsequent revision of this document in 2018.

SPD / SPG / Evidence Base

- 2.34 Other such documents include:

RBC: Assessment of Significant Views with Heritage interest 2018

RBC: Historic Environment Background Paper 2018, to the then emerging Local Plan

RBC: London Street / Market Place Conservation Area Appraisal 2015

RBC: St Mary's Butts / Castle Street Conservation Area Appraisal 2015

3. Heritage Assets

Introduction

- 3.1 The NPPF 2023 defines a heritage asset as:

“A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest ...”

- 3.2 Designated heritage assets are those that possess a level of heritage interest that justifies designation under relevant legislation and are, consequently, subject to particular procedures in planning decisions that involve them. The NPPF defines designated heritage assets as:

“A World Heritage Site, Scheduled Monument, Listed Building, Protected Wreck Site, Registered Park and Garden, Registered Battlefield or Conservation Area designated under the relevant legislation.”

- 3.3 The NPPF⁸ also identifies that heritage assets include both designated heritage assets and assets identified by the relevant local planning authority (including local listing). These are known as non-designated heritage assets.
- 3.4 The Site does include any statutory listed buildings, nor does it contain any buildings or structures that have been identified to be of heritage interest at the local level (i.e. local listing or non-designated heritage assets for the purpose of the NPPF).
- 3.5 The eastern part of the south area of the Site does, however, fall within the boundary of the Market Place / London Street Conservation Area, which is a designated heritage asset for the purpose of national policy. The proposed redevelopment of that part of the Site would then directly affect the significance of this conservation area. However, the boundary for this designated area as it currently crosses this part of the Site is in our view appears somewhat arbitrary as it pre-dates the development of The Oracle scheme. No buildings or spaces within the Site have been identified in the relevant published Conservation Area Appraisal dating from 2007 as making any positive contribution to the significance or setting of this heritage asset.
- 3.6 The Proposed Development for this Site would have the potential to affect the significance of this, and also a number of other heritage assets within the local and also wider townscape area of the Site indirectly through change to the character and appearance of part of their shared settings and also local views. These receptors include other designated heritage assets such as statutory listed buildings, conservation areas and a scheduled monument, and potentially non-designated heritage assets. A **Heritage Assets Plan (HAP)** is provided as part of this section and report to illustrate the location of potential built heritage asset receptors (both scoped in or out) within the surrounding area of the Site and Reading town centre.

⁸ MHCLG, National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2023 - Annex 2: Glossary

Ref	LB Name	Grade
1	Abbey Mill Ruins	II
2	11 And 12, Abbot's Walk	II
3	6-10, Bridge Street	II
4	67 And 68, Broad Street	II
5	95, Broad Street	II
6	Saxone	II
7	7, Castle Street	II
8	11, Castle Street	II
9	13, Castle Street	II
10	17, Castle Street	II*
11	19, Castle Street	II*
12	23 And 25, Castle Street	II
13	43, Castle Street	II
14	51, Castle Street	II
15	Talbot House	II
16	Holybrook House	II*
17	8, Castle Street	II
18	Church Of Saint Mary	II*
19	Shire Hall	II
20	Assize Courts	II
21	Queen Victoria Jubilee Statue	II
22	Quadrant Walls And Railings To Former No 64 (greyfriars Vicarage)	II
23	147, Friar Street	II
24	154, Friar Street	II
25	8, Gun Street	II
26	La Corbiere Restaurant	II
27	The High	II
28	10, High Street (see Details For Further Address Information)	II
29	Barclays Bank	II
30	17 And 18, King Street	II
31	Coroner's Court	II
32	No 33 (former Everyman Theatre)	II
33	37 And 39, London Street	II
34	41, London Street	II
35	77 And 79, London Street	II
36	44 And 46, London Street	II
37	54-58, London Street	II
38	62-66, London Street	II
39	70, London Street	II
40	74 And 76, London Street	II
41	Church Of St Laurence	I
42	The Simeon Monument	II*
43	National Westminster Bank	II
44	23-26, Market Place	II
45	The Coopers Public House	II
46	Trustee Savings Bank	II
47	Corn Exchange Arcade Entrance	II
48	50 And 51, Market Place	II
49	Queen's Crescent	II
50	1-31, Queen Victoria Street (see Details For Further Address Information)	II
51	Queen Victoria Jubilee Fountain	II
52	55 And 55a, St Mary's Butts	II
53	Church Of St Mary	I
54	Jubilee Cross	II
55	W I Palmer Memorial Hall	II
56	80, London Street	II
57	2 And 3 And 3a, Broad Street	II
58	3 And 5, Castle Street	II
59	9, Castle Street	II
60	27, Castle Street	II
61	39, Castle Street	II
62	Vachel Almhouses	II
63	10 And 12, Castle Street	II
64	Abbey Gate	I
65	9, Gun Street	II
66	7, High Street	II
67	The George Hotel	II
68	Nos 49-53 London Street	II

Ref	LB Name	Grade
69	73 And 75, London Street	II*
70	Drinking Fountain On South Side Of St Laurence's Tower	II
71	1 And 2, Market Place	II
72	32, Market Place	II
73	48 And 49, Market Place	II
74	The Allied Arms Inn	II
75	Group Of 4 Churchyard Tombs North Of St Mary's Church	II
76	Church House	II
77	The Mitre Inn	II
78	69, London Street	II
79	Building On South East Corner	II
80	Telephone Exchange	II
81	27 And 28, Market Place	II
82	35, London Street	II
83	11 And 12, Gun Street	II
84	155, Friar Street	II
85	The Horn Inn	II
86	21, Castle Street	II
87	45, Castle Street	II
88	15, Castle Street	II*
89	2 And 4, Bridge Street	II
90	10, Abbot's Walk	II
91	Culvert On Holy Brook Running South Westwards From Su71441/73234 To 71327/73133	II*
92	35 And 37, St Mary's Butts	II
93	Group Of 4 Churchyard Tombs, East Of St Mary's Church	II
94	Building To West Of Church House	II
95	48-52, London Street	II
96	68, London Street	II
97	72, London Street	II
98	7, Gun Street	II
99	10, Gun Street	II
100	13 And 14, Gun Street	II
101	House At Rear Of Nos 18 And 20 Kings Road	II
102	2 And 4, London Street	II
103	High Bridge	II
104	Congregational Church And Numbers 89 And 89a	II
105	33-37, Castle Street	II
106	47 And 49, Castle Street	II
107	59 And 61, Castle Street	II
108	Former Cottage At Rear Of No 8	II
109	Sun Inn	II
110	Seven Bridges House	II
111	St Laurence's Church And Churchyard Twelve Tombs In St Laurence's Churchyard	II
112	Church Of St Giles And Churchyard Tombs	II

Ref	Scheduled Monument
1	High Bridge
2	Reading Abbey: a Cluniac and Benedictine monastery and Civil War earthwork.



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- Application Site
- 500m Study Area
- Conservation Area
- HAP_Scheduled_Monument
- Historic Parks & Gardens
- HAP_Listed_Buildings
 - I
 - II*
 - II

CLIENT:
The Oracle Partnership Limited

PROJECT:
Debenhams & Vue, The Oracle, Reading

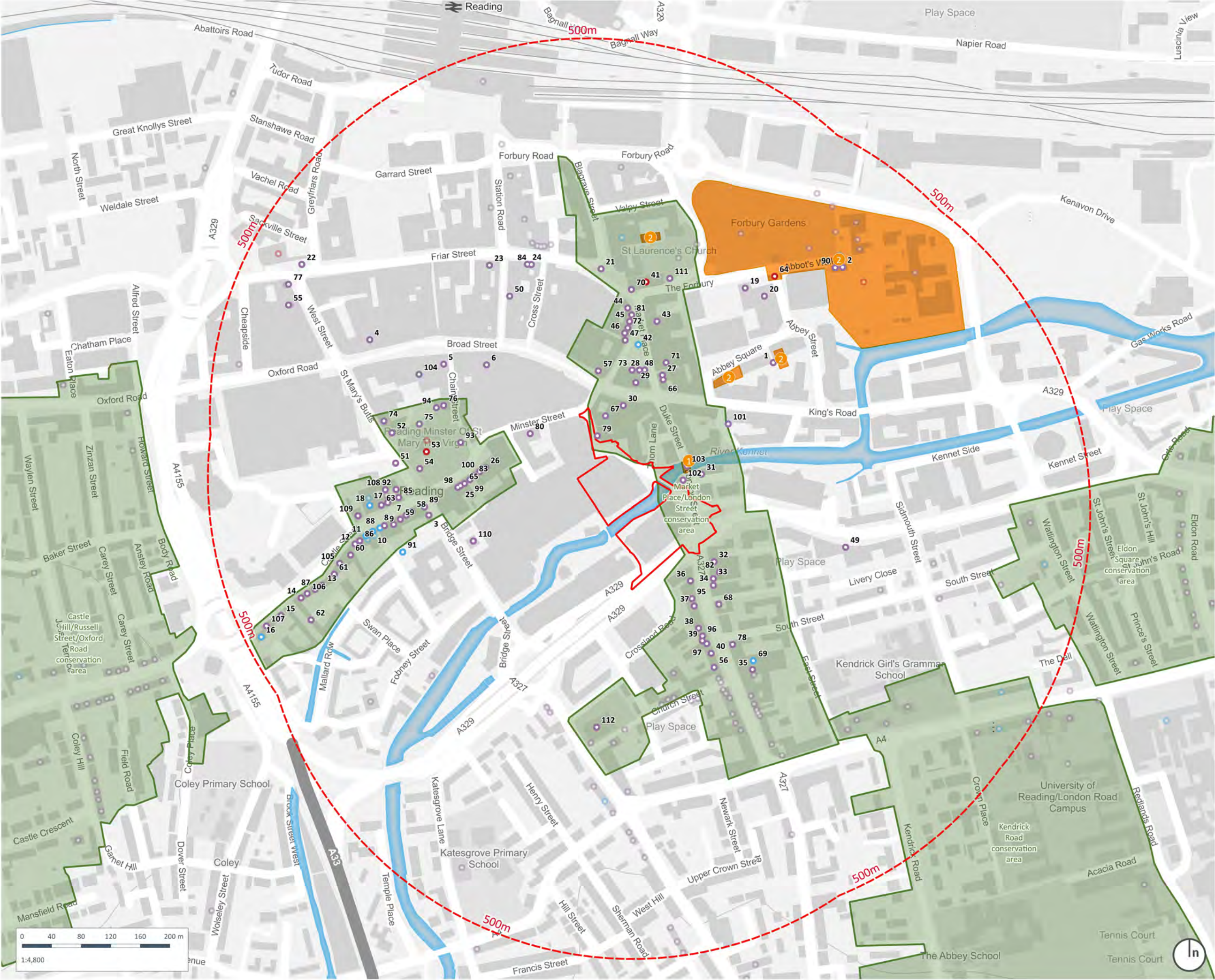
DRAWING:
Heritage Asset Plan

PROJECT NUMBER:
PACS3000

DRAWING NUMBER: 02a
CHECKED BY: RB

REVISION: 1.0
STATUS: Final

DATE: February 2024
SCALE: 1:6,000 @ A3



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- Application Site
- 500m Study Area
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CLIENT:
The Oracle Partnership Limited

PROJECT:
Debenhams & Vue, The Oracle, Reading

DRAWING:
Heritage Asset Plan

PROJECT NUMBER:
PACS3000

DRAWING NUMBER: 02b	CHECKED BY: RB
REVISION: 1.0	STATUS: Final
DATE: February 2024	SCALE: 1:4,800 @ A3

- 3.7 The following built heritage assets have been scoped in as relevant to our contextual analysis in **Tables 3.1-3.3**. This has been based on an initial review of existing published information, focussed desktop and archival research by our team, the establishing of an initial 500m radius study area, and then working outwards to gauge any other potentially significant visual effects with regard to other heritage assets at a greater distance from the Site. In addition, the relevant Historic Environment Record (HER) for this local planning authority area has been consulted.
- 3.8 To further assist the scoping in and scoping out process of these heritage asset receptors, the visibility of the Site and emerging height, scale and massing of emerging proposed built development (as provided in model format by the scheme architects) within the surrounding townscape area was assessed at that stage using a computer-generated Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV). This analysis is further described in relation to visibility and likely visual effects in a later section of this report. This analysis has been further confirmed by our on-site review.
- 3.9 A field study then has been undertaken as part of our process of analysis (firstly in August 2021 and again in April 2022 - during which the weather conditions were reported as good on both occasions). The location and extent of the identified built heritage assets were confirmed and explored during this survey, including consideration of heritage significance and also any contribution of setting and the experience of views whilst in the field.

Designated Heritage Assets

Listed Buildings

- 3.10 The Site is located within the local and wider setting of a number of statutorily listed buildings or structures of special architectural and or historic interest. These designated heritage assets have first been identified using HE's National Heritage List for England map web resource. Following this initial stage of identification, a further stage of on-site inspection has informed the scope of listed buildings that have been included in our appraisal. The listed buildings and or structures that are identified as having the potential to be affected by the Proposed Development on Site are identified in **Table 3.1**. Some of these have been grouped together for the purposes of this assessment due to close similarities in their location, building type / style, use, and or age / history.

Table 3.1: Listed Buildings

Type	Name
Listed building	Nos.2-4 London Street (Grade II)
Listed building	Coroner's Court, London Street (Grade II)
Listed building	High Bridge (Grade II)
Listed building group	London Street: Nos.33, 35, 37-39, 41, 49-53, 44-46, 48-52, 54-58, 62.66, 68, 70, 72, 74-76, 80, 86 & 88 London Street (all Grade II)

Listed building	Nos.24-52 Queen's Crescent (Grade II)
Listed building group	The George Hotel, King Street (Grade II) Building on south-east corner, Yield Hall Place (Grade II)
Listed building group	Nos.48-49, 50-51 & 52 Market Place (including No.10 High Street) (all Grade II)
Listed building Landmark	Church of St Laurence (Grade I)
Listed building	Telephone Exchange, Minster Street (Grade II)
Listed building Landmark	Church of St Mary, St Mary's Butts (Grade I)
Listed building Landmark	Church of St Giles, Southampton Street (Grade II)

Conservation Areas

- 3.11 Part of the Site is located within the designated area of one conservation area (Market Place / London Street), and the wider Site also within the local and wider setting of this and a number of other conservation areas that have been designated by the local planning authority. These designated heritage assets have first been identified using the local planning authorities' web resources. Following this initial stage of identification, a further stage of on-site inspection has informed this scope. The conservation areas that are identified as having the potential to be affected by the development of the Site are identified in **Table 3.2**.

Table 3.2: Conservation Areas

Type	Name
Conservation Area	Market Place / London Street
Conservation Area	St Mary's Butts / Castle Street

Scheduled Monument

- 3.12 The Site is located within the local setting of one designated scheduled monument, which has been identified using HE's National Heritage List for England map web resource. Following this initial stage of identification, a further stage of on-site inspection has informed our appraisal to exclude other such designations from our baseline analysis as not having the potential to be affected by the development. Refer to **Table 3.3** below.

Table 3.3: Scheduled Monument

Type	Name
Scheduled monument	High Bridge

- 3.13 In addition, we have identified that there are a much larger number of other designated (and also potential non-designated) heritage assets within the wider surrounding area of the Site. These have been scoped out from our assessment however; as informed by both desktop analysis and on site survey, in light of the screening and or filtering effects on visibility of distance, street pattern, intervening built form and or mature vegetation, and also in terms of the particular heritage significance of the asset and its relationship (or lack of) within its wider townscape setting and the Site itself.

4. Historical Development

Reading Town

- 4.1 It is important to understand the historical development / time depth of the Site and its role in the local area as part of any contextual study that informs its future development and also the design approach. As a supporting study to the then emerging Local Plan a Historic Environment Background Paper (2018) was prepared by RBC, which included a draft Heritage Statement (2014) for the town and Borough of Reading. Together with the various published Conservation Area Appraisals, this evidence has been reviewed as part of our own initial analysis. The Heritage Statement states in overview that:

“There has been a long history of settlement in the area, with the name Reading having Saxon roots. Reading Abbey was a very important and prestigious religious centre throughout the Middle Ages. Much of Reading’s growth took place in the Victorian era after the development of canals. The arrival of the railway led to the significant expansion of manufacturing in the town. This history is reflected in over 800 listed buildings, fifteen conservation areas and two scheduled ancient monuments, as well as six museums and a host of designated heritage assets. Those that seek out Reading’s heritage are richly rewarded.

This long heritage is important in forming the identity of the town and its people. It has a direct influence on the quality of life of its residents and is a key asset to the local and regional economy. Reading’s heritage is an important and unique asset, albeit sometimes our best kept secret.”

- 4.2 Appendix 1 to the Reading Tall Building Strategy SPD (2008), referred to as Cultural Heritage Desk Study, is also of particular relevant to our analysis. It is outlined that this study reappraises and synthesises existing information and evidence from various sources, including those relating to historic buildings and conservation areas. It includes information held in the local Sites and Monuments Record, but is principally based on historic maps and plans. This information is collected and mapped to assist in an analysis of the town plan and the definition of major historic topographic units within the town. This process of reappraisal generates a clearer picture of how the central area has evolved through time.

- 4.3 The more recently adopted Reading Borough Local Plan (2019) provides a succinct description of the Central Reading area (which includes the Site itself), in terms of its historical development and also current projections for its future growth. In summary, it states that:

“The character of the town centre is strongly linked to the history of the town. There is some evidence of Roman settlement, and the name of Reading has Saxon origins, with the original Saxon settlement in the vicinity of St Mary’s church. The development of Reading Abbey, founded in 1121, was a major economic stimulus for the town. The historic core of the centre dates from medieval times, around the three medieval churches of St Laurence’s, St Giles’ and St Mary’s. Reading was mostly contained within

its medieval boundaries until the end of the 18th century, when the town began to expand as a result of improved transport links (including transformation of the River Kennet into a canal, linking Reading with other areas), and industrialisation. Reading's emergence as an industrial centre is largely attributable to the arrival of the Great Western railway in the mid-19th Century.

The opening of the Inner Distribution Road (IDR) in 1960 transformed the town centre, with changes to the physical appearance of Reading, including alterations to the historic street pattern, the loss of historic buildings, and dissection of the town centre. Parts of Reading's historic core were demolished during the mid-20th Century, to make way for more modern developments. However, much of historical merit remains.

More recently, there has been substantial new development within the centre. The opening of the Oracle centre in 1999 helped to establish Reading as one of the leading shopping locations in the UK. More recently, Reading station has been transformed, increasing passenger capacity and removing a significant bottleneck on the rail network. New public spaces north and south of the station provide a focus for new development. New tall buildings have been developed in the centre, and, with further tall buildings already permitted, the skyline of Central Reading is set to transform ..."

- 4.4 The settlement of Reading was established at the lowest point of the River Kennet, where it could be forded. The original crossing place was at today's Bridge Street, and here the roads from Oxford, Southampton, Bath and London converged. Reading's location on the Kennet, near its junction with the Thames, means that it is in a favourable position for waterborne trade as well as passing traffic on the roads. The foundation of Reading Abbey by Henry I also fostered the growth of the town. This was located in the area of today's Forbury, transferred to the Benedictine order in the mid-13th century, and grew steadily so that by the mid-14th century it had become one of the richest abbeys in the country. Its royal patronage made it one of the main pilgrimage sites in England, and inevitably a population grew up around it which made a living from the many people visiting the town.
- 4.5 In its earliest years, the principal route through Reading followed Southampton Street, Bridge Street and St Mary's Butts in a north-south direction, past St Mary's Church and the original nucleus of the town. As the influence of the Abbey grew, the route along London Street and Duke Street to the Market Place outside St Laurence's Church became more popular, and shifted the focus of the town eastwards. It is this 12th century route which forms the back-bone of the Market Place / London Street Conservation Area. Reading Abbey was largely destroyed during the Dissolution of the Monasteries, after which its building materials were steadily quarried for reuse elsewhere in the town. Despite the loss of this key draw to the town, Reading continued to thrive on a range of trades and industries, including cloth and leather manufacture, and silk weaving.
- 4.6 One of the earliest detailed modern maps of Reading shows the town arranged in a broadly triangular shape to either side of the River Kennet. Friar Street formed one side of the triangle; with Southampton Street, Bridge Street and St Mary's Butts forming a second side, and London Street, Duke Street and Market Place the third. A church is located at each apex: St Laurence's, St Mary's and St Giles'. An extract of John Rocque's

18th century map is included at **Figure 3.1**.



Figure 4.1: Extract John Rocque's Map of Reading dated 1761⁹

- 4.7 The early established triangular settlement pattern remained legible through the 18th century, although some additional linear development had expanded westwards along Castle Hill and Bath Road, and also eastwards along London Road. Whilst the town itself remained relatively contained, its role and reputation grew in importance when work began in the early-18th century to make the both the Rivers Kennet and Avon navigable. This encouraged further trade and connection with Bath and Bristol in the west, and also London in the east. Construction began on a canal to connect the two rivers in 1794, and this was completed in 1810. This created a continuous waterborne route between Bristol and London, passing through Reading, and also highlighted Reading's importance commercially and industrially.

⁹ Berkshire County Record Office

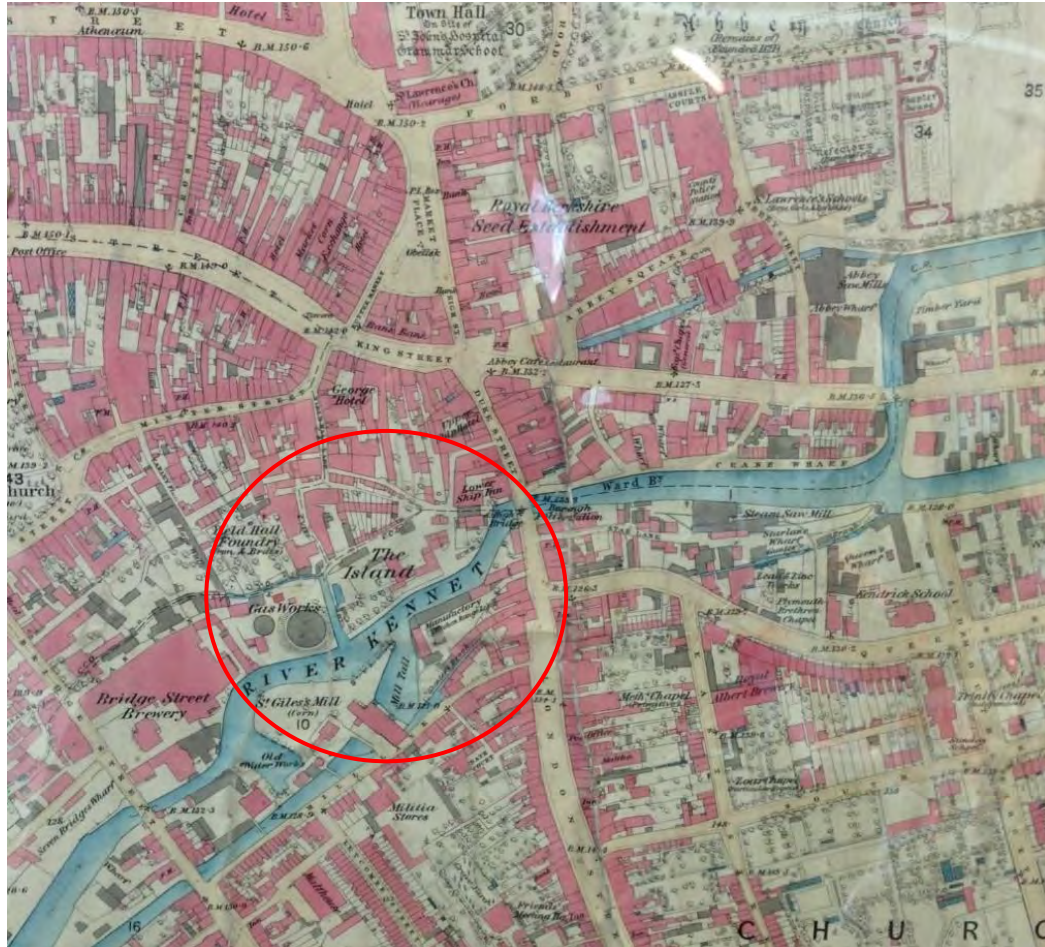


Figure 4.2: Extract of Ordnance Survey (OS) map dated 1877 (approximate area of the Site identified by a red circle)

- 4.8 The town filled out over the early decades of the 19th century. The medieval linear development along the three main routes again expanded outwards with new streets and development, and as a result of the improvements in transport and infrastructure in the town, and its status on the key transport route of the Kennet and Avon Canal. The Great Western Railway opened through the town in 1840, and as with the canal, this catalysed further growth and expansion. Major industries now began to be established in the town, including the biscuit manufacturers Huntley and Palmers, which by 1900 was the largest biscuit manufacturer in the world and employed over 5,000 people in the town. The Site itself formed part of that growing industrial importance for the town at that time, with its direct connection with the River Kennet waterway. **Figure 3.2** includes an extract of the 1877 Ordnance Survey map held by Berkshire Archives.



Figure 4.3: Photograph of Medieval St Lawrence's Church at the head of the Market Place, dated late 19th century¹⁰



Figure 4.4: Photograph of the High Bridge from the east looking west towards the Site, dated 1981 (prior to The Oracle redevelopment)¹¹

¹⁰ Berkshire Archives and Local Study Centre

¹¹ <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/photos/>

- 4.9 Into the 20th century Reading grown to become much denser and built-up, so that the early triangular street pattern had been both in-filled and surrounded by further streets of housing and industry. However, the medieval street pattern of London Street, Duke Street and Market Place remained legible, with its fine-grained street pattern of narrow-fronted plots, up to the Second World War. It was during and then immediately after this war that the greatest change occurred to the townscape. Extensive enemy bombing during the war necessitated the redevelopment of many central sites, albeit joined in the post-war period by even more comprehensive development plans for the future town that impacts much of the historic core. Larger-scale redevelopment has also occurred along the waterside and close to the new Inner Distribution Road (IDR), which was constructed between 1969 and the late-1980s east to west to the southern edge of the town centre. It is this road, more than any other late-20th century development, which has impacted upon the character of the Market Place / London Street Conservation Area and the town as a whole. It now bisects this designated area just south of the river and very near to the Site itself and involved the demolition of elements of Reading's historic core and building stock.

The Site

- 4.10 Historically the Site forms part of the former commercial / industrial area along the canalised River Kennet. This is immediately to the west of the more ancient north-south route of London Street / Duke Street through the historic core of Reading, which crosses the Kennet at High Bridge and leads into the Market Place further north. **Figure 3.2** and this extract of the 1877 Ordnance Survey indicates a much more complex and finer grain pattern of waterways and streets / lanes prior to the more comprehensive industrialisation of this area that continued into the 20th century. Mill Lane can be seen in the late 19th century still addressing the waterfront, and also where a large corn mill (St Giles's Mill) and its race dominated the area between the two ancient bridge crossings. The extract from the later 1934 Ordnance Survey map (**Figure 3.5**) illustrates the past uses, built form and pattern of streets and spaces in the interwar period. The old mill race had been built over as part of canalisation of the River Kennet. From the Site westwards the waterway of the Kennet and Avon Canal was then dominated by the industrial complexes of Reading Gas Works, Huntley and Palmers Biscuit Factory and Simmonds Brewery, to name just a few of the main industrial premises. **Figure 3.6** is an aerial photograph, also from the inter-war period, that illustrates the appearance of the Site and its local waterside area prior to the effects of post-war redevelopments.
- 4.11 It was again in the later 20th century that the greatest degree of change occurred to this past townscape form and character in relation to the Site. The development of the IDR (Queens Road) bypass along the south side of the canal and a new bridge crossing along the line of Yield Hall Place established a new pattern of movement and also introduces a generally larger grain and scale of built form, infrastructure and spaces. Older buildings on both sides of London Street at its north end were cleared away; leaving more isolated or divided historic built elements. More recently, the comprehensive development of The Oracle centre has further established this new character for the area on both sides of the Kennet to the west of the ancient bridge crossing of London Street. One remnant of the historic use of this Site however is the existing stone plaque "Reading Corporation Tramways Power Station" to the south elevation of the Vue cinema, which was taken from the former tramways depot

building of 1903 following its demolition in 1998.



Figure 4.5: Extract of OS map dated 1934 (approximate area of the Site identified by a red circle)



Figure 4.6: Aerial photograph of the Site from the east looking across High Bridge / London Street in the foreground along the canal westward to the former Tram and Bus Depot and The Seven Bridges Brewery, dated 1932¹²

¹² <https://www.britainfromabove.org.uk>



Figure 4.7: Photograph of Site as seen from the south east and Queens Road / London Street (2022)



Figure 4.8: Photograph of Site as seen from the west and Bridge Street bridge along River Kennet (2022)

- 4.12 As found today, the Site no longer integrates with, nor positively addresses or activates, London Street. The existing buildings are modern, large scale and of no particular architectural and or historic interest in relation to nearby heritage assets. Although largely inward looking as a shopping centre, The Oracle development itself has embraced the river to create new public realm along the water (Kennetside / Oracle Riverside). The name The Oracle is taken from that of the earlier 17th workhouse that once existed on part of its site towards Minster Street. This was one of the earliest workhouses built in the country and its primary use was for the production of cloth. Archaeological remains of the workhouse and its associated industry remain below this later redevelopment.

5. Heritage Significance and Setting

Introduction

5.1 The NPPF 2021 defines the ‘significance’ of a heritage asset as:

*"The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. The interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting ..."*¹³

5.2 Supporting NPPG confirms that heritage interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic, and also provides further detail as below:

- *"Archaeological interest: As defined in the Glossary to the National Planning Policy Framework, there will be archaeological interest in a heritage asset if it holds, or potentially holds, evidence of past human activity worthy of expert investigation at some point.*
- *Architectural and artistic interest: These are interests in the design and general aesthetics of a place. They can arise from conscious design or fortuitously from the way the heritage asset has evolved. More specifically, architectural interest is an interest in the art or science of the design, construction, craftsmanship and decoration of buildings and structures of all types. Artistic interest is an interest in other human creative skill, like sculpture.*
- *Historic interest: An interest in past lives and events (including pre-historic). Heritage assets can illustrate or be associated with them. Heritage assets with historic interest not only provide a material record of our nation's history, but can also provide meaning for communities derived from their collective experience of a place and can symbolise wider values such as faith and cultural identity."*¹⁴

5.3 Moreover, the NPPG also confirms that the terms ‘special architectural or historic interest’ of a listed building and the ‘national importance’ of a scheduled monument are used to describe all or part of what, in planning terms, is referred to as the identified heritage asset’s significance¹⁵.

5.4 Historic England has published guidance with regard to the preparation of statements of heritage significance, and how the proper analysis of the significance of heritage assets should be used to inform an assessment of impacts on that significance as a result of proposed change.¹⁶ The ‘setting’ of a heritage asset is defined by the NPPF to comprise:

"The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a

¹³ MHCLG, National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2023 – Annex 2: Glossary.

¹⁴ Paragraph: 006 Reference ID: 18a-006-20190723

¹⁵ Paragraph: 006 Reference ID: 18a-006-20190723

¹⁶ Historic England: Advice Note 12: Statements of Heritage Significance 2019

positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral."¹⁷

- 5.5 Historic England has published good practice advice¹⁸ in respect of the setting of heritage assets and also views analysis, providing detail on understanding setting and views and how this relates to heritage significance, and also how to gauge the indirect impact of any changes on that significance. In understanding how, and to what degree an element of setting contributes to the significance of a heritage asset, consideration should be given (inter alia) to: the physical surroundings of the asset, including its relationship with other heritage assets; the way the asset is appreciated; and the asset's associations and patterns of use. Our baseline appraisal work also recognises that historic, functional and or visual inter-relationships exist between the identified heritage assets, for particular example where a conservation area provides the key element of the setting of a statutory listed building or group that contributes to their significance. Accordingly, the sometimes complex and overlapping nature the heritage interests of these assets will be acknowledged and articulated. Further guidance on the definition of setting and how it should be taken into account is set out in NPPG.
- 5.6 Historic England has also in the past provided further guidance for their staff (and others) on their approach to making decisions and offering guidance about all aspects of England's historic environment¹⁹. This provides advice on how to assess the contribution of elements of a heritage asset, or within its setting, to its significance in terms of its 'heritage values'. These include: evidential, historical, aesthetic and communal. This supplements the established definitions of heritage significance and interests set out in founding legislation and more recent national planning policy and guidance.

Designated Heritage Assets

Listed Buildings

- 5.7 Listed buildings are defined as designated heritage assets that hold special architectural or historic interest. The principles of selection for listed buildings are published by the Department of Digital, Culture Media and Sport, and supported by Historic England's Listing Selection Guides for each building type. This is supported by Historic England's Listing Selection Guides for each building type.²⁰

Conservation Areas

- 5.8 Conservation areas are designated on the basis of their special architectural or historic interest, the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance. Historic England has published guidance in respect of conservation areas, and this provides a framework for the appraisal and assessment of the special interest and significance of a conservation area.²¹

¹⁷ MHCLG, National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2023 – Annex 2: Glossary.

¹⁸ Historic England, Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3 (Second Edition): The Setting of Heritage Assets, 2017

¹⁹ English Heritage (now Historic England) Conservation Principles: Policies and Guidance 2008

²⁰ Historic England, Selection Guides 2011 (and updated).

²¹ Historic England Advice Note 1: Conservation Area Appraisal, Designation and Management 2019 (2nd edn).

Scheduled Monuments

- 5.9 Scheduled monuments are those archaeological sites which are considered by the government to be of national importance. Historic England has published selection guides for different types of archaeological remains.²² Scheduling refers to the legal system for protecting nationally important monuments and archaeological remains in England and Wales. Its aim is to preserve the best examples of these for the benefit of current and future generations. These assets are added to the 'Schedule' (the list of legally protected monuments) by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, under powers contained in the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act, 1979.

Statements of Heritage Significance

- 5.10 The statements of heritage significance set out in the following sub-section of this baseline appraisal are proportionate to the importance of each of these built heritage assets, and provide a sufficient level of description to understand and appreciate the historic and heritage context, and the potential impacts of the Proposed Development on Site. The description of the particular significance and interests of each heritage asset is provided, including any contribution of setting (including the Site itself) and views to that significance. This work is in accordance with the requirements of the NPPF 2021 (paragraphs 194-195) and also best practice guidance and advice published by the DCMS and Historic England (HE).
- 5.11 Our analysis has been undertaken on the basis of the definition of an initial study area, followed by review of existing published information, focussed desktop and archival research by our professional team. In addition, the relevant Historic Environment Record (HER)²³ for this local planning authority area has been consulted. A site / field study was subsequently undertaken by these consultants. The location and extent of the identified built heritage assets were confirmed and explored, including consideration of heritage significance and also any contribution of setting and views whilst in the field.

The Site

- 5.12 As informed by our baseline analysis, it is our assessment that the existing condition of the Site does not contribute to the understanding or appreciation of the significance of any of the heritage assets identified within the defined Study Area. This assessment is further described for each heritage asset receptor in the statements of heritage significance following. The past development of the Site has connections to the historic industrial use of the local area along the waterways of the river and canal from the 19th century. However, this link is no longer legible on Site, and the existing large scale modern buildings and spaces are of no particular architectural and or historic interest. As found today, the Site no longer integrates with, nor positively addresses or activates, London Street. However, The Oracle mixed use development itself has embraced the river to create new public realm along the water.

²² Historic England, Selection Guides 2018 (and updated)

²³ The Archaeology and Historic Buildings Record (AHBR)



Figure 5.1: Photograph of Site as seen from Yield Hall Place looking south east (2022)



Figure 5.2: Photograph of Site as seen from Queens Road / IDR back from the east (2022)

Listed Buildings

Nos. 2-4 London Street (Grade II)

Architectural and Historic Interest

- 5.13 The Grade II listed Nos. 2-4 London Street is positioned adjacent to the River Kennet at the north corner of London Street. The List Entry²⁴ describes the building in some detail as follows:

“Mid C19 altered. 2 storeys and basement, rendered brick. Simple cornice and parapet. Hipped tiled roof (part old tiles). 4 bays, the left-hand bay has flanking recessed walls and slight panel to parapet. The 3 right hand bays are arched recesses (centre with depressed arch and higher parapet) and impost bands. Cross-glazed sash windows, round head to outer windows of the right-hand group. Ground floor, 2 modern shop fronts.”



Figure 5.3: View of Nos. 2-4 London Street

- 5.14 Nos. 2-4 London Street is of special architectural and historic interest by virtue of its age and as a good example of mid-19th century commercial town architecture, consisting of painted brick with engaged banded pilasters and relieving arches, topped with a plain stone cornice and parapet. A wooden shopfront faces Yield Hall Place. The building conforms to design, evidencing shop layouts and their relation to the wider townscape. It possesses group value alongside the Coroner's Court, as well as High Bridge. Nos. 2-4 face the River Kennet with its composition of entrances and shopfronts informed by the width of bridge and passage of traffic. Nos. 2-4 London Street

²⁴ Historic England, The National Heritage List for England (website)

demonstrate historic interest as purpose-built shop units, highlighting traditional commercial patterns in this area of Reading over multiple centuries.

Contribution of Setting and Site to Significance

- 5.15 Nos. 2-4 London Street addresses both London Street on its east side and Yield Hall Place on its south side, with the River Kennet to the north. It corresponds with High Bridge and the Coroner's Court as historic townscape at a key crossing point over the river. As such, it jointly reflects Reading's past alongside neighbouring historic development, evidencing multiple civic, transport and commercial uses in an urban setting. Neighbouring listed buildings positively affect how the significance of Nos. 2-4 is appreciated; they are positive setting contributors. Modern commercial development surrounding the building elsewhere lacks architectural interest and does not enhance the appreciation of its significance.
- 5.16 The Site is located approximately 10m south-west of the listed building from its nearest boundary. The western portions of the Site are positioned opposite Nos. 2-4 London Street on both sides of the River Kennet on Yield Hall Place. There is a high degree of intervisibility between the Site the listed building. As modern development of low architectural merit, the Site lacks any historic interest that might affiliated it with Nos. 2-4 or affect how its significance is appreciated. It does not correspond with historic building patterns previously evident on Yield Hall Place. Therefore, it makes a neutral contribution towards the significance of the listed building, or to some degree detracts as part of its historic townscape setting.

Coroner's Court, London Street (Grade II)

Architectural and Historic Interest

- 5.17 The Grade II Listed Coroner's Court is positioned on the corner between London Street and Star Lane, directly to the south of the River Kennet. The List Entry²⁵ describes the building as follows:

"Mid C19 adapted Ventian Gothic. Rendered brick. Dentil cornice and parapet. 3 storeys with 2 storey wing to east. Divided by composite pilaster strips into 1-5-1 bays. Parapet raised over 3 centre bays. Band over ground floor. Glazing bar sash windows with heavy surrounds, attached colonnetes on 2nd floor with corbels above to cornice, corbelled columns with crocket caps on 1st floor with pointed arch in panel, tympanum fretted and decorated. On ground floor, 3 tripartite segmental headed windows with vermiculated voussoirs and 2 door pieces. Engaged outer columns support brackets to cornice, inner engaged columns with crocket caps to blind round headed arch. Shouldered lintels, pattern repeated on upper panels of 6 panel doors. Slate roof with one large chimney stack also rendered with a chevron pattern on panel above. 2 storey wing to left and bad fit, forms 'L' plan with doorway to west and smaller doorway in channelled surround to left of it. River front has 1+3 bays with arched window surrounds on 1st floor. Rails to river. Quadilobe pattern gates to street."

- 5.18 The significance of the Coroner's Court is derived from its special architectural and historic interest as a landmark building overlooking the river Kennet, adjacent to High Bridge. Elaborate front elevations facing the Kennet River and London Road are in a

²⁵ Historic England, The National Heritage List for England (website)

grand and eclectic classical order with Venetian Gothic elements, typical of mid-19th century architectural trends. It demonstrates a period taste for combining multiple historical styles. Engaged columns and pilasters with finely moulded capitals flank windows and entrances, outlining the building's essential classical proportions through their repetition and regularity, ornamented with relieving arches. These compliment the rusticated quoins at the ground storey, whilst presenting a more fanciful Venetian design on the first floor with rich floral motifs. The grandiose design reflects the building's status as an important civic building, having served as a coroner's court. It shows evidential value, conforming to both a mid-19th century architectural typology and illustrating the specific layout of a historic coroner's court through its well-preserved features. It possesses group value alongside High Bridge, as well as Nos. 2-4 London Street, as part of the traditional townscape in this area. The Coroner's Court demonstrates historic interest, given its specific traditional function, serving local people over many generations.



Figure 5.4: View of Coroner's Court, London Street

Contribution of Setting and Site to Significance

5.19 The Coroner's Court faces both London Street on its east side and the River Kennet on its north side. As previously noted, High Bridge and Nos. 2-4 London Road possess group value alongside it, with architectural forms that address the river the river and the street, forming part of a key Reading thoroughfare. As neighbouring development, the jointly evidence traditional civic, transport and commercial use married together in an urban environment. These listed buildings make a positive contribution towards the significance of the Coroner's Court as setting. Modern commercial development elsewhere, whilst somewhat in keeping of the essential historic layout of this townscape, makes at best only a neutral setting contribution.

5.20 The Site is located approximately 40m south-west of the listed Coroner's Court from its

nearest boundary. The southern part of the Site, on the opposite side of London Street, can be viewed in conjunction with the listed building further south. However, modern development within the entire Site, lacking any architectural interest, does not contribute towards the appreciation of the listed building's significance, failing to address London Road's historic street form. The northern part of the Site is further recessed on the other side of the River Kennet and partially obscured by Nos. 2-4 London Street. The Site is distanced enough on Yield Hall Place from the listed building to not register any overtly negative impact on its significance as setting, making a neutral contribution overall.

High Bridge (Grade II), including Scheduled Monument designation

Architectural and Historic Interest / National Importance

- 5.21 The Grade II listed bridge spans the River Kennet, connecting Duke Street and London Street, which is also designated as a scheduled monument in recognition of its national importance and archaeological interest as a key river crossing and ancient structure within Reading. The List Entry²⁶ describes the structure as follows:

"1788. Architect: Robert Brettingham of Princes Street, Hanover Square. A single segmental rusticated and vermiculated arch with a plain ashlar keystone. Plain circular recessed panels in spandrels. A curved string follows the pavement but with a plain solid panelled balustrade and moulded coping. The balustrade is curved outwards at each end and finished with a rectangular pier. Graceful design of considerable architectural merit. (Ancient Monument. Berks No 1)."

- 5.22 High Bridge demonstrates special architectural and historic interest as a good example of a late-18th century bridge, designed by notable architect, Robert Brettingham. Brettingham's designs were informed by his travels to Italy during his early life, with his designs and sketches exhibited at the Royal Academy through the 1780s. As well as the 1799 High Bridge, he produced a celebrated design for a bridge at Benham Place. High Bridge spans a narrow section of the river, having a relatively small-scale and simple composition with a single segmental arch. The classical design is roughly symmetrical with rusticated masonry voussoirs, ashlar keystones and parapets with stone panelling on each side. Later historic cast iron lamps are fixed to the parapets. Overall, the bridge is well-proportioned with individual elements contributing towards a cohesive whole. Well preserved fabric provides good evidence of late-18th century bridge construction and the materials, techniques and processes involved. As a key piece of civic infrastructure spanning the Kennett and directing traffic along the London Road, it shows historic interest, associated with traditional commercial and transport patterns, which have affected the lives of local people for many centuries. It has informed Reading's wider streetscape, predating most buildings that surround it.

²⁶ Historic England, The National Heritage List for England (website)



Figure 5.5: View of High Bridge from the waterside

Contribution of Setting and Site to Significance

- 5.23 High Bridge spans the River Kennet. This historic waterway makes a positive contribution towards the listed bridge's significance as setting, having determined the original concept and dimensions for this bridge. London Street, running north and south from each end of the bridge contains a mix of historic and modern commercial development, though generally laid according to the traditional street plan. The street, bridge and aligning development can be viewed in unison as an important historic throughfare within the context of Reading. There, historic buildings, on both sides of the river, including Nos. 23 London Street, Nos. 2-4 London Street and the Coroner's Court, positively affect how the significance of the listed bridge is appreciated. These elements responding to a traditional townscape make an overall positive contribution as setting.
- 5.24 The Site is positioned approximately 40m south-west of High Bridge from its nearest boundary. The lower sides of the bridge, containing most of its significant historic fabric cannot be seen from London Street and Yield Hall Place (aside from the modern bridge directly to the west). The modern tarmac road deck, historic parapets and streetlamps attached are more exposed features which can be viewed in relation to the Site at various instances. However, north and south parts Site do not impose on any key views of the listed bridge and obscured from the east by intermediary development either side of London Street and the River Kennet. The Site fails to align with historic street patterns set out across Yield Hall Place and London Street. Whilst containing development of poor architectural quality, this does not negatively affect appreciation of High Bridge in its context. The Site is recessed away to the west for the most part with limited intervisibility alongside the asset. Therefore, the Site makes only

a neutral contribution towards the significance of the listed and scheduled bridge as an element of its setting.

Group: Nos. 33-41 and Nos. 44-46 London Street (all Grade II)

Architectural and Historic Interest

- 5.25 Nos. 33-41 and Nos. 44-46 London Street form a mixed group of Grade II listed buildings of typically 2-4 storeys, dating predominantly from the 19th century with some 18th century exceptions. These have been grouped according to their group value as neighbouring assets making up the historic townscape on London Road (and conservation area designation). The List Entries²⁷ provide some description of these listed buildings:

"No 33 (former Everyman Theatre) Formerly Primitive Methodist Chapel. Frieze inscribed "Primitive Methodist Chapel 1866", but in fact built 1843 as a Literary, Scientific and Mechanics' Institute. Architect: William Brown. 3 storeys. Symmetrical. Carefully developed Greek Ionic front engaged fluted columns and angle piers. Good detail. Entablature and pediment. Ground floor channelled. Scroll patterned moulded string at 1st floor cill level. 3 windows on 2nd floor with architrave surround. 3 on 1st floor, centre one with frieze and pediment, flanking windows with frieze and cornice. Central 6 panelled door and two 3-light windows on ground floor. Dickens read "Pickwick Papers" here."

"No 35 Mid C19 - probably circa 1862-66 if built in connection with the adjoining Primitive Methodist Chapel (To 33 qv). 4 storeys. Bath stone with rustic quoins, entablature and blocking course. 1 range of tripartite windows with stone pier mullions glazing bar sashes 2nd floor, rest casements, blocks to cills on 2nd floor, bracketed stone balcony on 1st floor. Ground floor has altered shop front carried through from No 37."

"Nos 37 and 39 Mid C18, incorporating part of an older house (see studs in through passage to right). Each 3 storey. No 39 built of silver grey header bricks with red dressings, quoins, string at 2nd floor level, painted brick dentil cornice, blue and red diaper pattern in parapet. Old tile roof. 3 windows on upper floors, glazing bar sashes. Early C19 shop front removed and heavy modern shop continued from No 35 to No 39 inserted. No 37 is a similar design to No 39 but red brick."

"No 41 Mid C19. 3 storeys quasi-Italianate. Red brick with Bath ashlar moulded impost bands, moulded cill bands with cill blocks and bracketed cornice. Slate roof with coped verges. 3 ranges of round headed windows with grey and Bath stone alternating voussoirs, raised keys; hood moulds with foliage stops. Cross glazed sash windows. 6 panel door with radiating fanlight to right. A heavy timber frame on side elevation to this house visible in through passage to right of No 39."

"Nos 44 and 46 Mid C18, altered; rear rebuilt. 2 1/2 storeys, painted brick. Mansard tile roof (No 46 old tiles) with 2 gabled 2 light (modern) dormers. 4 modern casements on 1st floor. 2 modern shop fronts on ground floor and a large through passage opening

²⁷ Historic England, The National Heritage List for England (website)

to right.”



Figure 5.6: View of Nos. 33-41 London Street

- 5.26 This large townscape grouping at Nos. 33-41 and Nos. 44-46 demonstrate architectural and historic interest as typical examples of 19th and 18th century commercial buildings aligning London Street – an important historic throughfare within Reading, crossing the River Kennet. Of brick construction, common buildings techniques materials, including brick and Bath Stone are reflected through preserved fabric, illustrating the historic layout of shops combining residential accommodation.
- 5.27 No. 33 features a particularly grand Bath Stone Neo-classical façade, purported built in 1843 as a Literary, Scientific and Mechanics’ Institute, then used as Methodist Chapel from 1866 and later as an Everyman Theatre. Its symmetrical composition contains engaged fluted Ionic columns and pilasters with a large entablature and pediment above and ground floor rustication. This impressive architectural design is indicative of the cultural importance ascribed to educational institutions in the early to mid-19th century. It shows strong evidential value given its well-preserved features illustrating former use patterns, as well as historic interest. Charles Dickens is reputed to have read his novel, *Pickwick Papers*, in this building during its days as a theatre. Its many former uses contribute towards historical narratives focused on this area of Reading; the listed building has accommodated social, educational and religious happenings, experienced by Reading inhabitants over many decades.



Figure 5.7: View of Nos. 35-41 London Street

- 5.28 No. 35 is also of Bath Stone, likely built c.1862-66, a couple of decades after No.33, though in a similarly grand Neo-classical style. Rusticated quoins and tripartite windows across the upper storeys, featuring pilasters, a balustrade and a pediment, present fine details onto London Street. Nos. 37-39 are of brick construction with white dentilled stucco cornices beneath parapets at the roof line. Off set from one another, No. 39 contains grey as well as red brick, standing slightly taller. These are more typical mid-18th century commercial and residential buildings, having more restrained, albeit dignified, architectural features. The ground floor modern shop front extending across Nos. 35 to 39 lacks architectural interest, providing a negative distraction from preserved historic fabric above.
- 5.29 No. 41 London Street is a mid-19th century commercial building of red brick. Its three bay three storey arrangement is well-proportioned, featuring elaborate fenestration in the form of round arched windows with alternating Bath Stone and grey stone voussoirs, alongside floral motifs. Stone stringcourses and a dentilled cornice beneath the roofline further define the front façade of the listed building onto London Street. On the opposite side of the road, the mid-18th century Nos. 44-46 present relatively modest painted brick elevations with an uneven mansard tile roof. Shop fronts were remodelled in the 20th century and a new passage introduced to the north, of lower architectural interest. Despite this, special architectural and historic interest is demonstrated, with Nos. 44-46 containing well-preserved fabric evidencing traditional use patterns.

Contribution of Setting and Site to Significance

- 5.30 The southern portion of the Site is located approximately 50m north-west from the nearest of this group of listed buildings (Nos. 33-41 and Nos. 44-46) on London Street. Nos. 33 and 35, at the north east of the group, can be seen most prominently from the direction of the Site over a crossroads. Further south and on the east side of London

Street, listed buildings are more obscured from the Site by the street profile, providing intermediary development to the north. Buildings within the Site lack architectural interest and do not contribute towards any appreciation of the listed buildings' significance. The Site is contained in a distinctly different townscape character area, and on the other side of the IDR, failing to correspond with London Street's historic street patterns. As such, the Site makes at best only a neutral contribution to the appreciation of the significance of this group of listed buildings, although the contrasting modern form and large scale experienced as a backdrop to more historic rooflines in some shared views looking north along London Street is a detracting characteristic.

Group: Nos. 49-53 and 48-52, 54-58, 62-66, 68, 70, 72, 74-76, 80, 86 & 88 London Street (all Grade II)

Architectural and Historic Interest

- 5.31 Nos. 49-53 and 48-58, 62-76, 80, 86-88 London Street form a group of Grade II listed buildings dating from the 18th and 19th centuries, though Nos. 49-53 stands as an exception with some remaining 16th century fabric. These listed buildings provide good evidence of traditional commercial architecture on one of Reading's prominent historic streets. Frontages of mixed designs and materials, including both brick and Bath Stone Ashlar, reflect the piecemeal development of this area. Buildings possess group value as historic townscape developed in a variety of phases, showcasing changes along this street over multiple centuries. The published List Entries²⁸ provide some description of these buildings:

"Nos 49-53 A timber framed building of the C16 and possibly earlier on the east side of London Street, re-fronted and remodelled into a pair of dwellings probably in the C18 or C19, with shop fronts of the late C19 and C20. Remodelled and extended in the late C20 and early C21.

Nos 44 and 46 Mid C18, altered; rear rebuilt. 2 1/2 storeys, painted brick. Mansard tile roof (No 46 old tiles) with 2 gabled 2 light (modern) dormers. 4 modern casements on 1st floor. 2 modern shop fronts on ground floor and a large through passage opening to right.

Nos 48 to 52 (even) Mid C18 altered. 2½ storeys. Painted brick, brick block eaves cornice. Mansard old tile roof (No 52 has lower pitched roof). 4 gabled dormers. 5 windows on 1st floor (early-mid C19 replacements probably), Nos 48 and 50 tripartite, No 52 late glazed; 2 others. Modern shop fronts, No 50 early C20. Rear rebuilt except No 52.

Nos 54 to 58 (even) 1753/4. 3 storeys, attic and basement. Brick, brick strings between floors (painted on 2nd floor). Brick dentil and moulded cornice. Parapet. No 54 has mansard slate front slope, rest and Nos 56 and 58 are old tile roof. One dormer. Each house has 3 windows, glazing bar sashes, 1st floor windows have late C18 cast-iron balconies of intersecting arch pattern. Nos 54 and 56 each have one door and modern shop window. Inside No 56 on ground floor is a reeded marble fireplace and a wide panelled hall with arch. No 58 has 2 windows (lacking glazing bars) and one door.

²⁸ Historic England, The National Heritage List for England (website)

Doors have moulded architrave surround and moulded cornice supported on consoles; Nos 56 and 58 have 6 panel doors. Cast-iron spearhead rails with patterned standards. More dormers and occasional grey brick to rear.

Nos 62 to 66 (even Early C19. 3 storeys Bath stone ashlar; string at 1st floor level, entablature, cornice and parapet. Slate roof. 4 windows on upper floors, glazing bar sashes, 3 on ground floor with splayed reveals and door with heavy Doric pilasters, entablature and cornice. 6 panelled door with high rectangular fanlight over. Interior: front room to north has deeply undercut palmette cornice. To south is early C20 replica-style block (Nos 64 and 66) 3 storeys and basement red brick with stone modillion cornice and blocking course. 5 ranges of windows, glazing bar sashes with panels below. Bath stone pilaster doorcase to left, similar to No 62 (retaining lattice pattern glazing in rectangular fanlight).

No 68 Early C19. 4 storeys, painted Bath stone, strings between floors. Cornice and shaped blocking course. Slate roof. 2 windows on upper floors; glazing bar sashes with architrave surrounds. Ionic shop front removed and replaced with modern plate glass.

No 70 Early C19. 4 storeys and basement. Bath stone, channelled with struck voussoirs on ground floor, string at 1st and 2nd floor cill levels. 1st and 2nd floor windows have architrave surrounds. Cornice and shaped blocking course. Slate roof. 3 windows, glazing bar sashes, on upper floors, moulded cornices on 1st floor. 2 semi-circular headed windows (without glazing bars) on ground floor and a modern 6 panel door. Cast-iron foot scraper. Back door has arched radiating fanlight.

No 72 1849. Built as Savings Bank by John Billing. Italianate. 3 storeys. Bath stone ashlar, ground floor channelled with struck voussoirs. This house is set back between Nos 70 and 74 which have rustic piers flanking No 72 to ground floor height. Heavy modillion and panel cornice to cope. Quoined break. 1st and 2nd floors have tripartite windows - arched and stepped on 2nd floor with corbelled flat bow stone balcony; segmental pediment to 1st floor with heavy balcony on stone brackets. Below is engraved "Reading Savings Bank" in masonry. 2 arched windows on ground floor. Round headed door with modern door and fanlight. Basement area railings have alternate pendants fillers.

Nos 74 and 76 II GV 2. Mid C18. 2 storeys, attic and basement. Brick, painted cornice and parapet. Flanking conical rainwater heads. Coped verges. Old tile mansard roof to No 76 with 3 dormers. No 74 has old tiled roof. No 74, altered 2 storey extension to No 76: 3 windows on 1st floor, 2 windows and yard entrance on ground floor, glazing bar sashes. No 76 has 5 windows on upper floors, and central door, doorcase altered; crude short pilasters on panelled plinths, pulvinated frieze and curved pediment. 6 panelled door, rectangular fanlight (lacking glazing bars). Railings on each side of alternating pattern.

No 80 House and shop dated 'w j March 25 1753' on stone tablet set in rear wall: street front remodelled mid C19. Timber-framed with brick infill; brick walls to front and rear (the former stuccoed and lined out to resemble ashlar), brick chimney stacks. Old tile roof and hanging to rear gable. Two-unit plan with transverse central stair; original entry at foot of stair, from access passage through left-hand side of building. Two storeys plus basement (to front) and attic. Front elevation of 3 storeys (at attic level a

screen for the original gable). To ground floor, a 4-panel door (upper panels glazed) with over light to left, a C20 shop window in C19 opening to right, with basement light under. Impost mouldings to piers between openings, carrying plain fascia surmounted by cornice. At first floor level, 3 windows, sashes with glazing bars to top sash only, in projecting surrounds with brackets under cills. Similar window (with C20 glazing) to centre of second floor, the cill set on a plain projecting band. Above, window, similar band, heavy projecting cornice and parapet. Above, $\frac{1}{2}$ hip of original roof, and stacks to right-hand flank wall visible. Rear elevation has doorway to right at ground floor level, and single light original window openings to ground and first floors, all under $\frac{1}{2}$ -brick segmental arches. Lower opening partially blocked to accommodate mid C19 sash like those on front; upper has C20 steel casement. Eaves line continued across gable by two projecting brick courses, above which gable is tile hung on timber framing, with central C20 casement in earlier opening; roof $\frac{1}{2}$ -hipped above. The interior has been little altered, retaining the original dog-leg stair with closed strings, and column-on-vase baluster from top to bottom. The ground floor front room has a simple wooden cornice and chimney piece. The building is archaic for its date both in its plan and constructional details; the former closely resembles the usual form of terrace house in London c 1660-80 (for which see *Post Medieval Archaeology*, 8, (1974), pp 80-91).

No 88 Early C18 to London Street, refronting earlier building. 2 storeys, attic and basement. Brick. Old tiled roof hipped to left. 1 dormer. 2 windows on 1st floor, segmental headed glazing bar sashes. Mid C19 shopfront on ground floor: 3 pilaster strips and dentil cornice to fascia. Jettied 1st floor to Church Street has dragon beam to front, the ground floor brick infill, 1st floor rendered. Modern weatherboarding at rear. The interior has turned baluster staircase, lower flight sliced in two, the cellar has a fragment of stone, possibly mediaeval with a chevron carved on it. Evidence that the London Street front was formerly jettied."



Figure 5.8: View south down London Street



Figure 5.9: View north down London Street

- 5.32 It is noted that nearby No.69 London Road is identified on the statutory list, but has been demolished and replaced by new development since designation in 1978.

Contribution of Setting and Site to Significance

- 5.33 The Site is located approximately 100m north of this extended grouping of listed buildings at Nos. 49-53, 69 and 48-58, 62-76, 80, 86-88 London Street. This group is contained on and south of London Street's intersection with London Court. Partial and glimpsed views between some of these buildings and the Site are feasible, though they are generally obscured by the enclosure of the street. The Site registers no architectural interest, or historical connection, affecting appreciation of the significance of these heritage assets. The Site makes at best only a neutral contribution towards the significance of these listed buildings as an element of their wider townscape setting and views.

Nos. 24-52 Queen's Crescent (Grade II)

Architectural and Historic Interest

- 5.34 The Grade II listed terraced crescent is positioned on the south side of Queen's Road. The List Entry²⁹ describes the building as follows:

"1832-33. J J Cooper architect (according to Colvin). A very slight crescent with houses on a skew, following the curve of the road. 3 storeys Bath stone ashlar. Channelled ground floor. Band over ground floor. Plain cornice and parapet. 3 ranges of glazing bar sashes each, 1st floor centre of each with pediment. Ground floor windows round headed, one each, No 44 1+3 (formerly 2 houses). Bracketed hoods to 4 panel doors with rectangular over lights and architrave surrounds. Butterfly roofs with brick

²⁹ Historic England, The National Heritage List for England (website)

chimneys. No 40 rendered. No 24 has no door but 3 round headed windows on ground floor."



Figure 5.10: View of Nos. 24-52 Queen's Crescent

- 5.35 Queen's Crescent is of heritage significance by virtue of its special architectural and historic interest as a large-scale early-19th century residential terrace, composed in a classical Regency style by J. J. Cooper. Of Bath Stone construction, individual units are finely proportioned, showing same regularly repeating composition across the length of the crescent. This induces a grand and palatial effect across the crescent, further emphasised by continuous stringcourses at the roofline and above rusticated ground storeys. Impressive classical detailing features throughout. Doorways are flanked by volutes, ground floor windows are rounded, and middle first-floor windows are topped with ornamental pediments. The Crescent is a major landmark feature on the south side of Queen's Road, though now appears relatively isolated as an historic townscape feature. It provides good evidence of late-19th century well to do dwellings in this part of Reading, with preserved features indicating traditional and evolving household living patterns.

Contribution of Setting and Site to Significance

- 5.36 Queen's Crescent is a large and visually impressive terrace when viewed in the local context of Queen's Road. It is isolated as historic development, indicated clearly by differing forms and materiality of nearby modern residential and commercial buildings, principally of red brick. These do not relate to the listed crescent or affect how its significance is appreciated. Overall, the contribution made by setting is neutral. The Site is located approximately 170m west of Queen's Crescent from its nearest boundary on the south side of the River Kennet. The listed terrace facing Queen's Road cannot be seen from the Site at street level as result of the meandering street profile and intermediary development. The Site does not affect how the listed terrace's

significance is appreciated; it makes no contribution towards its significance as part of a shared setting.

Group: The George Hotel, King Street (Grade II) & Building on south-east corner, Yield Hall Place (Grade II)

Architectural and Historic Interest

- 5.37 These Grade II listed buildings together form the George Hotel, facing onto both Yield Hall Place and King Street. The List Entries³⁰ describe these buildings in some detail as follows:

“Nos 8 and 9, Nos 10. to 12 (consec) (The George Hotel) Including Nos 61 to 63 (consec) Minster Street. First mentioned 1423. Built at various dates round a courtyard with one entrance from King Street and secondary entrance from Minster Street. King Street front Nos 11 and 12 a modern fake timber design but original timber members survive. 3 storeys. 4 modern windows, on ground floor 2 angled bay windows and central carriage arch . Nos 8 and 9 and return to Minster Street, 4 storeys early C19, stucco and slate roof with rounded corner, moulded cornice over 2nd floor and moulded cope to parapet. No 9 has 2 windows, modern casements. No 8, 3 windows on curve with 2 storey framing pilaster strips on ground floor, doubled to Minster Street. Glazing bar sashes except 1st floor. Nos 62 and 63, raised surrounds, cornices to 1st floor. Nos 61 forms a slight break with Ionic pilasters framing centre and outer incised pilasters, also pedimented 1st floor windows. 3 storey 3 window brick and tile extension to Yield Hall Lane. Ground floor a continuous range of modern glazing bar shop windows. The Courtyard is cobbled and the facades are mainly C18 painted brick with various groups of C18 and early C19 windows; south block with brick block cornice.

Building on south-east corner. Part of the George Hotel. Early C19 altered. 2 storeys and garrets. Red brick with mansard tile roof, large ridge chimney and 3 roof lights. 4 ranges of late C19 sashes. 2 blocked doorways. Segmental arches over ground floor openings (1 door arched) with grey brick headers. Included for group value - for vistas from Minster Street.”

- 5.38 The George Hotel, King Street and the Building on South-East Corner, Yield Hall Place, both forming the George Hotel, register special architectural and historic interest as predominantly 19th century buildings, heavily altered, possessing some medieval fabric and on the site of an early inn. Despite having a modern frontage onto king street, mimicking late-medieval construction, original timbers do remain. This and the plan form of the buildings, possessing an interior courtyard, shows evidential value, reflecting the evolving use of the plot and buildings as an inn and now a hotel over many centuries. The segmental arches onto Yield Hall Lane are typical late-19th century ornamental features complimenting the traditional functional arrangement of the rear yard space and layout of entranceways and windows. The assets historic interest as a longstanding location for commercial and social activity in Reading from the 15th century or earlier.

³⁰ Historic England, The National Heritage List for England (website)



Figure 5.11: (2no) View of George Hotel, King Street and Building on south-east corner, Yield Hall Lane

Contribution of Setting and Site to Significance

5.39 The listed George Hotel, King Street and Building on south-east corner, Yield Hall Lane falls within Character Area 3 of the Market Place / London Street Conservation Area. The immediate setting of the two listed buildings is very varied. The main George Hotel faces north onto King Street, situated within Reading's traditional commercial centre. Though stylistically unique in its locality, it is appreciated alongside many other historic buildings forming Reading's old town centre, of group value alongside. Together, these buildings convey the piecemeal development of Reading over multiple centuries through the exposition of varied and fine architectural styles, reflective of buildings' original and continued uses. The hotel building on the south-east corner is concealed from focus of commercial development around King Street. Nos. 10-12 King Street, to the north-east, providing some group value as historic townscape, though this far more limited in this area, dominated by The Oracle shopping centre to the south.

5.40 The northern portion of the Site is located approximately 60m south of these two listed buildings forming the George Hotel. Despite its relatively close proximity, there is no visibility between the Site and these listed buildings at street level due to an intermediary east wing forming part of The Oracle shopping centre. The George Hotel on King Street faces north away from the Site, forming part of a separate commercial streetscape. The listed building on the south-east corner, facing Yield Hall Lane, is obscured from views from the Site by larger modern commercial development, forming part of the shopping centre. The Site does not affect how the significance of these listed buildings is appreciated. Therefore, the Site makes no positive contribution as part of this groupings wider townscape setting.

Group: Nos.48-49, 50-51 & 52 Market Place (including No.10 High Street) (all Grade II)

Architectural and Historic Interest

5.41 Nos.48-49 Market Place dates from the mid 18th century and was likely originally built as a mixed use building for both commerce and residential on this key historic space

within the town. The List Entry³¹ describes this building as:

“Coloured stucco facade with cornice and blocking course, band at 2nd floor cill height. Slate roof. 4 storeys. 4 ranges of glazing bar sashes. Modern marbled offices on ground floor.”

- 5.42 The significance of this listed building derives principally from its high quality and high-status example of mid-18th urban commercial building of this period. Historically this also illustrates the growing commerce and wealth in Reading and its town centre at this time. The grand, well ordered and Classically influenced architecture, and use of materials and fine detailing, further underlines the importance of the use of this site and its prestigious location fronting the Market Place in this period. The frontage and roof line of this building also enjoys group value as part of a highly varied ensemble of historic buildings that each address and part enclose the ancient Market Place (including Nos.50-51 & 52 along the south side). In this way these buildings in this defined grouping also contribute to the historical record and visual interest / distinctiveness of the local townscape.



Figure 5.12: View of the South side of the Market Place (Nos.48-49, 50-51 & 52)

- 5.43 Within this group, Nos.50-51 dates from the latter part of the 19th century and was originally built as a later phase and expansion of the banking premises at 3-5 King Street immediately to the rear and sharing the same urban block (Barclays Bank). The

³¹ Historic England, The National Heritage List for England (website)