

04 September 2024



Reading
Borough Council
Working better with you

Title	PLANNING APPLICATION REPORT
Ward	Abbey
Planning Application Reference:	PL/22/0933
Site Address:	35-39 Friar Street, Reading, RG1 1DX
Proposed Development	Demolition of existing buildings and installation of basement and erection of part 7, part 11 storey mixed use building comprising 103 upper floor residential units (Class C3) and Class E uses at part basement, part ground floor level plus landscaping and other works (amended description).
Applicant	Shaviram Group
Report author	Jonathan Markwell, Principal Planning Officer
Deadline:	Originally 22/12/2022, but extensions of time have been agreed with the applicant until 27/09/2024
Recommendations	Delegate to the Assistant Director for Planning, Transport and Public Protection Services (AD PTPPS) to: (i) GRANT full planning permission subject to the satisfactory completion of a Section 106 legal agreement and delegate to the AD PTPPS to make such minor changes to the conditions, Heads of Terms and details of the legal agreement as may be reasonably required to issue the permission or (ii) (ii) to REFUSE permission should the Section 106 legal agreement not be completed by the 27th September 2024 (unless officers on behalf of the AD PTPPS agree to a later date for completion of the legal agreement).
S106 Terms	- Securing 70 on-site market Build to Rent units (14 x studio, 15 x 1-bedroom, 37 x 2-bedroom and 4 x 3-bedroom) as per 0083-A-03-LXX-400 Rev P5 Proposed Tenure Mix and CIL Area Plans, as received 22/05/2024, as per all of the stipulations of Policy H4 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019, including (but not limited to) single ownership for a minimum 20 year term from occupation, minimum three year tenancies for private renters, high standard professional on-site managements and meeting RBC's voluntary Rent with Confidence Standards. - Securing 33 on-site Affordable Private Rent Housing units (32.04% provision - 5 x studio, 7 x 1-bedroom, 19 x 2-bedroom and 2x 3-bedroom), as per 0083-A-03-LXX-400 Rev P5 Proposed Tenure Mix and CIL Area Plans, as received 22/05/2024, in perpetuity, as per the Affordable Housing SPD 2021. This will also include the rental levels (set in relation to Local Housing Allowance levels for Reading – including

	service changes), management, eligibility and change in circumstances measures, all as per the SPD. - Should the application site subsequently be extended/altered to create further residential units (which it is considered could reasonably be possible through changes to the proposed mix, utilisation of the first floor ancillary residential floorspace and/or conversion of the non-residential floorspace to residential uses) then contributions towards affordable housing would apply on a cumulative basis also taking into account this application (effectively to prevent this being the first of a succession of applications, with the later application(s) being subject to lower requirements towards affordable housing, whereas had all proposals been submitted in a single instance a higher requirement would have been required). - Employment, Skills and Training - The production, implementation and monitoring of an Employment and Skills Plan (ESP) for both the construction and end use phases of the development. or, in the event that the developer chooses not to provide the ESP themselves, financial contribution commuted sums for the two phases, calculated using the Employment, Skills and Training SPD 2013 formula will be secured in lieu of an ESP. - Zero Carbon Offset financial contribution, as per the Sustainable Design and Construction SPD 2019. If zero carbon is not achieved the scheme must instead achieve a minimum of a 35% improvement in regulated emissions over the Target Emissions Rate in the 2013 Building Regulations, plus provide a financial contribution of £1,800 per remaining tonne towards carbon offsetting within the Borough (calculated as £60/tonne over a 30-year period). - Contribution towards monitoring costs plus a separate commitment to pay the Council's reasonable legal costs in connection with the proposed S106 Agreement, to be payable whether or not the Agreement is completed. - Any unexpended contributions to be repaid within ten years beginning with the start of the Financial Year after the final obligation payment for each obligation is received. In accordance with Policy CC9 . - Indexation - All financial contributions to be index-linked from date of permission unless expressly stated otherwise.
Conditions	1. Time Limit for implementation – 3 years. 2. Approved plans. 3. Pre-commencement, barring demolition works, details of all external materials to be submitted and approved. 4. No flat roof area to be used as a balcony or roof garden unless where already stated / shown (compliance condition) 5. Provision and maintenance of active window displays along Friar Street and Friars Walk at ground floor level (compliance condition). 6. Ground floor commercial unit(s) to be used solely for Class E (a), E (b), E (c), E (d), E (e) or E (f) uses only (compliance condition)

	7. Hours of use of commercial unit(s) of 06:00-23:30 Monday-Saturday and 06:00 – 22:30 on Sundays/Bank Holidays (compliance condition) 8. Mix of units restricted to 19 x studio, 22 x 1-bedroom, 56 x 2-bedroom and 6 x 3-bedroom residential units. 9. Pre-occupation of any residential dwelling, submission and approval of details of 4 'wheelchair accessible' and 2 'wheelchair adaptable' units. 10. Pre-commencement, barring demolition, Security Strategy details to be submitted and approved 11. Pre-commencement, barring demolition, full Fire Strategy details to be submitted and approved 12. * Pre-commencement Demolition and Construction Method Statement (also including Environmental Protection measures) 13. Parking Permits 1 (pre-occupation) 14. Parking Permits 2 (compliance condition) 15. Vehicle Parking (compliance condition) 16. Pre-occupation of a) any residential unit b) commercial unit 1, c) commercial unit 2, d) commercial unit 3, submission and approval of cycle parking details 17. Pre-occupation of any residential unit, submission and approval of visitor cycle parking management plan and details 18. Pre-occupation submission and approval of a moving in / moving out management plan 19. Pre-occupation submission and approval of refuse collection, servicing and delivery details (waste and servicing management strategy, also including vermin proof bin measures detailed by Environmental Protection) 20. Pre-occupation provision of refuse stores (compliance condition) 21. * Pre-commencement arboricultural method statement and tree protection plan 22. Pre-commencement, barring demolition, submission and approval of hard and soft landscaping scheme details. 23. * Pre-commencement biodiversity enhancement scheme 24. Pre-commencement, barring demolition, submission and approval of a ventilation strategy to mitigate overheating (based on the recommendations of the already submitted acoustic assessment) 25. Pre-commencement, barring demolition, submission and approval of a scheme for protecting the dwellings from noise emissions from the commercial uses 26. Hours of deliveries and waste collection (same as hours of use) (compliance condition) 27. Noise Assessment approved prior to installation of any mechanical plant 28. Noise Assessment approved prior to first occupation of any Class E (d) gym use 29. Odour Assessment approved prior to first occupation of any Class E use which includes hot-food cooking 30. * Pre-commencement contaminated land assessment
--	---

	31. * Pre-commencement contaminated land remediation scheme 32. Pre-construction implementation of approved remediation scheme 33. Reporting of any unexpected contamination 34. Demolition/Construction hours (compliance condition) 35. No burning of materials on site during demolition/construction (compliance condition) 36. * Pre-commencement archaeological investigation 37. Pre-commencement, barring demolition, Sustainable Drainage Strategy details 38. Pre-occupation of any residential unit approval submission and approval of all water upgrades works or a development and infrastructure phasing plan being agreed with Thames Water 39. Pre-commencement, barring demolition, SAP assessment (energy) – design stage, in relation to the new build dwellings 40. Pre-occupation of any residential unit SAP assessment (energy) – as built, in relation to the new build dwellings 41. Pre-occupation of residential submission and approval of photovoltaics details. 42. Pre-commencement, barring demolition, submission and approval of an interim BREEAM Certificate demonstrating a minimum BREEAM Excellent rating in relation to the non-residential component 43. Pre-occupation submission and approval of a final BREEAM Certificate demonstrating a minimum BREEAM Excellent rating in relation to the non-residential component
Informatives	1. Positive and Proactive Working – approval 2. Pre-commencement conditions 3. Highways 4. S106 Legal Agreement 5. Terms and conditions 6. Building Control 7. Complaints about construction 8. Encroachment 9. Noise between residential properties – sound insulation 10. Community Infrastructure Levy 11. Parking Permits 12. Advice about trees in Conservation Areas 13. No advertisement consent granted – separate consent may be required in the future 14. Thames Water recommended informatives 15. SSE Power Distribution information regarding new structures being built over existing electricity cables

1. Executive summary

- 1.1. Full planning permission is sought for the demolition of all existing buildings at the site and the erection of a basement and part 7, part 11 storey mixed use building comprising 103 upper floor build to rent residential units, including the provision of 32.04% on-site affordable housing, together with 3 Class E (a-f) uses at part basement and part ground floor level.
- 1.2. The proposals have been carefully considered by a variety of officers and been subject to a series of changes since the application was originally submitted. Whilst there are some shortcomings associated with the proposed development, predominantly as a consequence of its location within an already dense urban environment, the many benefits of the proposals are considered to ultimately outweigh any harmful impacts. In particular, the on-site provision of affordable housing in excess of policy requirements, as well as a suitable mix of different sized units and excess in provision of cycle parking and wheelchair user dwellings are all tangible benefits. Furthermore, the overarching design quality of the scheme, positively responds to the local context and compliments the neighbouring Plots E and F development at the Station Hill site. Accordingly, planning permission is recommended to be granted subject to conditions and the completion of a s106 legal agreement.



Birds-eye view from Friar Street

Figure 1 – Elevated view of the proposed site, in the context of the emerging context of the on-going Station Hill development (extract from the original DAS, received 22/09/2022)

2. Introduction and site description

- 2.1. The application site comprises buildings and land on the north side of Friar Street, close to the junction with Merchants Place to the east and the emerging Friars Walk immediately to the west, as shown below in Figure 2. The site is 0.1941 hectares in size.



Figure 2 – Site Location Plan (outlined in red, with neighbouring land also owned by the applicant shown in blue – the area outlined in green shows the currently under construction / emerging Station Hill development layout)

- 2.2. More specifically, the site includes two main plots, No's 35-38 Friar Street and No. 39 Friar Street. No's 35-38 Friar Street is a 4 storey building at ground level and above (plus a level of rooftop plant), with two storeys of basement space. The double-storey basement and ground floor is occupied by Cosmo Restaurant, with three floors of vacant offices above. The building dates from the later part of the 20th century and is brick based, with distinctive projecting windows, with the upper most floor almost mansard in form (see Figure 3 below). To the north of the building is a car park and servicing area, utilised by the existing occupier and providing vehicular access onto Merchants Place and Garrard Street to the north. No. 39 Friar Street dates from between 1780 and 1800 and was a townhouse as part of a terrace at this point. It is three storeys in height, with the ground floor footprint extending back to create a significant area of flat roof to the rear. The building was previously Grade II listed, but was de-listed by Historic England in 2018, with it being considered that the criteria for listing was no longer fulfilled. It is no longer considered to be a heritage asset (either designated or non-designated). At the time of the officer site visit on 02/11/2022 the upper floor offices were still partly in use, while the

ground floor commercial space was vacant, having most recently been occupied by a boxing gym.



Figure 3 – The existing application site from Friar Street (16/08/2024)

- 2.3. Whilst the application site is not an allocated site for development within the local plan, it is located within the Station / River Major Opportunity Area (MOA). The vision for this MOA is:

"The station/river area will be a flagship scheme, extending the centre and providing a mixed use destination in itself and centred on the new station and public transport interchange. It will integrate the transport links and areas northwards towards the River Thames and into the heart of the centre."

- 2.4. More specifically, it is located within the Policy CR11a Friar Street and Station Road sub-area, which states in full:

"There will be active retail and leisure uses on the ground floor along Friar Street and Station Road, with a mix of users on higher floors. Developments should enhance linkages in a north-south direction to link to the Station Hill area, Listed Buildings and their settings in the area will be conserved, and opportunities to improve the environment of Merchants Place will be sought."

Site size: 1.36 ha indicative potential 150-270 dwellings, officers, retail and leisure (no significant gain assumed)."

- 2.5. In addition to the sub-area policy, Policy CR11 specifies that development in the MOA shall, in summary (particularly relevant to these proposals):
- i) contribute towards providing a high-density mix of uses to create a destination in itself.
 - ii) Help facilitate greater pedestrian and cycle permeability

- iii) Provide developments that front onto and provide visual interest to existing and future pedestrian routes and public spaces;
- iv) Safeguard land which is needed for mass rapid transport routes and stops;
- v) Provide additional areas of open space where possible;
- vi) Give careful consideration to the areas of transition to low and medium density residential and conserve and, where possible, enhance listed buildings, conservation areas and historic gardens and their settings;
- vii) Give careful consideration to the archaeological potential of the area;
- viii) Demonstrate that it is part of a comprehensive approach to its sub-area, which does not prevent neighbouring sites from fulfilling the aspirations of this policy, and which contributes towards the provision of policy requirements that benefit the whole area, such as open space;
- ix) Give early consideration to the potential impact on water and wastewater infrastructure.

2.6. Furthermore, the following designations and information is also pertinent to the site:

- The site is within the boundary of the Reading Central Area (Policies CR1-10);
- The site is within the Primary Shopping Area, Central Core and Office Core (Policy CR1);
- The Friar Street frontage is an existing designated primary frontage in Central Reading (Policy CR7);
- The site is within an Air Quality Management Area (Policy EN15);
- The site is located within a low tree canopy cover ward (Reading Tree Strategy)
- The site is within an area of Archaeological potential (Policy EN2);
- The site is within the 'Station Hill and around' town centre district heating cluster (paragraphs 8.7 – 8.10 of the Sustainable Design and Construction SPD);
- The site is in a Smoke Control Zone;
- Friar Street is part of the classified highway network (Policies TR1-3) and identified for the proposed Mass Rapid Transit route (Policy TR2);
- Friar Street is a specified cycle route (Policy TR4);
- Friar Street is used by buses and has access restrictions in place during certain times of the day. There is a 24 hour restriction in place for Friar Street westbound (except for buses and taxis) and time restricted access Friar Street eastbound between 7am – 11am and 4pm – 7pm and restricted access to Market Place. A section of a 'no stopping' red route has been introduced east along Friar Street (including outside the application site). This restriction means vehicles will not be allowed to stop unless they are within a dedicated loading bay;
- The site is located within Zone 1 of the adopted Parking Standards and Design SPD, which is an area at the very heart of Reading Borough. This area is well served by rail and bus links and also contains the largest proportion of public car parking spaces;
- Friar Street is also identified for the proposed Mass Rapid Transit route and Station Road is identified as a key movement corridor (pedestrian and/or cycle)
- The site is outside a designated tall buildings cluster;
- The site is outside of a designated conservation area, with the closest conservation area being 210m to the east (Market Place / London Street Conservation Area). There are also a number of listed buildings and structures in closer proximity to the site (denoted by a blue star on Figure 4 below), as well as locally listed buildings (denoted by a pink star)



Figure 4– Map showing the application site in the context of nearby listed buildings (denoted by a blue star) and locally listed buildings (denoted by a pink star)

- 2.7. The surrounding area is in the process of transition. Plots E and F of the Station Hill development have recently been constructed (now known as Ebb & Flow), with the Ebb block fronting Friar Street to the west of the site being occupied from 2023 and the occupation of the Flow building, immediately to the north of the application site, appearing to be imminent. Photographs of Ebb and Flow are shown below at Figure 5. These are residential-led blocks, with occupied commercial space fronting onto Friar Street (see relevant history section below for details). The Ebb block is seven storeys fronting onto Friar Street, rising to twelve storeys off Friars Walk (fourteen storeys on the Garrard Street frontage). The Flow building is twelve storeys on Friars Walk, rising to fifteen storeys on Garrard Street (where there is fall in land levels in comparison with the application site). Friars Walk will in time connect Friar Street to Reading Station, with hard and soft landscaping implemented adjacent to Ebb & Flow and the application site in 2023 (see Figure 5).
- 2.8. The site location plan submitted by the applicant (see the extract at Figure 2 above) specifies that the applicant also owns the neighbouring buildings on Friar Street to the east of the site up to the junction of Merchants Place, namely No's 32-34 (four-storey buildings with retail units at ground floor and residential above) and 30-31 Friar Street (a six storey building with a Nando's restaurant at ground floor level and offices above). To the east of the car park / servicing area at the application site is Milk Bar, a two-storey building at 8 Merchants Place, surrounded by other large existing residential blocks such as Projection West and Garrard House. Friar Street is an important historic throughfare in the town centre, as evidenced by the numerous characteristics identified at paragraph 2.6 above. A series of listed buildings are location on the junction of and along Queen Victoria Street to the east (see Figure 4). The south side of Friar Street contains a wide variety of building styles, forms and heights, with the entrance to the distinctive Union Street to the south-east of the application site. The uses along Friar Street are largely within the Class E use class or associated Sui Generis nighttime economy uses, with limited residential at this point.

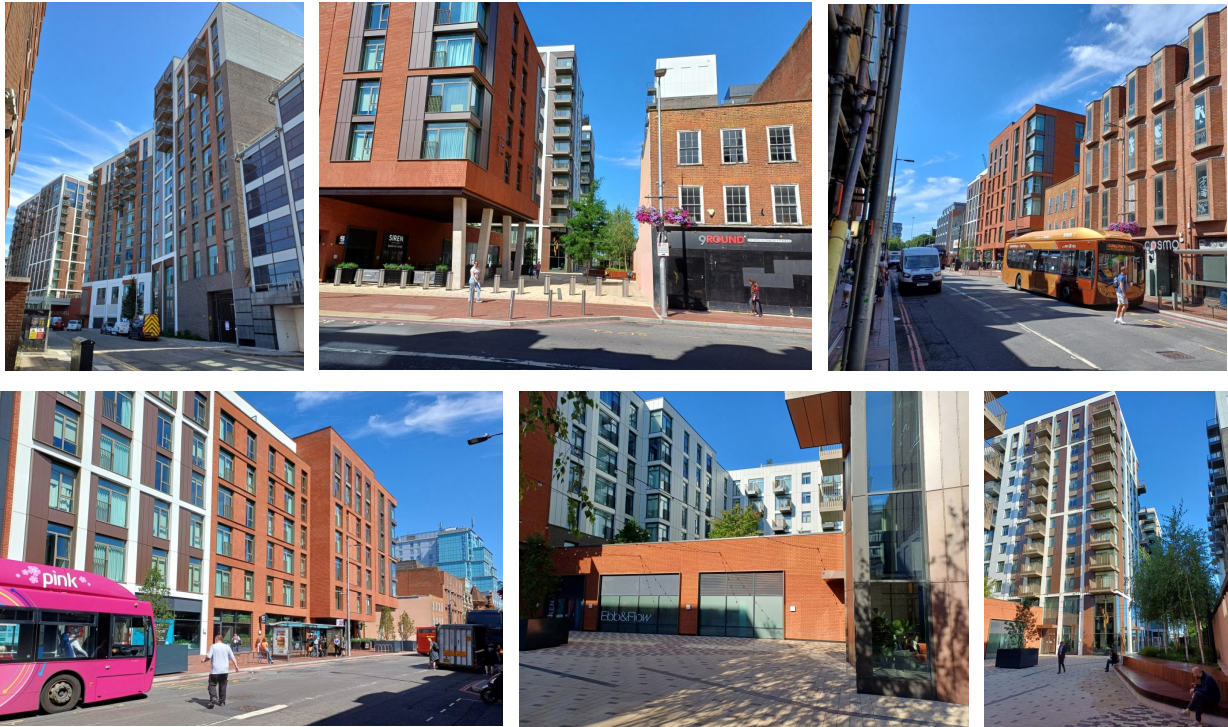


Figure 5 - Photographs of Ebb (above) & Flow (below) at Station Hill (June & August 2024).



2.9. The location of the site within the wider context of the Station Hill redevelopment and Reading Town Centre is shown below within Figure 6.



Figure 6 - Extract from the applicant's submission showing the location of the site in the Reading town centre context

- 2.10. The application is being considered at Planning Applications Committee, as it is a 'major' development recommended for approval by officers.

3. The proposal

- 3.1. Full planning permission is sought for the demolition of the existing buildings at the site and redevelopment for the erection of a basement and part 7, part 11 storey building to provide 103 upper floor residential units, Class E uses at part basement/ground floor level and associated works such as parking and landscaping.
- 3.2. In terms of the residential component of the scheme, the scheme seeks to provide 70 Market Build to Rent units and 33 Affordable Private Rent Housing units (all within the Class C3 use class). In total, 19 x studio (18.4%), 22 x 1-bedroom (21.4% - resulting in a total of 39.8% studio/1-bed units), 56 x 2-bedroom (54.4%) and 6 x 3-bedroom (5.8%) residential units are proposed. A floor-by-floor and mix by tenure breakdown of these units is shown below in Figure 7. In addition, an ancillary residential space at first floor level (with separate access from the ground floor level) will be provided for use by all future residential occupiers, together with a ground floor level reception area, cycle parking and car parking. Two communal terrace areas at first and seventh floor level provide shared external amenity spaces for all future occupiers. In addition, each of the 103 residential units will include individual private amenity spaces, some of which are externally projecting balconies and others are recessed spaces on units fronting Friar Street and Friars Walk (as shown on the proposed first floor plan at Figure 9 below).

Floor	Market Build to Rent units				Affordable Private Rent Housing units				Total
	Studio	1-bed	2-bed	3-bed	Studio	1-bed	2-bed	3-bed	
1 st					2	4	5		11
2 nd		1			3	3	7		14
3 rd	3	4	4				3		14
4 th	3	4	7						14

5 th	2	3	6				2		13
6 th	2	3	6				2		13
7 th	1		5						6
8 th	1		3					2	6
9 th	1		3	2					6
10 th	1		3	2					6
Total number	14	15	37	4	5	7	19	2	103
% within tenure	20%	21.4%	52.9%	5.7%	15.2%	21.2%	57.6%	6.1%	
Totals per tenure	70 units – 67.96%				33 units – 32.04%				

Figure 7 – Floor-by-floor and tenure breakdown of the proposed mix of residential units.

- 3.3. In terms of the non-residential components of the scheme, there are a total of three separate Class E units proposed. The floorspaces involved are detailed below in Figure 8, with the exact locations shown on the basement and ground floor plans at Figure 9. Unit 1 is located at part-basement and part ground floor level, with sole customer access off Friar Street. This is a significantly sized unit (1,684sqm as per figures specified on the plans) and the applicant has indicatively indicated that it is intended space for the current occupier (Cosmo Restaurant), although in practice the proposal is for any Class E operator (not necessarily Cosmo – with Class E comprising many uses including retail, food and drink, professional services, indoor sport and medical/health facilities). The size of this unit is comparable with the existing Cosmo restaurant, which presently comprises 1,452sqm (GIA – figures provided by the applicant) across the existing ground and two floors of basement accommodation. Two smaller units (both under 100sqm in size) are proposed solely at ground floor level, with one on the corner of Friar Street and Friars Walk, with the second unit solely fronting onto Friars Walk (see Figure 9). On the Friars Walk elevation these units are set back slightly, under a proposed colonnade feature at this point (with the residential footprint above). These are described as ‘incubator’ units by the applicant, said to encourage small to medium enterprises, although again in practice they are both proposed for any Class E use.

Unit	Basement level floorspace (sqm)	Ground floor level floorspace (sqm)	Total floorspace (sqm)
Unit 1 – Class E	749 (& 164 plant)	771	1,520 (& 164 plant)
Incubator unit 1 – Class E	-	83	83
Incubator unit 2 – Class E	-	97	97
	749 (& 164 plant)	951	1,700 (& 164 plant)

Figure 8 – The proposed Class E units (all floorspace figures as per those stated on the proposed floor plans)

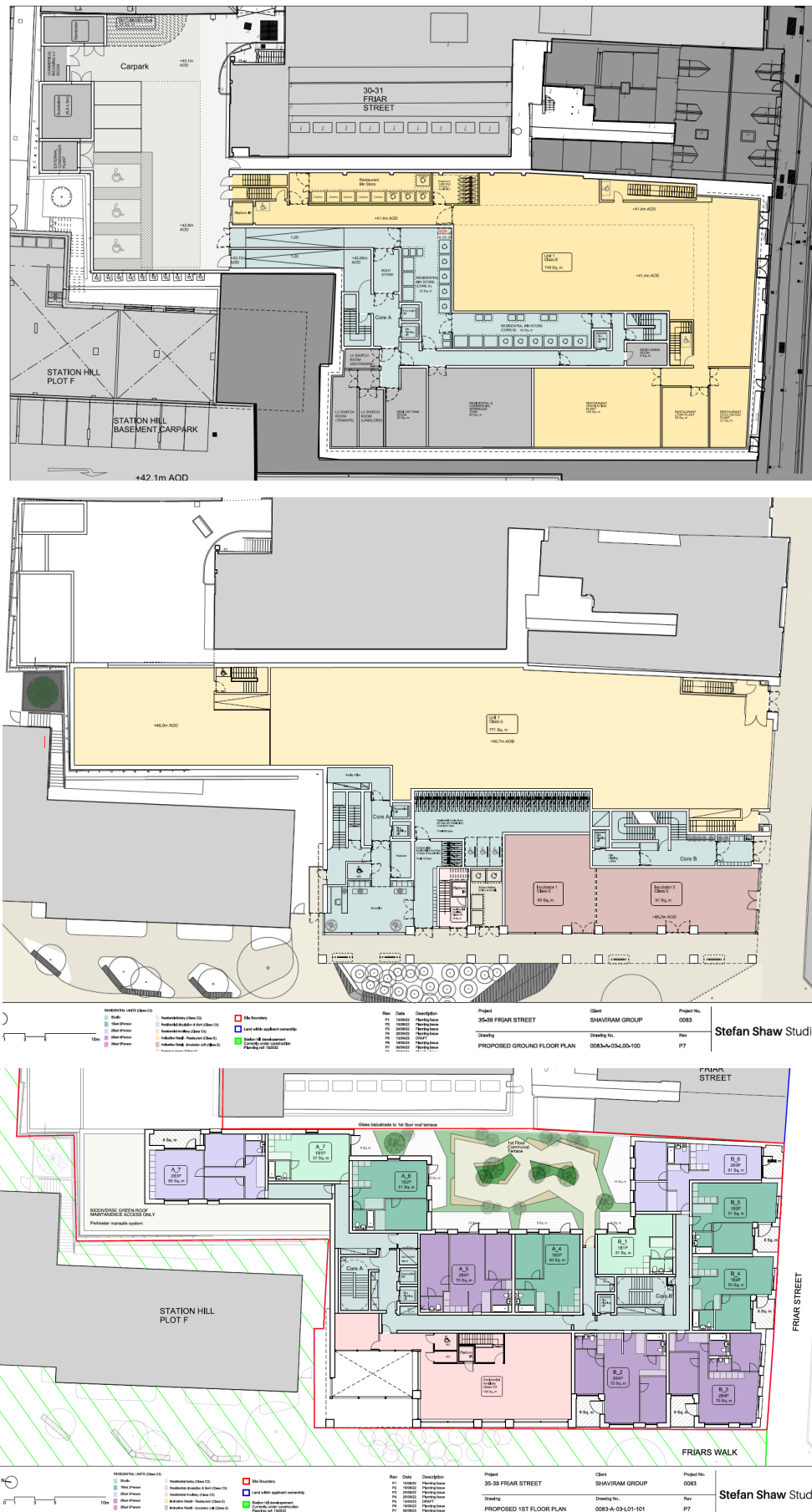


Figure 9 – Proposed basement (top), ground (middle) and first (bottom) floor plans

- 3.4. The footprint of the proposed building largely follows the boundaries with Friar Street and Friars Walk, with a significant rear wing set in to the east of the Station Hill Flow (Plot F) building. The servicing yard in the north east corner of the site is largely retained as

existing, with the exception of four proposed single-storey plant buildings along the northern boundary (comprising a condenser plant room, substation, commercial low voltage switchroom and generator room), meaning on-site parking is proposed to be reconfigured from circa 15 existing spaces to 6 (3 disabled spaces for the proposed development and 3 spaces for the adjacent sites on Friar Street also owned by the applicant). This also creates space for servicing vehicles, with both residential and commercial bin stores located at basement floor level, together with further plant space.

- 3.5. There is a significant set-back of the building at seventh floor level from the Friar Street elevation (see Figure 1), with the set-back increasing from west (18m, then 24m) to east (32m). At roof level there is further areas of enclosed plant space, with all remaining areas containing a biodiverse roof and 101 separately mounted photovoltaic panels.
- 3.6. A series of changes to the proposals have been incorporated since the application was first validated. A summary of the main changes comprise:
 - Revised plans and a variety of updated technical documents have been submitted following officer feedback on the proposals.
 - Revised basement floor arrangements, including altered vehicular parking, access, servicing and mechanical plant.
 - Revised ground floor arrangements, including provision of cycle parking, altered access and the reconfiguration of the Class E units, with a reduction from 4 to 3 units now proposed. One unit is solely accessed from Friar Street, another is on the corner of Friar Street and Friars Walk and the third unit solely fronts onto Friars Walk.
 - The red line boundary of the application site has altered slightly to include the entirety of the existing open-air parking area accessed off Merchants Place (originally the site boundary covered around half of the parking area – the remainder of the space was within the ownership of the applicant, as denoted by a blue line).
 - Reconfiguration of the massing in the northern most part of the site, with the footprint of the proposed building moving further away from the western boundary, but closer to the northern boundary (no change in the number of residential units, or the mix of units proposed).
 - Increase in the proposed on-site affordable housing units, from 31 as originally proposed to the now proposed 33 units.
 - Alterations to the landscape and public realm design at seventh floor level.
 - Omission of the originally proposed Class E(g)(i) use at part first floor level, with this now proposed to be ancillary Class C3 space.
 - All proposed plans have been updated to indicate the hard and soft landscaping and public realm which has been implemented along Friars Walk since the application was first submitted. The proposed scheme has been amended in a number of ways in order to be assessed on the basis of that space remaining as existing.
- 3.7. All of the plans and information submitted and considered is provided within Appendix 1.
- 3.8. In terms of the Reading Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), the proposals are a CIL liable development. The applicant has submitted the relevant CIL liability form as part of the application and included a series of plans to seek to demonstrate the methodology behind the floorspace figures stated. These will be subject to separate consideration by the Council's Infrastructure Monitoring Officer once a formal decision has been issued. The calculation in this instance is anticipated to be complex. Owing to the on-going occupancy of the lower floors of 35-38 Friar Street, it could be the case that the existing floorspace at the site is able to be deducted from the liability. In addition, it may also be the case that the proposed on-site affordable housing qualifies for mandatory or

discretionary social housing relief. Furthermore, the non-residential components as existing and as proposed will add a further layer of complexity to the final calculation. As an example though, in the scenario of there being no deduction for the existing floorspace, the applicant's stated floorspace figure of providing 6037.1sqm of market housing would, on a standalone basis, generate a liability of £1,082,391.66, based on the 2024 residential CIL rate of £179.29 per square metre.

4. Planning history

- 4.1. There have been a number of applications at both 35-38 and 39 Friar Street in the past quarter of a century. The following applications are considered to be relevant to the current proposals:

35-38 Friar Street

- 4.2 070001 – Demolition of existing four storey building (Class A1 retail use on ground floor and Class B1 office use on upper floors) and erection of a seven storey building with Class A1/A2/A3 use on ground floor, Class D 2 leisure in basement, and 83 Class C1 hotel use serviced apartments on the upper floors. Granted following completion of s106 legal agreement on 11/02/2009. Not implemented.
- 4.3 100304 - Change of use from A1 to A3; new steel framed and clad extension over existing flat roof; new extract ducts. Granted 24/04/2010. Implemented.
- 4.4 160232 - Change of use of 1st to 3rd floor (with ground floor entrance and plant room at basement) from Class B1(a)(offices) to C3 (dwelling houses) to comprise of 25 flats (15 studios, 6 x 1 bedroom and 4 x 2 bedrooms). Prior Notification under Class O, Part 3 of Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015. Prior approval granted 04/04/2016. Not implemented.

39 Friar Street

- 4.5 160248 - Retrospective permission for change of use of ground floor premises from amusement arcade (sui generis) to gymnasium (class D2). Granted 05/05/2016.

Station Hill

- 4.6 It is also pertinent to reference the most relevant permissions under construction at the neighbouring Station Hill site too:

Station Hill - Plot F and North sites

- 4.7 192032/HYB - Hybrid application comprising (i) application for Full Planning Permission for Phase 2 (Plot G and public realm) including demolition of existing structures, erection of an eighteen storey building containing office use (Class B1) and flexible retail, non-residential institution and assembly and leisure uses (Class A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, D1 and D2). Provision of podium deck, vehicular access and parking. New public open space and landscaping. Bridge link over Garrard St and (ii) Application for Outline Planning Permission for Phase 3 (all Matters reserved) for four building plots (A, B, C and D). Demolition of existing buildings and structures. Mixed-use redevelopment comprising residential dwellings (Class C3), hotel (Class C1), residential institutions (Class C2), office use (Class B1). Flexible Retail, financial and professional services, restaurants and cafes, drinking establishments, hot food takeaways, non-residential institutions and assembly and leisure (Class A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, D1 and D2). Provision of podium deck and basement storey running beneath Phase 2 and 3. Formation of pedestrian and vehicular access. Means of access and circulation and car parking within the site. Provision of new public open space and landscaping. Granted following completion of s106 legal agreement 22/07/2021.
- 4.8 201536/VAR - Outline application (pursuant to Section 73 of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990) for mixed use redevelopment of the site through the demolition and alteration of existing buildings and erection of new buildings & structures to provide Offices (Use Class E (g)(i) and (g) (ii)), a range of town centre uses including retail and related uses

(Use Class E (a),(b) and (c); Drinking establishments (sui generis) and Hot food takeaways (sui generis)), leisure and community (Use Class E (d), (e), and (f); Class F.1; Class F.2; and Theatres; Cinemas; Concert Halls; Bingo Halls; Dance Halls (sui generis)), and residential units (Use Class C3), associated infrastructure, public realm works and ancillary development (all matters reserved) as permitted by planning permission 190441 granted on 6 December 2019 (as amended). Granted following completion of s106 legal agreement 22/07/2021.

- 4.9 201533/REM - Application for the approval of reserved matters (access, scale, appearance, layout and landscaping) and submission of details (Conditions 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, and 52) for Plot F within the development site known as Station Hill, submitted pursuant to the Outline Planning Application ref. 201536/VAR. The proposals comprise the construction of a ground plus 12 storey building comprising 184 Build to Rent residential units, 762 sqm (GEA) of flexible retail, leisure and business floorspace (Use Class E, Sui Generis, F.1 and F.2), cycle storage, car parking, servicing, plant areas, landscaping, new public realm and other associated works. Granted following completion of s106 legal agreement 23/07/2021.
- 4.10 230138/NMA - Non-Material Amendment to conditions 37, 41, 47, 59, 10 and 71 of permitted application 201536 - amendments to timing of conditions and amendment to Phase 1 landscaping. Non-material amendment agreed 06/07/2023. This application includes the landscaping which has been implemented in Friars Walk.

Station Hill Plot E

- 4.10 201532/VAR - Outline application under s.73 of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990 with all matters reserved for mixed use redevelopment of Plot E of the Station Hill site and neighbouring Telecom House site (48 to 51 Friar Street & 4 to 20 Garrard Street) to comprise the demolition of existing buildings and erection of new buildings/ structures to provide residential units (Use Class C3), a range of town centre uses, including retail and related uses (Use Class E (a),(b) and (c); Drinking establishments (sui generis) and Hot food takeaways (sui generis)), and leisure uses (Use Class E (d), (e), and (f); Class F.1; Class F.2; and Theatres; Cinemas; Concert Halls; Bingo Halls; Dance Halls (sui generis)), associated infrastructure, public realm works and ancillary development as permitted by planning permission 190442 granted on 6 December 2019 (as amended). Granted following completion of s106 legal agreement 22/07/2021.
- 4.11 201537/REM - Application for the approval of reserved matters (access, scale, appearance, layout and landscaping) and submission of details (Conditions 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 30, 34 and 62(i)) for Plot E within development site known as Station Hill, submitted pursuant to the Outline Planning Application ref. 201532/VAR. The proposals comprise the construction of a 12 storey building, plus basement storey, comprising 415 Build to Rent residential units, 722 sqm (GEA) of flexible commercial and leisure (Use Class E (a),(b) (c),(d),(e), (f), (g)(i), and (g)(ii), Use Class F.1 and Use Class F.2); the following sui generis uses: Drinking establishments; Hot food takeaways; Theatres; Cinemas; Bingo Halls and Dance Halls; cycle storage, car parking, servicing, plant areas, landscaping, new public realm and other associated works. Granted following completion of s106 legal agreement 23/07/2021.

5. Consultations

Internal / External:

- 5.1. The **RBC Transport Development Control** section advises that, following a series of comments and amendments from the applicant, there are no Transport/Highway objections subject to a series of conditions.
- 5.2. More specifically, it is firstly recognised that the site's town centre location means it is fully accessible in terms of walking, cycling and public transport. This ensures that travel by alternative modes is a realistic and achievable option.

- 5.3. In terms of trip generation, the applicant has sufficiently demonstrated (using an appropriate methodology) that the proposed development will result in a reduction in trips by all modes in both the AM and PM peak, when compared with that possible from the existing uses, as well as having a significant reduction in trips across a total day. The principle of the development is therefore acceptable.
- 5.4. With regard to access arrangements, pedestrian access to the residential and retail units will be taken from either Friar Street or the newly created Friars Walk public realm. Both lifts and stairs provided via two cores to each floor for residents. These principles are accepted. On the Friars Walk elevation a colonnade feature is proposed at ground level, with the approved/implemented Station Hill landscaping immediately adjacent (which is not proposed to be altered). The revised layout creates a restrictive walkway between the development and the pillars, planters/benches with the usable width being required to be 2m. This could be narrowed further by external visitor cycle parking, with revised plans making various attempts to address officer comments. This matter is not yet resolved, with officers also mindful that discussions regarding public art adjacent to this area (within the Station Hill development ownership) are simultaneously taking place. In the circumstances the visitor cycle parking at this point will be secured via condition, with officers confident a solution can be achieved in due course and pedestrian flows at the northern end of the colonnade area likely to be low.
- 5.5. Cycle parking for the proposed residential units is proposed at ground floor level. This follows revisions, having originally been proposed at basement level. The ground floor level facility provides convenient and direct access to the public realm for cyclists, which is supported.
- 5.6. Vehicular access is proposed to the rear of the site from Merchants Place, utilising the existing gated traffic light controlled access. Vehicles will route through the existing car park to the rear of the site. The existing underutilised 15 space private car park will be remodelled to provide a substation, condenser plant and generator, together with six car parking spaces, including three disabled bays and a turning head for servicing vehicles. All car parking spaces are proposed at ground floor level, unlike the original submission where 3 disabled spaces were located at basement level. The now proposed layout provides two separate 1:20 pedestrian ramps, one for accessing the residential core and one to access the bin and bulk stores. No vehicles will be utilising either ramp and therefore this creates a clear distinction between pedestrian and vehicle movements to the rear of the site. The gradient, length and rise of the ramp has been assessed and it is confirmed that the design of the route complies with the required guidance.
- 5.7. In terms of access for refuse servicing, this would also take place from Merchants Place. Bin stores are located within the basement and collection is anticipated to be undertaken privately for all aspects of the development via a dedicated refuse collection point. Swept path analysis has established that refuse collection vehicles will not be able to access the site. Collections will therefore be undertaken from Merchants Place, which is deemed acceptable. Further details on refuse collection are required to avoid on-Highway collection points, as secured via a recommended condition, in conjunction with RBC Waste Services (see below).
- 5.8. More specifically in terms of the provision of car parking, the non-residential components will be car-free, which complies with local and national policy and is therefore deemed acceptable. Public parking is provided across the town centre should it be required, with no overspill parking occurring given existing restrictions in the area.
- 5.9. The residential parking standards equate to the proposed development requiring a maximum of 58 parking spaces. The Council's standards also stipulate that disabled parking should be provided at a minimum of 3 spaces or 5% of the total parking capacity, whichever is greater. The submitted application provides for a provision of three disabled parking spaces, with these all according with the size guidelines.
- 5.10. The applicant is not proposing a car club as part of the proposed development. Given the presence of car clubs secured as part of the Station Hill development (within a 1-minute

walk of the site) the Highway Authority are satisfied that a Car Club would not need to be secured through this application.

- 5.11. This lower provision of car parking compared to RBC maximum standards is considered appropriate for the development proposals due the location of the site within Reading Town Centre. This location provides easy access to amenities, leisure facilities, employment opportunities and a range of public transport links, all within walking and cycling distance of the site. In addition, the existing parking restrictions that surround the application site do not allow for any overspill parking to be occur. The Council's two standard parking conditions are recommended to be included. Overall, the Highway Authority are content that the parking for the proposed development is deemed acceptable and compliant with standards and Local and National Policy.
- 5.12. Three regular parking spaces are also shown, specified for the use of other sites adjoining the redline boundary also under the ownership of the applicant (see Figure 2). This reduction in car parking (compared with the 15 existing spaces) has only been agreed given that the applicant is in the ownership of the adjacent land and that overspill parking could not occur on surrounding streets as a result. This loss of parking is fundamental in the achieving suitable vehicle circulation/movement.
- 5.13. In terms of cycle parking provision, the residential component of the scheme is required to provide 55 spaces, of which 3 should cater for adapted (non-standard) cycles. The proposal seeks to provide 105 cycle spaces, which is far in excess of the Council's standards and equates to more than a single space per residential unit. It is therefore deemed acceptable and supported. In terms of the cycle parking serving the commercial units, the large unit 1 (at basement/ground floor level) includes cycle parking at basement floor level. This is to be accessed via the rear of the site, utilising the platform lift to gain access to the lower basement floor. The principle of this is not ideal but has been accepted. The location of the store has been revised to avoid cycles being transported through the restaurant use, which is acceptable. The provision for the cycle parking for the commercial units as a whole has been based on retail (Class E(a)) or restaurant (Class E(b)) uses only. However, the application seeks flexible Class E uses. Therefore, the applicant was required to undertake a detailed exercise to ensure the maximum cycle parking scenario is provided for within the development. This has not been provided, therefore requiring cycle parking details to be required to be secured prior to the first occupation of each commercial unit proposed. This will be secured via condition. In terms of the provision of short stay visitor cycle parking, as per comments at paragraph 5.4 above, acceptable details have not yet been provided, so this will be secured via condition. This condition will also incorporate details of the applicant's intention to provide additional visitor cycle parking within the residential element of the building. In principle this is acceptable, but further information is required to confirm how this would be managed.
- 5.14. In terms of servicing/deliveries, it is proposed for all refuse stores to be serviced daily by a private refuse collection contractor. The use of a private refuse collection contractor will enable the applicant to specify the collection times and where possible peak hours (08:00-0900 and 17:00-18:00) will be avoided. On the collection days the building management team will transport bins containing either refuse, or recycling and food waste from the three-basement level refuse stores up the 1:20 ramp to the temporary ground floor level collection point to the north of the site within the car park accessed off Merchants Place. Owing to the distance from the bin stores to the presentation point the site management staff will utilise a pedestrianised electric 'tug' vehicle to transport the bins from the basement to the collection point. The storage area for the tug vehicle is considered to be acceptable. The Highway Authority accepts the assessment undertaken by the applicant in relation to service vehicle trips to the site and it is also accepted that many of these could be undertaken at the rear of the site and as such would not materially impact servicing on Friar Street.
- 5.15. It is however noted that a separate refuse store is located at ground floor level for the non-residential occupiers, which would be served via Friar Street. In principle, this limited

arrangement is acceptable. The management of all the refuse collections will be subject to a planning condition, to ensure that refuse is not stored on the Public Highway.

- 5.16. In addition, it is stated that occupier move in and move out arrangements will be from the rear of the site. However, access is already restricted for small refuse vehicles, it would therefore need to be confirmed how this operation would be managed, therefore meaning details will be secured via condition.
- 5.17. In respect of the demolition and construction stages of development, it is considered that there could be significant transport implications constructing the proposed building in this prominent location. It will be necessary for a pre-commencement planning condition to secure a full and site-specific Demolition and Construction Method Statement. Not only will this help secure highway safety (including the safe operation of the bus stop outside the site), but it is also in the interests of protecting the amenity of local land uses or neighbouring residents and separately help protect the character of the area. Moreover, any works affecting the highway will have to comply with the Borough's Guidance Notes for Activities on the Public Highway and works will need to be scheduled with the Council's Streetworks team, again prior to commencement.
- 5.18. **RBC Environmental Protection** advise that the proposals are acceptable, subject to a series of conditions being secured.
- 5.19. In terms of noise impacts, this is a particularly pertinent issue along Friar Street, given the presence of a large number of nighttime economy uses, but the area becoming increasingly residential too. The submitted assessment shows that the recommended standard for internal noise can be met, if the recommendations from the assessment are incorporated into the design. In terms of specific ventilation details, the acoustic report suggests measures to mitigate overheating and to ensure that there is sufficient ventilation for the dwellings, to reduce the need to open windows. Natural ventilation is proposed, but insufficient detail is provided to demonstrate this will not cause overheating, predominantly as the option of mechanical ventilation with heat recovery and/or air conditioning has not been selected. Hence, a pre-commencement, barring demolition, ventilation strategy to mitigate overheating, based on the recommendations of the already submitted acoustic assessment, will be secured. The wording of this condition will also incorporate securing the noise measures already specified in the acoustic assessment.
- 5.20. Separate noise concerns are potentially raised between the commercial uses at basement/ground floor level and residential accommodation above, with this possibly causing harm to future residential occupiers. A separate condition will secure sound insulation details to protect occupiers from noise emissions caused by the commercial uses. Noise disturbance to future residents (and the area generally) could be caused by delivery hours, waste collections and opening hours of the commercial uses. Accordingly, conditions to limit opening times and deliveries/waste collection to preclude this being possible from 23:30 – 06:00 (and from 22:30 on Sundays/Bank Holidays), also noting that this is a town centre location where the balance between providing active uses and protecting amenity must be balanced.
- 5.21. In terms of noise from mechanical plant, given the existing nearby sensitive receptors, an acoustic assessment is required prior to the installation of any externally located plant. Given the future occupiers are unconfirmed, the applicant is seeking for a condition to prevent any externally located mechanical plant being installed prior to a noise assessment being submitted. Officers are content with this approach, in the context of the proposals. Given the variety of uses possible within the non-residential spaces, it is considered necessary to separately secure a noise assessment prior to the first occupation of any Class E(d) gym use (to safeguard against structure borne noise).
- 5.22. Linked to noise matters, cooking odour is often a significant problem in commercial kitchens and therefore an odour assessment will be required prior to hot-food cooking is permitted in any occupation of any of the Class E units approved. The reference to hot-food cooking is included as many uses within Class E could include the preparation of food with odours, not just Class E (b) restaurants. As such, the condition seeks to ensure that any odours are managed accordingly.

- 5.23. On air quality matters, the original air quality assessment concluded that mitigation was required to protect the new occupiers on the Friar Street façade from poor air quality. During the course of the application it has been confirmed and demonstrated that ventilation and filtration is proposed on the Friar Street elevation, in the form of acoustic ventilation panels positioned on all upper floor levels to serve individual rooms. These panels will also assist in reducing noise pollution too. Officers are satisfied that this mitigation measure is sufficient to protect the amenity of future occupiers. In terms of the proposed development itself creating air quality issues, this is not envisaged based on a comparison of the existing and proposed uses. This is agreed by officers.
- 5.24. With regard to contaminated land, the submitted phase I desk study concludes that an intrusive investigation is necessary once demolition has taken place. Accordingly, the standard 4-stage contaminated land condition is recommended by the EP Team, to ensure that future occupants are not put at undue risk from contamination.
- 5.25. Turning to consider bin store related matters, it is important for the bin stores to be vermin proof to prevent rats accessing the waste. Accordingly, details will be secured within the relevant condition.
- 5.26. In relation to the demolition and construction phases of development, dust, noise and pest control measures should be included within the demolition and construction method statement condition recommended by RBC Transport. Separate compliance-worded conditions are also recommended in terms of hours of working and preventing the burning of materials on site, to protect nearby amenity.
- 5.27. **RBC Housing** confirm that the Affordable Housing offer for the proposed Build to Rent scheme is beyond policy compliant (Officer note: the offer is 32.04%, which is above the 30% policy requirement) and is acceptable. The offer goes beyond the percentage threshold and there is an equal split across all sized properties (Officer note: Of the 33 units provided, 5 will be studio's, 7 x 1-bedroom, 19 x 2-bedroom and 2 x 3-bedroom units are proposed). Whilst it is noted that the affordable homes are predominately on the lower floors, there is no issue with this as it appears that all the homes are proposed to be built to the same standard and finish. It is also noted that the applicant is committed to letting the homes at Local Housing Allowance levels for Reading, including the service charges, as confirmed during the course of the assessment of the application.
- 5.28. All of the Affordable Private Rent Housing units should be secured via S106 Legal Agreement, in full compliance with the Affordable Housing SPD requirements. On this basis RBC Housing support the proposals for this Build to Rent scheme.
- 5.29. **RBC Planning Natural Environment** have no objections to the scheme, subject to conditions, following the submission of additional and revised information during the course of the application.
- 5.30. The site is identified in the Tree Strategy as being within the lowest canopy cover ward in the Borough and also within an Air Quality Management Area (Policy EN15). As such, there is an expectation for proposals to include creative greening of the site. The proposals include a roof top terrace at 7th floor level and, at roof level, green roofs (with photovoltaics). These are positive elements which will benefit biodiversity (as per Policy EN12), and provide other benefits such as reduced runoff (Policies CC2 and CC3) and improving thermal efficiency (Policy CC3 & guidance with the Sustainability SPD), so aid in meeting other policy requirements. A smaller communal terrace is also provided at first floor level which can provide additional landscaping. The two terrace areas are shown below in Figure 10.



Figure 10 - Proposed 1st and 7th floor courtyards, as proposed at the outset of the application (extracts from the originally submitted DAS)

- 5.31. The planting principles submitted with the application are largely acceptable. A series of queries in respect of matters of detail have been raised with the applicant based on the original submission. Some of these have been sought to be altered (in the revised proposals and information submitted in July 2023 – such as an altered layout of the 7th floor terrace, as shown in Figure 11 below), whilst in other respects the applicant has chosen not to provide full responses or details at this juncture, meaning full hard and soft landscaping details will be required to be secured via condition. For example, a series of points of detail in respect of some exact tree species, the interaction between 'grow your own' planters and trees and details of soil volumes will be required to be provided, over and above other standard details such as the interaction with external lighting of the terrace areas. Ultimately, the exact proposed landscaping details will be secured via planning condition.

3.5 ROOF TERRACE AT LEVEL 07

3.5.1. Proposed layout & Play strategy

The south facing roof terrace at the 7th accessible for all residents offers panoramic views over reading Town Centre.

The revised plan increases Children's play space provision, with soft finishes and naturalistic play located to the southeastern edge away from the residential apartments.

The planted green edge has been revised for a 600mm easily maintained full perimeter which creates an ecologically rich and visually appealing amenity for residents.

The balustrade height has been increased from 1.1 to 1.5m for increased safety and to reduce the risk of falls.

A 1.5m offset from the external balustrade has been provided ensuring there are no opportunities to climb on up onto planters / seats within easy reach of the perimeter

Seating areas have been incorporated into the planters so as to integrate seamlessly with the environment.

- Paved communal terrace
- Climbable bench & planter edges
- Green edge with integrated balustrade protecting from falling
- Soft surface with naturalistic playground
- Fixed tables
- Grow-Your-Own-Garden planters
- Raised pocket of green including lift overhang, AOV and smoke extract - accessible for maintenance only



Figure 11 – Extract from DAS Addendum dated June 2023, as received 03/07/2023 showing the proposed 7th floor external terrace area

- 5.32. Significant discussions have taken place during the consideration of the application in respect of the landscaping area along Friars Walk, which is outside the red line boundary of the application site. Originally it appeared that the proposals were seeking to alter the (then) approved landscaping / public realm within the neighbouring Station Hill development, to assist in aligning this with the colonnades on the western elevation of

the proposed development. It is also important to reference that the Station Hill landscaping scheme was altered during the course of this application, with the subsequently approved soft landscaping / public realm implemented in the first half of 2023. Ultimately, the proposed plans now detail the approved/implemented landscaping along Friars Walk, with the proposed development seeking to work around this current feature. The applicant has provided sufficient initial information to satisfy officers that the landscaping, including Birch trees within the planter, can feasibly be retained in the short and long term, as well as being protected during construction. However, the exact level of detail presently falls short in terms of all requirements, so further and final details are recommended to be secured via a pre-commencement arboricultural method statement and tree protection plan (given the need to initially protect trees during demolition works) condition.

- 5.33. **GS Ecology (RBC Ecology consultants)** conclude that the development is unlikely to have any adverse impact on wildlife and there are no objections on ecology grounds. Original comments sought more information from the applicant in order to provide full comments. On the basis of the revised and additional information submitted by the applicant in July 2023 GS Ecology agree with the submitted report that the existing site is of negligible ecological value due to its lack of natural habitats.
- 5.34. GS Ecology also recognise that the proposals will be likely to result in a series of biodiversity enhancements. The submission references roof top planting at levels 1 and 7 (full details to be secured via condition, as per RBC Natural Environment comments) and mentions proposed enhancements such as bird and bat roosting features, log piles, green walls and bee brick/towers are proposed in the ecology report. If installed, this will lead to a net gain in biodiversity for the site, as required by Policy EN12 (Biodiversity and the Green Network). However, no plans show full details of these enhancements, so a condition should be included on any permission to secure these anticipated details.
- 5.35. The **RBC Access Officer** sought a number of clarifications over points of detail as part of the original consultation. The various matters raised were responded to by the applicant. As part of the re-consultation process the RBC Access Officer provided further comments, which in overall terms confirmed satisfaction of the clarifications and details referenced in the responses from the applicant. In particular, the wheelchair accessibility design approach was strongly welcomed and the further details provided demonstrating safer edges to the roof terraces and rooftop seating were further supported elements to the scheme. The RBC Access Officer therefore indicated general support for the proposals.
- 5.36. **RBC Waste Operations** advise that subject to a formal waste management strategy being secured via condition, there are no objections to the proposed development. From the outset of the application the proposals have sought to provide bin storage at basement floor level and for refuse servicing to take place on a daily basis. This would all be via a private refuse collection contractor, rather than the Council's collection service, at the preference of the applicant. Based on the original submission more details were sought in respect of the intended collection strategy, with it being unclear whether vehicles would have sufficient space to access the site via Merchants Place. During the course of the application it was established that collections would be required from a designated bin collection point on Merchants Place. There is a 17m pulling distance, which is outside of the Council's specified 10m pulling distance for four wheeled containers. Given a private contractor is intended to operate this service, this is not problematic, although the waste management strategy will need to explicitly confirm that the applicant will not be using the standard RBC household waste collection service and instead using a paid for private service. The strategy will also detail the frequency of collections, with this expected (based on the provision shown at basement level) to at least be on a weekly basis. In addition, during the course of the application some limited waste storage areas are now proposed at ground floor level, off Friars Walk, to serve the two smaller adjacent commercial units adjacent. This is considered appropriate and has all been discussed in conjunction with RBC Transport.

- 5.37. The **RBC Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA)** advises that the Flood Risk Assessment and Sustainable Urban Drainage Strategy demonstrate that the proposal will result in a significantly reduced surface water run off rate, through proposed green roofs. The detailed design of the strategy is still to be confirmed, so will be secured via condition. The full strategy will be approved via this condition prior to commencement, barring demolition works. The approved strategy will be completed prior to first occupation and will thereafter be managed and maintained in accordance with approved details approved. This will reduce the risk of flooding onsite or elsewhere, in accordance with Policy EN18 (Flooding and Sustainable Drainage Systems). The re-consultation in July 2023 reiterated the LLFA's original advice.
- 5.38. **RBC Licensing** comment that whilst not objecting to this application, the requirements of the Agent of Change principle must be strictly enforced. Friar Street has a high number of pubs and nightclubs that operate into the early hours and form a vital part of Reading's night time economy. Any proposal should include adequate sound proofing to protect residents from being negatively impacted by the noise that venues on Friar Street produce. This, in turn, will also protect the venues from having to face future enforcement action on public nuisance grounds that they do not currently require.
- 5.39. The **RBC Conservation & Urban Design Officer** notes that No. 39 Friar Street is a three-storey red brick Georgian style former residence. Whilst it is the oldest remaining building on this stretch of the northern side of Friar Street, it is in a very deteriorated condition and was de-listed by Historic England in 2018. Whilst the loss of an historic building is unfortunate, the significance of the building has deteriorated to such an extent that it is no longer considered a heritage asset, meaning there are no objections to its removal.
- 5.40. In addition, the proposed replacement building has been designed to contribute to the setting within Friar Street. Overall, there is general support for the proposal, with the design of the building having developed during pre-application discussions with officers and Design South East.
- 5.41. **Reading's Economy & Destination Agency (REDA)** note that the development is in a key site within the town centre and all commercial occupiers will be potential Central Reading Business Improvement District (BID) members. The inclusion of 103 residential flats raises some concerns about the increasing pressures being placed on BID services, and the potential issues raised by the differing needs of residents, the hospitality and retail businesses in the area and general town centre users. Accordingly, REDA require the developer to enter into an Employment and Skills Plan (ESP) via s106 Legal Agreement for both the construction and end use phases of development, as per the adopted Supplementary Planning Document. This will either be in the form of formal plans, or financial contributions in lieu of plans to deliver training and recruitment programmes which benefit local residents. REDA confirmed at the time of the re-consultation in July 2023 that the original comments still stand unaltered.
- 5.42. **Berkshire Archaeology** advise, as per the archaeological desk based assessment submitted with the application, the site has archaeological potential for medieval and post medieval remains. Despite the existing development it is possible that remains survive intact around these. As such a condition is recommended should permission be granted, securing a scheme of archaeological work to further assess the potential for survival of remains at the site and mitigate any harm from the development. This is in line with Policy EN2 and NPPF paragraphs 194 and 205. The re-consultation in July 2023 reiterated the original advice.
- 5.43. The **Designing Out Crime Officer (DOCO) at Thames Valley Police** provided a response to the original scheme in November 2022. This raised a number of concerns that some aspects of the design and layout could be problematic in terms of crime and anti-social behaviour. These related to matters such as views out from the reception area, the access the incubator units would have to the rest of the building, access controls for the co-working space, the height of the balconies within the podium gardens, merged cores, compartmentation and securing the basement floor. The DOCO acknowledged

that some could be dealt with via a suitably worded condition relating to a robust security and access strategy, while others require suitable amendments to the submitted plans.

- 5.44. The applicant provided commentary and amendments to plans in seeking to address the DOCO comments, but the DOCO did not respond to the July 2023 re-consultation.
- 5.45. **CCTV Reading at Thames Valley Police** confirm that no real issues are envisaged with regard to monitoring capabilities when this development is completed.
- 5.46. The **Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service** comment that there is no duty placed upon the Fire Authority to make any comment in relation to the application. However, the application plans (Officer comment: the original application in September 2022) have been briefly examined and the applicant should be reminded that access for fire-fighting, particularly vehicular access, must comply with Part B5 of the Building Regulations guidance. Any structural fire precautions and all means of escape provision will have to satisfy Building Regulations requirement too. The re-consultation in July 2023 reiterated previous comments, with the exception of there being no reference to the plans being briefly examined.
- 5.47. **Thames Water** has no objection with regard to foul water sewerage network infrastructure capacity.
- 5.48. Thames Water has no objection with regard to surface water drainage, providing the developer follows the sequential approach to the disposal of surface water. An informative is recommended in this regard.
- 5.49. Thames Water has no objection with regard to surface water network infrastructure capacity. Informatives are recommended in relation to prevent sewage flooding, minimising groundwater discharges into the public sewer and ensuring there is not damage to existing sewers.
- 5.50. In terms of water matters Thames Water has, following initial investigations, identified an inability of the existing water network infrastructure to accommodate the needs of this development proposal. Thames Water suggest that a planning condition is attached to any permission to enable further details to be sought and secured, to ensure development doesn't outpace the delivery of essential infrastructure. This condition is duly recommended, with an informative also assisting the developer in terms of the precise level and nature of information required.
- 5.51. **SSE Power Distribution** comment that the application shows proposed new structures to be built over the existing electricity cables. Whilst SSEN have no objection in principle to the development, the cables will likely need to be diverted before building works under the lines are to commence. An informative in this regard is recommended.
- 5.52. The scheme was considered by the **Berkshire Design Review Panel (part of Design South East - DSE)** at pre-application stage in September and November 2021, with the schemes at these times shown below in Figure 12. At the first review DSE made a number of key recommendations, including lowering the proposed heights, to reconsider the massing and shaping of the stepped back blocks and reworking the façade treatment to unify the upper and lower floors. At the second review the prospective applicant was commended for a willingness to address previous issues raised, with the design having developed positively. Further key recommendations were made in relation to refining the massing and architectural treatment further, defining sustainability targets and consulting/collaborating with others in terms of ideas for Friars Walk.



Figure 12 – Pre-application stage proposals at the time of DSE meetings 1 (left) & 2 (right)

- 5.53. **Building Research Establishment (BRE)** – The BRE was instructed by the local planning authority to assess the **daylight and sunlight** information submitted in support of the application, as provided in the report by Delva Patman Redler (DPR).
- 5.54. It is initially noted that the original DPR report, dated 07/06/2022, was based on the 2011 BRE guidance, which was superseded by updated 2022 BRE guidance, as published on 08/06/2022. The application was received on 27/06/2022, meaning prior to the instruction of BRE discussions took place between officers and the applicant as to whether the assessment should be considered on the basis of either the 2011 or 2022 BRE guidance. Ultimately, officers were content, given the particular circumstances regarding the timing of the application, that it was reasonable for the assessment to be based on the 2011 guidance.
- 5.55. BRE's initial review followed a site visit on 02/11/2022, where access to the existing buildings was provided. BRE's initial review (November 2022) raised a series of areas where more information was required from the applicant, in respect of nearby buildings not being assessed, the proposed building only being assessed up to fourth floor level and the proposed courtyard and roof terraces not being assessed for sunlight. Furthermore, an analysis of the results presented identified a series of impacts on existing/under construction nearby residential properties, ranging from minor to major adverse impacts.
- 5.56. The applicant submitted additional information and responses to BRE's comments in July 2023, which also took into account changes made to the scheme at that point in time. BRE was re-instructed to carry out a further assessment, with this provided by BRE in July 2023. This continued to raise a number of queries in relation to the methodology of the assessment. The applicant provided responses in March and April 2024, which led to initial comments being made by BRE in May 2024 and a meeting taking place on 14th June 2024. This resulted in the applicant submitting further information in July 2024, which enabled BRE to provide a third substantive report, also in July 2024. A summary of the findings of BRE's latest report is as follows:
- 5.57. BRE's comments on the daylight and sunlight impacts of the proposed development on nearby occupiers is summarised as follows:
- For Plot E (Ebb) at Station Hill a total of 103 windows would be below the vertical sky component (VSC) guidelines, while 52 rooms would be below the daylight distribution guidelines. These impacts units up to 9th floor level and would reduce access to daylight, with the main areas impacted shown in red in Figure 13 below. In the areas closest to the proposed development the VSC would reduce to less than half of their current values, leading to a major impact.
 - In terms of sunlight, six of the living areas assessed would be below the BRE annual probable sunlight hours guidelines, with five of these being in the area starred in Figure 13. There would be a major loss for the three worst impacted living rooms on the second to fourth floors.
 - The amenity open spaces at Plot E would technically meet the BRE guidelines in terms of sunlight, although the areas as existing receive less than 2 hours of

sunlight on 21st March. Friars Walk would however encounter a reduction in sunlight below the BRE guidelines as a result of the proposed development.



Figure 13 – Plot E areas below BRE guidelines (red line indicates main areas where daylight is reduced; star indicated main area where sunlight is reduced)

- In terms of Plot F (Flow) at Station Hill a total of 55 windows would be below the vertical sky component (VSC) guidelines, while 28 rooms would be below the daylight distribution guidelines. These impacts units up to 10th floor level, with the most significant impact being a single bedroom on the southern end of the east elevation (see Figure 14 below) where reductions in light would be severe and major adverse, with the first floor reduction being 96% and the tenth floor reduction being 40%. and would reduce access to daylight, with the main areas impacted shown in red in Figure 14 below. In the areas closest to the proposed development the VSC would reduce to less than half of their current values, leading to a major impact.
- On the ground floor of the east facing façade there are four living rooms below the guidelines, but the impact would be moderate in overall terms as these rooms also include west facing windows.
- On the south façade of Plot F (see photo on right in Figure 14) a minor to moderate impact is anticipated in terms of daylight impacts.
- In terms of sunlight, 13 living rooms would be below the BRE annual probable sunlight hours guidelines, with six also below the winter guidelines. The worst impacted would be the four previously mentioned at ground floor level, where there would be a major adverse impact. A fifth floor living room would have sunlight halved – a moderate impact; in other areas the results are closer to the guidelines, leading to minor impacts.

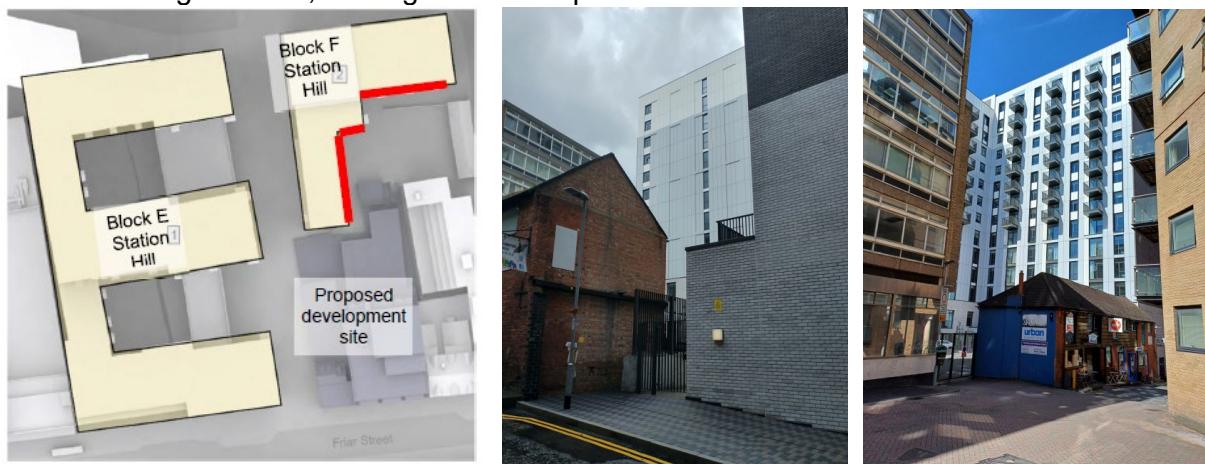


Figure 14 – Plot F areas below BRE guidelines (red line indicates main areas where daylight is reduced)

- BRE comments that Plots E and F are large buildings, located close to the boundary of the site and may take their fair share of light. In such situations the BRE guidance suggests alternative targets based on a “mirror-image” could be

used. The applicant has undertaken a form of this, with BRE concluding that the position and design of Plot F is the primary reason for the large loss of light if the proposed development is to match the height of existing buildings. In terms of Plot E, although it is a large building close to the boundary, this is not the sole reason for the loss of light if the proposed development is to match the height of existing buildings.

- In terms of Garrard House and Projection West (to the north-east of the site) there would be minor adverse daylight and sunlight impacts to Projection West, barring 3 living areas at Projection West where at least a moderate adverse impact would occur in terms of daylight.
- To the east of the site, No's 32-34 Friar Street meet the BRE guidelines. To the south, there would be a minor adverse impact at No. 125 Friar Street and a minor-moderate adverse impact on No. 126 Friar Street. Loss of sunlight would not be an issue since the windows face northerly.

5.58. A summary of BRE's comments on the daylight and sunlight provision for the proposed development are:

- 124 of 151 bedrooms (82%) would meet the bedroom daylight recommendation.
- 64 of 84 (76%) combined living/kitchen/dining areas would meet the living room daylight target. 52 would also meet the higher kitchen daylight target. 52 would also meet the higher kitchen daylight target.
- 17 of the 20 (85%) studios would meet the living room daylight target. 7 would also meet the higher kitchen daylight target.
- Overall, using the bedroom and living room daylight targets 205 of the 255 (80%) habitable rooms across the scheme would meet the recommendations.
- There are some examples of poor daylight provision. A bedroom (marked with a red star in Figure 15 below) at the northern end of the building would have an average daylight factor of only 0.04% on the first floor, with the equivalent room on the fourth floor having a value of only 0.21%, compared with the recommended 1%. The equivalent room on the eighth floor would be the first to meet the recommended 1% level, with all rooms on the floors below being below the standard.



Figure 15 – Extract from BRE review of the proposed 1st and 2nd floors, with red dots indicating rooms would be below the bedroom or living room average daylight factor criteria. The red star room is where the standard would only be met at 8th floor level.

- The daylight results use internal reflectance values based on previous recommendations in a best-case scenario and therefore may be an overestimate compared to real world conditions.
- 50 of the 104 (48%) living areas proposed would be able to meet the annual and winter probable sunlight hours guidelines. The sunlighting potential of the scheme is at least partly limited due to the orientation of the site, with the existing obstruction of the Novotel/Ibis hotel to the east and Plot E to the west.
- Sunlight provision has been assessed to the two proposed outdoor amenity spaces. The space on the seventh floor would meet the recommendations, with over half the space receiving at least two hours of sunlight on 21 March. The space on the first floor would be below the recommendations and be very poorly sunlit, with none of the area receiving at least two hours of sunlight on 21 March.

5.59. **Architectural Aerodynamics Ltd (ArcAero)** was instructed to assess, for the local planning authority, the **wind and microclimate** based supporting information, as per the report produced by RWDI on behalf of the applicant. The initial review in November 2022 concluded that the assessment represented a plausible appraisal of the wind microclimate upon the introduction of the proposed development. In particular, Arc Aero reported:

- *The wind microclimate for the Proposed Development in existing surrounds meets the criteria for safety and all areas are substantially suitable for the intended uses, including the recreational spaces on the rooftop levels. An exception to this is location 125 on Level 7 (Officer comment: this is on the external terrace close to the door accessing the space) which would be suitable for standing in summer. The results as presented are plausible and accepted.*
- *With the introduction of the cumulative surrounds, the wind conditions remain suitable for safety and comfort criteria for all pedestrians. Wind conditions to location 125 (Officer comment: On the 7th floor external terrace, as explained above) have improved and become suitable for its intended use. The results as presented are plausible and accepted.*

5.60. However, a number of queries and requests for clarification were also raised in the review. Arc Aero advised that if these are satisfied the conclusions will be considered to be robust.

5.61. The applicant duly submitted revised information in July 2023, with Arc Aero re-instructed to provide an updated review. This also took into account the wider changes made to the scheme at this time. Arc Aero's summary comments were:

- *RWDI noted in the report that the above changes are unlikely to have a material impact on wind conditions and wind conditions are expected to be suitable for the intended use with the proposed landscaping scheme in place. This is considered plausible and acceptable.*
- *The assessment represents a plausible appraisal of the wind microclimate upon the introduction of the proposed development. No further clarifications are required and as a result the conclusions can be considered to be robust.*

5.62. The local planning authority instructed **Hoare Lea** to assess the **sustainability and energy** components of the proposed submission, relating to reports and information submitted by CPW. Hoare Lea's initial review (received November 2022) raised a series of matters which necessitated responses from the applicant. The applicant submitted a revised energy report and other related responses in July 2023. This was then further reviewed by Hoare Lea. In overall terms, Hoare Lea concluded that the proposals were

not policy compliant, nor meet the requirements set out in the Sustainable Design and Construction SPD, with a number of specific component elements not demonstrated.

5.63. In summary, Hoare Lea raised a series of comments/concerns, including:

- The BREAAAM 2018 shell and core Pre-Assessment (for retail space) is targeting 49.4% of the credits, which is below the very good threshold of Very Good >55. The pre-assessment also demonstrates the scheme could potentially achieve 59.3%, which is below the Excellent threshold of >70. More specifically, the mandatory ENE01 credits have not been targeted for the achievement of Excellent. So, the pre-assessment is positioned to only achieve Very Good if the potential credits are achieved. It is also noted that the initial 2022 submission included an earlier BREEAM pre-assessment (shell only), whereby a score of 57.2% (equating to a very good) rating was achieved.
- In terms of the sustainability statement:
 - the proposed water conservation measures have not been quantified
 - concerns that the thermal comfort analysis omits reference to Part O compliance and subsequent concerns about the methodology used
 - lack of clarity over how embodied carbon will be calculated and/or reduced
 - lack of reference to limiting pollution ingress to dwellings in terms of air quality
 - No BREEAM pre-assessment has been submitted in relation to the proposed office (Case officer comment: this was later altered from office to ancillary residential use, so no specific BREEAM pre-assessment was subsequently required).
- In terms of the energy statement:
 - In terms of the energy efficiency of the building, justification for the thermal bridging y-value is required. The total Fabric energy efficiency kWh has been stated at a 17% reduction against the 2013 regulations.
 - With regard to the baseline annual predicted energy demand of the development, the residential and non-residential performance has been set out separately presenting regulated energy reductions of 11% and 45% for non-residential and residential elements respectively achieving an aggregated reduction of 38.4%. The SPD requires 35% CO2 reduction on 2013 building regulations.
 - In terms of renewables, the total Be Green carbon reduction has been recalculated as 41% reduction over Part L 2013 with SAP 10 carbon factors.
 - No cost information has been provided for the proposed ASHP or Photovoltaics.
 - In terms of connecting to district heating, an early stage appraisal has been completed. The scheme intends to provide the mechanical and spatial allowance for the system to connect to a future District Heating system. This can be achieved by allowing for future connection to the base of the LTHW riser and space allowance for potential future plant within the basement residential bike store.
 - The original energy report recognised that the minimum 35% CO2 reduction on 2013 building regulations was met (38.4%), but the scheme would not achieve zero carbon. In turn a carbon offset payment would be required and was estimated to be £166,320, but this was subsequently omitted from the revised energy report for unspecified reasons.

- 5.64. The applicant submitted responses to this further Hoare Lea review and, in some respects amended the proposals to omit the need to address some matters raised by Hoare Lea. The level and nature of the further information provided meant it was not considered relevant to seek further input from Hoare Lea, with officers instead providing a final assessment of the sustainability and energy components of the scheme. This is discussed within the appraisal section below.
- 5.65. No responses have been received to date to formal consultation requests to the Health & Safety Executive, RBC Community Safety, RBC Education and RBC Leisure.

Public consultation:

- 5.66. Notification letters were originally sent to nearby occupiers on 27/09/2022, expiring on 18/10/2022. Following the submission of revised plans, re-consultation letters were sent to nearby occupiers on 05/07/2023, expiring on 19/07/2023. A series of site notices were erected on 27/09/2022, expiring on 18/10/2022. Following the submission of revised plans, a series of further site notices were erected on 07/07/2023, expiring on 28/07/2023. A press notice was published on 06/10/2022, expiring on 27/10/2022. Following the submission of revised plans, a further press notice was published on 13/07/2023, expiring on 03/08/2023.
- 5.67. One objection has been received, from an address in Kidmore Road (RG4), objecting to the demolition of 39 Friar Street, which was listed until 2018 and as a late 18th century townhouse is a complementary feature to the local surroundings. The objector seeks for the Council to not allow more destruction of heritage.
- 5.68. Twenty responses in support of the proposals have been received from the following addresses: Bamburgh Close (RG2), Bulmershe Road (RG1), Cranbury Road (RG30), Dulnan Close (RG30), Eastern Avenue (RG1), Elgar Road South (RG2), Hogarth Avenue (RG30), Junction Road (RG1), Kelmscott Close (RG4), Kings Road (RG4), London Road (RG6), Northumberland Avenue (RG2), Shaftesbury Road (RG30), Sherwood Street (RG30), Silchester Road (RG30), Southcote Lane (RG30), Staverton Road (RG2), Warwick Road (RG2), Woodlands Road, Sonning Common (RG4), Wykeham Road (RG6). A summary of the matters raised in these responses in support are:
- Owing to the housing crisis, there is a need for more homes for people. Another response says the development will help tackle the housing crisis.
 - Proposals could help get people on the housing ladder (instead of renting) and boost supply, with the development providing different options.
 - Help tackle the affordable housing shortage in the area. Another supports the development mainly for the affordable housing, with another stating the proposal will help ease the burden of finding a place to live without spending a fortune.
 - More homes like these will relieve housing pressures on a) young people and help family/friends stay together / not move away, b) rural areas, c) rentals (and associated high prices).
 - The inclusion of communal space is a good idea.
 - There is a shortage of housing in Reading and this will increase local housing options.
 - The site is in a great location for commuters.
 - Improving the town centre by replacing old structures is a smart move. Another states Friar Street is not in great condition as existing.
 - This development will make our community better for everyone. Another states developing the area will improve quality of life. Another response states the development could make the area safer. A further response states the overall development will bring more vibrancy and opportunities to the area.

- Car-free housing would reduce congestion and encourage more people to use public transport.
- In the context of presently living in an overcrowded three-bedroom home with seven people, a development like this could help people.
- Two responses reference support for the proposals, but note that there is a need to ensure that there is sufficient supporting infrastructure in the area.
- Comment suggesting that there should be more one-bedroom flats for pensioners, ideally at ground floor level with easy access to outdoor spaces (Officer note: No such units are proposed).

Local Groups:

- 5.69. **Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee (CAAC)** original response in October 2022 did not object to the proposals, but commented, summarised as follows:
- Set within the Station Hill policy context and large parts of the Station Hill redevelopment being underway, this site is an important corner location which will form part of the gateway to Friar's Walk.
 - The proposal involves the loss of 39 Friar Street an undesignated heritage asset removed from the national heritage list in 2018. Its loss, whilst unfortunate, is acceptable.
 - The development of this site and any future plans for the adjacent site (to the east) should not override the principle of Merchant's Place being a key pedestrian route from the St Mary's Butts/Gun Street/Castle Street/Bridge Street crossroads to the Station and not have a negative impact on Merchant's Place.
 - The development should not have a negative impact or harm the setting of the heritage buildings at 8 Merchant's Place and Ajilon House (27-29 Friar Street).
- 5.70. Reading CAAC was formally re-consulted on the application in July 2023, with the response summarised as follows:
- Believe that the current use and setting of 8 Merchant's Place, a non-designated heritage asset, is now damaged by these proposals The proposal for the site at the rear of 8 Merchant's Place is busy with services, many of which will create detrimental noise.
 - Assurances as to noise levels and other environmental impacts and structural integrity should be secured by condition.

6. Legal context

- 6.1. Section 16(2) and 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the local planning authority to have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of special interest which it possesses.
- 6.2. Section 72 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the local planning authority in the exercise of its functions to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.
- 6.3. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) - among them the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'. However, the NPPF does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making (NPPF paragraph 12).

- 6.4. In this regard, the NPPF states that due weight should be given to the adopted policies of the Local Plan 2019 according to their degree of consistency with the NPPF (the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the NPPF, the greater the weight that may be given).
- 6.5. Accordingly, the latest NPPF and the following development plan policies and supplementary planning guidance are relevant:

NPPF December 2023

- 2. Achieving sustainable development
- 4. Decision-making
- 5. Delivering a sufficient supply of homes
- 6. Building a strong, competitive economy
- 7. Ensuring the vitality of town centres
- 8. Promoting healthy and safe communities
- 9. Promoting sustainable transport
- 11. Making effective use of land
- 12. Achieving well-designed places
- 14. Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change
- 15. Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
- 16. Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

National Planning Practice Guidance (2014 onwards)

6.6 Reading Borough Local Plan 2019

- CC1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- CC2: Sustainable Design and Construction
- CC3: Adaptation to Climate Change
- CC4: Decentralised Energy
- CC5: Waste Minimisation and Storage
- CC6: Accessibility and the Intensity of Development
- CC7: Design and the Public Realm
- CC8: Safeguarding Amenity
- CC9: Securing Infrastructure
- EN1: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment
- EN2: Areas of Archaeological Significance
- EN6: New Development in a Historic Context
- EN9: Provision of Open Space
- EN12: Biodiversity and the Green Network
- EN14: Trees, Hedges and Woodland
- EN15: Air Quality
- EN16: Pollution and Water Resources
- EN17: Noise Generating Equipment
- EM3: Loss of Employment Land
- EN18: Flooding and Drainage
- H1: Provision of Housing
- H2: Density and Mix
- H3: Affordable Housing
- H4: Build to Rent Schemes
- H5: Standards for New Housing
- H10: Private and Communal Outdoor Space
- TR1: Achieving the Transport Strategy
- TR2: Major Transport Projects
- TR3: Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters
- TR4: Cycle Routes and Facilities
- TR5: Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging
- RL1: Network and Hierarchy of Centres
- RL2: Scale and Location of Retail, Leisure and Culture Development

OU5: Shopfronts and Cash Machines
CR1: Definition of Central Reading
CR2: Design in Central Reading
CR3: Public Realm in Central Reading
CR4: Leisure, Culture and Tourism in Central Reading
CR5: Drinking Establishments in Central Reading
CR6: Living in Central Reading
CR7: Primary Frontage in Central Reading
CR11: Station/River Major Opportunity Area

6.7 Reading Borough Council Supplementary Planning Documents Topics

Affordable Housing (2021)
Design Guide to Shopfronts (2022)
Employment, Skills and Training (2013)
Revised Parking Standards and Design (2011)
Planning Obligations under Section 106 (2015)
Sustainable Design and Construction (2019)

Sites:

Reading Station Area Framework (2010)
Station Hill South Planning and Urban Design Brief (2007)

6.8 Other relevant documentation

Reading Borough Council Tree Strategy (March 2021)
Reading Biodiversity Action Plan (March 2021)
BRE Site Layout Planning for Daylight and Sunlight – A guide to good practice, (BR 209 **2011** edition)
Review of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 – March 2023
Reading Borough Local Plan Partial Update – Consultation on Scope and Content (under Regulation 18), November 2023
The National Design Guide (2019)
The National Model Design Code (July 2021)
Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 2: Managing Significance in Decision-Taking (Historic England, 2015)
Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: 3 (2nd Edition) The Setting of Heritage Assets (Historic England, 2017)

7. Appraisal

7.1. The main considerations relevant to the determination of this application are considered to be:

- i. Land use principles
- ii. Affordable Housing
- iii. Density and mix
- iv. Design & related matters: demolition, layout, scale, massing, appearance and impact on heritage assets
- v. Landscaping and public realm
- vi. Quality of accommodation for future occupiers
- vii. Amenity for nearby occupiers
- viii. Transport and Highways
- ix. Sustainability and Energy
- x. Other matters – ecology, SuDS, archaeology, legal agreement, pre-commencement conditions

i. Land use principles

7.2. From the outset, it is considered pertinent to first reference that the site, despite not being specifically allocated as a development site in the local plan, is located within the Station / River Major Opportunity Area (Policy CR11). The wider vision, area requirements and specific CR11a (Friar Street & Station Road) sub-area expectations are already outlined in section 1 above and are guiding principles throughout this appraisal.

Loss of existing uses

- 7.3. Considering first the loss of the existing uses within the existing buildings, the upper floors of both buildings include office floorspace. This is now within lawful Class E use. No policy concerns are raised with the loss of Class E uses on the upper floors of the building.
- 7.4. At ground floor level, as existing No. 35-38 contains a Class E restaurant and No. 39 a lawful Class E gym. In broad land use terms there would be no 'loss' of Class E uses, as these too are proposed as part of the redevelopment proposal. Accordingly, no planning harm would arise from the loss of the existing uses.

Proposed Class E uses

- 7.5. As already mentioned, the proposal seeks to provide replacement Class E uses. The original application submission sought an unrestricted Class E use (the Class has 11 parts) across the three separate units at part-basement and part-ground floor level. At ground floor level, there are no in-principle issues with the majority of the various separate Class E uses, with most aligning with the Policy CR7 (Primary Frontages in Central Reading) equivalent uses permitted in a primary frontage location such as this.
- 7.6. However, during the application officers raised concerns with the possibility of a Class E (g) (more specifically Class E (g)(i) 'Offices to carry out any operational or administrative functions', E (g) (ii) 'Research and development of products or processes' & E (g) (iii) 'industrial processes') use at ground floor, as such uses would not be compatible with the equivalent Policy CR7 permitted uses. The applicant has agreed in correspondence to a planning condition which prevents Class E (g) uses being permitted at the site (thereby permitting Class E(a)-(f) uses). With this condition secured, the proposals are considered appropriate from a land use principle perspective.
- 7.7. Policy CR7 (Primary Frontages in Central Reading) is also relevant, given Friar Street is a designated primary frontage. The policy states that proposals that result in the loss of

A1 or A2 use such that the proportion along the whole frontage falls below 50% will not be permitted. This policy however is now out of step with the national context, following the September 2020 changes to the Use Classes Order, which revokes Class A1/A2 and introduced the 11 part Class E. The November 2023 consultation on the scope and content (under Regulation 18) of a Local Plan Partial Update indicated that minimum proportion of any specific use is proposed to be removed. Whilst this is not yet an adopted policy approach, it indicates an anticipated direction of travel. Set within this context, there are no concerns raised with the Class E(a)-(f) uses proposed. Furthermore, these uses align with the Policy CR7 equivalent uses permitted in primary frontage locations within the regional centre such as this (which links into Policy RL1 (Network and Hierarchy of Centres)).

- 7.8. It is also recognised that the applicant's submission specifies that the intention is for the existing Cosmo Restaurant to be retained. However, whilst this is the current stated intention of the applicant (as shown in the proposed layout, which provides a comparable space), in land use terms the proposal, as per the above referenced condition, will secure the unit for any Class E(a)-(f) use, rather than any specific occupier or specific Class E(b) use. Hence, in practice, whilst it may be the case that the existing occupier remains at the site, the proposals in practice enable any Class E(a)-(f) use to occupy the unit.

Principle of Build to Rent residential accommodation

- 7.9. In this instance the upper floor proposal is for Build to Rent residential accommodation, which is an established and accepted form of housing provision at the national and local level. Policy H4 (Build to Rent Schemes) clearly sets out the circumstances in which such developments will be supported. In this instance the applicant has confirmed agreement to all of the required commitments in terms of Build to Rent units. This includes, but is not limited to, single ownership for a minimum 20 year term from occupation, there being minimum three year tenancies for private renters, a high standard professional on-site managements and meeting RBC's voluntary Rent with Confidence Standards. All the requirements will be secured within the proposed s106 legal agreement, thereby demonstrating the full commitment of the applicant to these Borough requirements. With the use secured via legal agreement, this principle is established. Simultaneously, the proposal will also provide 103 residential units, which is a significant contribution to the Borough's need for an average of 689 dwellings per annum across the plan period, in accordance with Policy H1 (Provision of Housing).

Ancillary residential accommodation at first floor level

- 7.10. The proposal also includes a 150sqm space at first floor level (with separate access from ground floor level off Friars Walk) which will comprise ancillary residential accommodation for residential occupiers. Such spaces are commonplace in Build to Rent schemes, providing additional on-site facilities for future occupiers. At the outset of the application this was sought to be a standalone Class E (g) (i) office use, as 'co-working' space. However, this was omitted during the application and it has instead been shown as ancillary Class C3 accommodation, (as a shared internal space for the use and benefit of all future build to rent occupiers) which raises no in-principle land use issues.

ii. Affordable Housing

- 7.11. Policy H4 (Build to Rent Schemes) requires Build to Rent schemes to provide 30% on-site affordable housing, either in accordance with Policy H3 (Affordable Housing) or in the form of Affordable Private Rent Housing, as per the Affordable Housing SPD. In a scheme of 103 residential units, this equates to 30.9 units being affordable. The applicant seeks to provide 33 on-site Affordable Private Rent Housing units, which translates into a 32.04% on-site provision (see Figure 7 for details). Moreover, the applicant has also agreed to the various stipulations required by Policy H4 and the Affordable Housing SPD, such as the rental levels being set in relation to Local Housing Allowance levels for Reading (including service charges).
- 7.12. The Affordable Private Rent housing would be 'pepper-potted' (spread) throughout the development, thereby assisting in the creation of a mixed and balanced community. More

specifically, the affordable units are predominantly located at first and second floor level, but a selection of units are also at third, fifth, sixth and eighth floor levels, as shown below in Figure 16. In addition, as per Figure 7, there is a range of unit sizes provided in the affordable tenure, from studio to three bed units. The spreading of the units within different parts and floors of the building and there being a varied mix of unit sizes provided too is welcomed and strongly supported by officers.



Figure 16 – Plan showing the location of affordable private rent housing units at first, second, third, fifth, sixth and eighth floor level (denoted by a red spot on the plan).

- 7.13. As per the observations at paragraphs 5.27-5.28 above, this proposed offer is supported by RBC Housing, with all elements to be secured in full via the s106 legal agreement, as per the recommendation at the outset of this report. Planning Officers consider that, within the context of a Build to Rent scheme, the proposal represents an exemplar proposal in respect of the form, nature and amount of affordable housing required for such developments in the Borough. It is therefore strongly supported and considered to be a key tangible planning benefit of the scheme in overall terms. This shall be later discussed in the context of the overall planning balance of the proposals.
- 7.14. It is also recognised that the on-site provision is in-fact marginally above the 30% policy requirement. In such circumstances, it is usually appropriate for the legal agreement to solely secure the 30% policy requirement and to require no more than this. However, given some shortfalls in other respects of the proposals, as discussed elsewhere in this assessment, in this instance officers consider it relevant and necessary on this occasion to secure all 32.04% of the development as affordable housing via legal agreement. Put simply, securing a marginally higher policy amount of affordable housing is considered necessary to offset some of the harmful impacts of the development in the overall planning balance, as discussed at the end of this assessment.
- 7.15. A further affordable housing related clause is considered to be required to be secured via legal agreement in this instance too. This involves the scenario that should the application site subsequently be extended/alterd to create further residential units (e.g. through the conversion of, purely example basis [there is no indication that this is the intention of the applicant] a 3-bed unit into 2 x studio units, or ground floor space being converted into

units or the building being later extended to create further residential units) then contributions towards affordable housing would apply on a cumulative basis, rather than a standalone basis. This stems from Policy H3 requiring different levels of affordable housing depending on the number of units. The proposed approach therefore prevents this proposal being the first of a succession of applications, with the later applications having lesser requirements, or put another way, if all applications had been submitted collectively it would have generated a larger requirement. It is considered reasonable and necessary for this to be secured in this case so the site makes an appropriate contribution towards affordable housing to meet the needs of Reading Borough. This clause has been incorporated within a number of other permissions in the Borough in recent years, including being accepted at planning appeals. The applicant indicated agreement for this to being secured too.

iii. Density & Mix

- 7.16. In density terms, the provision of 103 residential units on a 0.1941 hectare site produces a density of development of 530.65 dwellings per hectare. The proposal therefore represents an undoubtably high density proposal, far beyond the minimum 'above 100' density indicatively specified at figure 4.5 of Policy H2 (Density and Mix) of the Local Plan and also discussed within the Reading Station Area Framework (albeit a density range is not specifically given for this site). Policy H2 however clearly recognises that the appropriate density of residential development will be informed by a range of factors. The character of the area (in particular the neighbouring Station Hill development), the highly accessible town centre location, the need to maximise the efficiency of land use and, as referenced elsewhere in this assessment, the design quality and environmental impacts are such to all combine to support high density development in this location. Moreover, Policy CR11i) specifies in the context of the Station/River MOA as a whole that development will contribute towards providing a high-density mix of uses to create a destination in itself and capitalise on its role as one of the most accessible locations in the south east of England. The proposal will evidently assist in this regard. Therefore, overall, the proposed density of development is considered appropriate given the context.
- 7.17. In terms of the mix of residential units proposed, as specified in full at Figure 7 within paragraph 3.2 above, the proposal fully complies with Policy CR6i) (Living in Central Reading). The scheme provides a suitable mix of different sized units, with fewer than 40% studio/1-bedroom units (39.8%) and more than the minimum 5% 3-bedroom (5.8%) units. This is consequently a planning benefit of the proposals. There is also a suitable mix of units proposed between the market and affordable units too, which is another welcomed benefit of the proposals.

iv. Design & related matters: demolition, layout, scale, massing, appearance and impact on heritage assets

Demolition

- 7.18. As described above, there are two existing buildings at the site. No. 35-38 Friar Street is not considered to be of any special architectural or historic merit to warrant retention. A previous proposal involving demolition was also granted in 2009 (see paragraph 4.2 above). No. 39 Friar Street, as explained in paragraph 2.2, was de-listed by Historic England in 2018. Furthermore, the Council's Conservation & Urban Design Officer, raises no concerns to its demolition on the basis of it no longer being considered a heritage asset. Reading CAAC also consider its loss to be acceptable (see paragraphs 5.69-5.70 above). Hence, whilst the building makes a contribution to the streetscene and its loss is regrettable, the demolition of the existing buildings is therefore supported, on the proviso of the proposed replacement building being considered appropriate.

Layout, scale and massing

- 7.19. The proposed layout of development mirrors and extends the footprint of the existing buildings at the site, as shown in Figure 17 below. The area where the layout extends further (in comparison with existing) is at its northern tip, although this has been set further away from the boundary with Plot F (Flow) during the course of the application. The

proposed layout evidently seeks to maximise the development potential of the site, but given the Policy CR11 (Station/River Major Opportunity Area) this is not considered a basis for resisting the proposals. In addition, mindful of the Reading Station Area Framework (see Figure 18 below), the proposed layout generally follows the anticipated pattern of development envisaged at this time, creating a strong edge along Friars Walk to connect the path towards Reading Station and frame a public square/space anticipated at the junction with Friar Street. It is also considered that the proposed layout builds on and respects the existing grid layout structure of the central area, as required by Policy CR2 (Design in Central Reading). Accordingly, in principle layout terms, no issues are raised with the proposed approach.



Figure 17 – The existing location plan (left) and proposed layout (right) (1st floor)

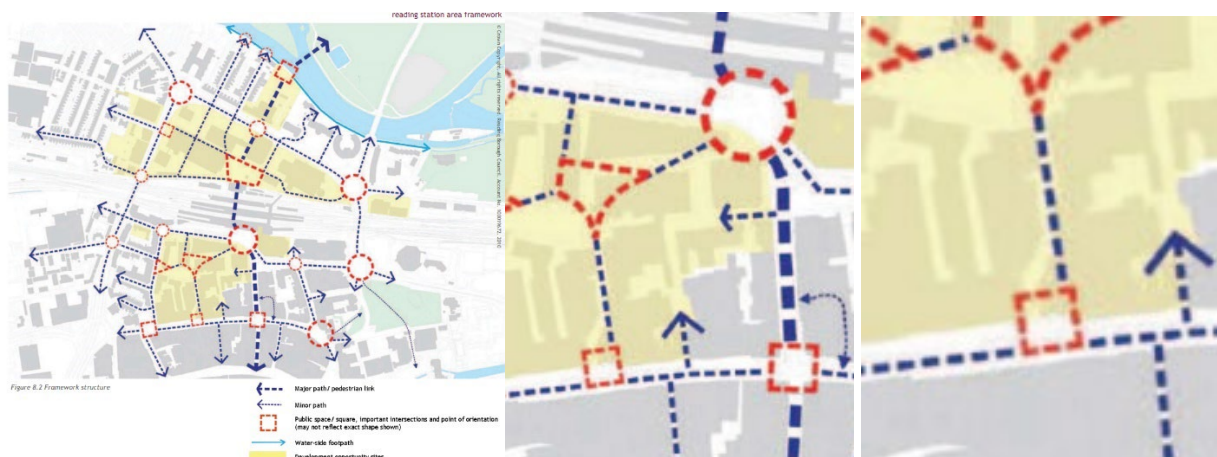


Figure 18 – Figure 8.2 of the Reading Station Area Framework (left) and zoomed in extracts (middle and right)

- 7.20. Turning to consider the proposed scale and massing of development, it is important to reiterate (further to section 2 above) that, despite being located within the Station/River Major Opportunity Area, the site is outside of one of the Borough's tall buildings clusters. The boundary of the Station Area Cluster is to the east (Merchants Place) and north (Garrard Street) of the application site. In addition, the site is not specifically referenced within the Reading Station Area Framework for 'benchmark' heights or 'landmark' building heights.
- 7.21. With this context in mind the proposal seeks to create a basement and part 7, part 11 storey building. There is a significant set-back of the building at seventh floor level from the Friar Street elevation, with the set-back increasing from west (18m, then 24m) to east (32m). As such, the 11 storey element of the proposal is set a considerable distance away from the Friar Street frontage. This is initially most clearly shown in Figure 1 at the outset of this report. Whilst this is fully acknowledged to be a sizeable building, it has been carefully developed following pre-application discussions with officers and input from Design South East (see paragraph 5.52 above). At basement and 11 storeys and 35m in

height (from ground level up to roof floor level, so excluding the basement, roof parapet and plant zone) it falls below the threshold of a 'tall building' (as per the Policy CR10 – Tall Buildings - definition of 10 storeys of commercial floorspace or 12 storeys of residential (equating to 36 metres tall) or above). Therefore, the proposal is not classified as a tall building and Policy CR10 is not engaged.



Figure 19 – Extracts from the Design and Access Statement showing the proposed scale and massing of the 7 storey element of the proposed development in context.

- 7.22. Along the Friar Street elevation the proposals will largely appear as a 7 storey building, aligning with the approach recently approved and implemented in respect of Plot E (Ebb) at the neighbouring Station Hill development, as shown in Figure 19 above. Whilst it is acknowledged that there will be a significant contrast between the remaining 3 storey and roofspace No's 32-34 Friar Street to the east, in the context of the Station Hill development, this proposal represents a continuation of the approach taken, assisting in the legibility of the streetscape at this point in marking the entrance to Friars Walk. As such, the scale and massing at this part of the site is considered appropriate within its context.
- 7.23. With regard to the 11 storey element of the proposal, again this is seeking to reinforce the recently emerging local context at Station Hill, by broadly aligning with the scale and height of Plot F (Flow). It is considered that set within this newly created local character, the proposed scale of building seeks to compliment, but not compete with, the surrounding context (as shown below in Figure 20). Furthermore, it is evident that the scheme as a whole, rising from 7 to 11 storeys from south to north, seeks to continue the transitional increase in height from Friar Street towards Garrard Street and beyond to the northern (taller) Station Hill sites adjacent to Reading Station. Set within this context, as shown within Figure 20 below, the proposed scale and massing is considered to align with the prevailing character, albeit at the very upper level of acceptability.

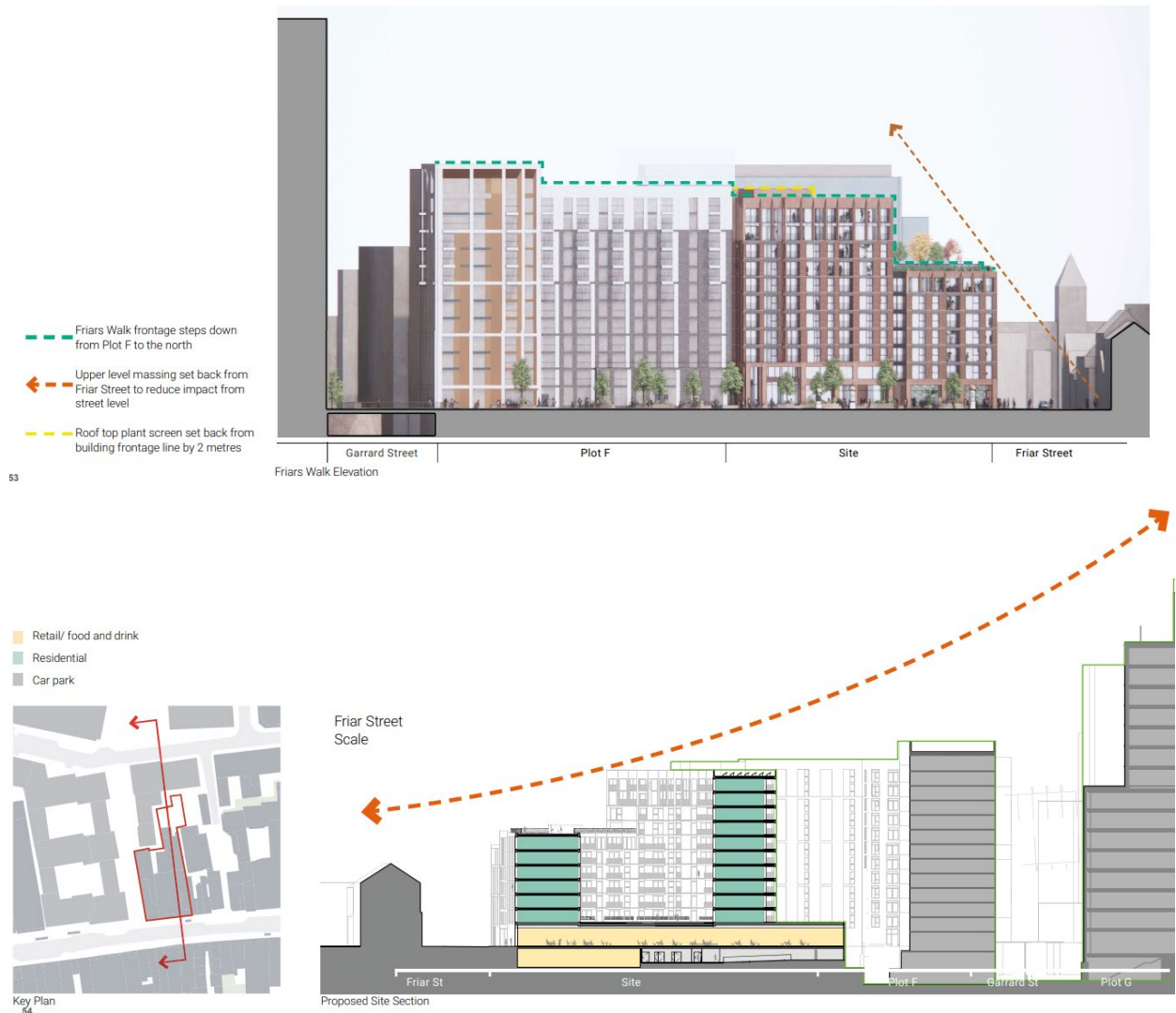


Figure 20 – Extracts from the Design and Access Statement showing the proposed scale and massing of the development in a south to north context.

- 7.24. In support of the proposals, the applicant has also undertaken a succinct townscape assessment along a number of viewpoints to the east and west on Friar Street. A selection of the existing and proposed visualisations are provided below at Figure 21. In the longer and medium views from both east and west of the site, it is evident that whilst the proposals will be distinguishable, it is only the immediate seven storey element which will be visible. This is considered to help evidence that the proposals align with the Plot E character and also assist in legibility terms through marking the entranceway to Friars Walk. In the closer views from the east looking west, the change in scale between No's 32-34 Friar Street and the application site is more noticeable, but the impact is reduced through the proposed inclusion of brick banding and articulation in the brickwork, together with a change in the upper most floor material, thereby preventing a blank façade being created. Accordingly, this assessment helps to further justify the proposed scale and massing of the proposed development in terms of its impact on Friar Street.
- 7.25. Finally in terms of scale and massing matters, the proposals are not considered to cause unreasonable burdens on the future development of neighbouring sites, with the scheme itself having to take into significant account the Station Hill scheme to the north and west. To the east of the site, the set-back of the first floor terrace area creates a relationship between buildings at this point, together with the remaining car/park terrace area. This means the proposals are not considered to prevent neighbouring sites from fulfilling the aspirations of Policies CR11 (Station/River Major Opportunity Area) and CR2 (Design in Central Reading).

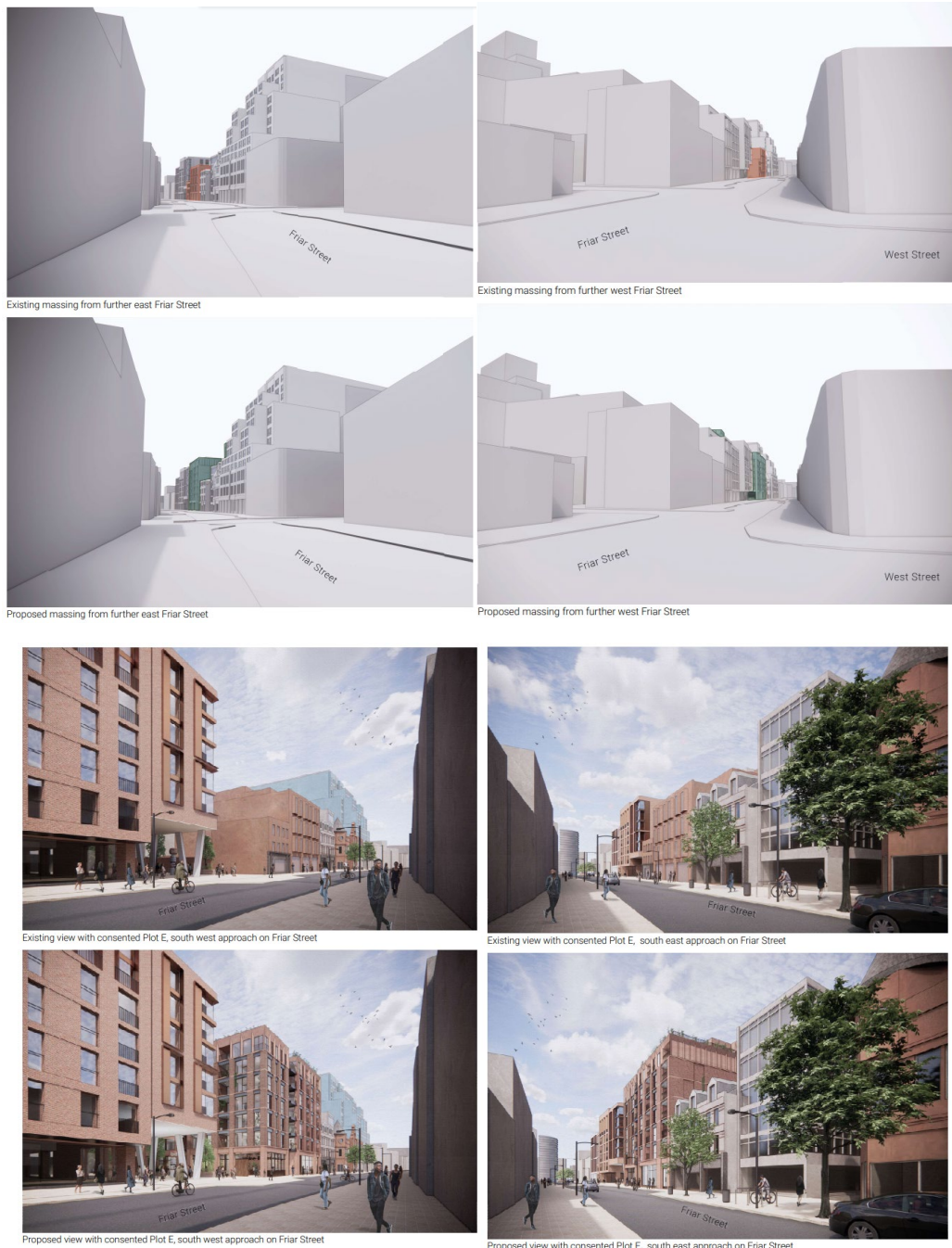


Figure 21 - A selection of the existing and proposed visualisations provided within the townscape assessment.

Appearance and detailed design matters

- 7.26. The proposed materials and appearance of the development has taken inspiration from both the historic town centre context and more contemporary elements too. The primary materials are textured red and orange brick, with lighter concrete banding clear at each floor level (assisted by the sawtooth blue brick above the windows) on the Friar Street elevation. There are clear tops, middles and bases to both the 7 and 11 storey elements (see Figure 22 below), with a continuity between the two in order for them to be read together as one. The uppermost floor of the 7 storey element and uppermost two floors of the 11 storey element include a contrasting textured concrete material to provide a contemporary interpretation of terracotta finishes seen on historic buildings within the town centre. At ground floor level the shopfronts will be metal framed (bronze in colour to subtly vary from the floors above) and large expanses of glazing, whilst maintaining some traditional shopfront features to tie in with the principles of the Shopfronts SPD. The shopfronts are shown in detail at Figure 22 below. Along Friars Walk the colonnade feature helps distinguish the corner within the streetscape and signify the importance of

the future route to and from Reading Station. Furthermore, the proposed finished appearance is considered to be sufficiently contrasting from Plots E and F at Station Hill, but in a complementary and not jarring manner. In addition, another pertinent point is that there is no decrease in design quality in the rear facing east and north elevations, which is another welcomed and supported element in demonstrating the overall quality of the proposed scheme.



Birds-eye view from Friar Street

Figure 22 – Above: Visualisation of the proposed scheme from Friar Street. Below: Ground floor details (as per the DAS Addendum dated June 2023, as received 03/07/2023)

2.5 MATERIALITY

2.5.1 Ground Floor

The use of red/orange tones across the facade harmonises the proposal as a whole. Subtle variations in the blend of brickwork and mortar colour provide each block with it's own distinct character while working with the tonality of Station Hill to appear as one harmonious proposal.

Intricate brick detailing above the windows emphasises the verticality of the openings and makes reference to the ornate brick detailing that can be seen throughout many of Reading's historic buildings.

At ground floor bronze coloured metal framed shopfronts are set within a polished concrete effect frame that gives the base on the building it's own character.

The shopfront is set back along Friars Walk to provide a colonnade and improve visual connectivity from Friars Street with the revised Station Hill Landscape design creating a permeable route between the public realm and the proposed development at 35-39 Friar Street.



Friar Street bay study

1. Red/ orange textured multi brick
2. Grey/ blue sawtooth brick fascia
3. Textured concrete effect with exposed aggregate
4. Metal soffit to balcony
5. Dark metal spandrels cladding
6. Dark metal balustrade
7. Bronze coloured metal framing to glazing



1. Varying shades of red bricks and mortar colour 2. Grey/blue glazed sawtooth brickwork 3. Textured concrete effect exposed aggregate

- 7.27. The overall appearance of the building is considered to be of a high quality design, which includes a variety of detailing in order to add layers of richness, which would make it a welcome and valued addition to Friar Street and the wider area. In particular, it is considered that the design approach will stand the test of time and continue to be fine addition for many decades to come, so is strongly supported by officers and considered to be a particular benefit of the proposal.

Impacts on heritage assets

- 7.28. The proposals are accompanied by a Heritage Statement, which comments that the proposals will have no impact on the setting or special interest of the nearest designated heritage asset, the Grade II No's 147-149 Friar Street, nor any other designated heritage asset. This overriding conclusion is shared by the Council's Conservation Officer, as summarised at paragraph 5.39 – 5.40 above, with it confirmed that the proposals are considered to be in full accordance with the relevant national and local policies from a heritage perspective.
- 7.29. With specific regard to the concerns raised by Reading CAAC through the re-consultation period (see paragraphs 5.69-5.70 above), that the use and setting of 8 Merchant's Place (Milk Bar – which is not a designated heritage asset) is now damaged by these proposals (through the introduction of plant rooms within the servicing and parking area), the extent of the proposals within the servicing and parking area are shown below in Figure 23. Whilst the proposals in this part of the site would change the existing context, the proposed structures are modest single storey structures which would not be highly visible from the public realm. The primary views and setting of the neighbouring building from Merchants Place would be unaltered by the plant room proposals. In addition, all plant is located internally at this point, downplaying noise concerns, and Environmental Protection officers raise no specific concerns with this element of the proposals. Hence, officers are content with the proposals at this point.

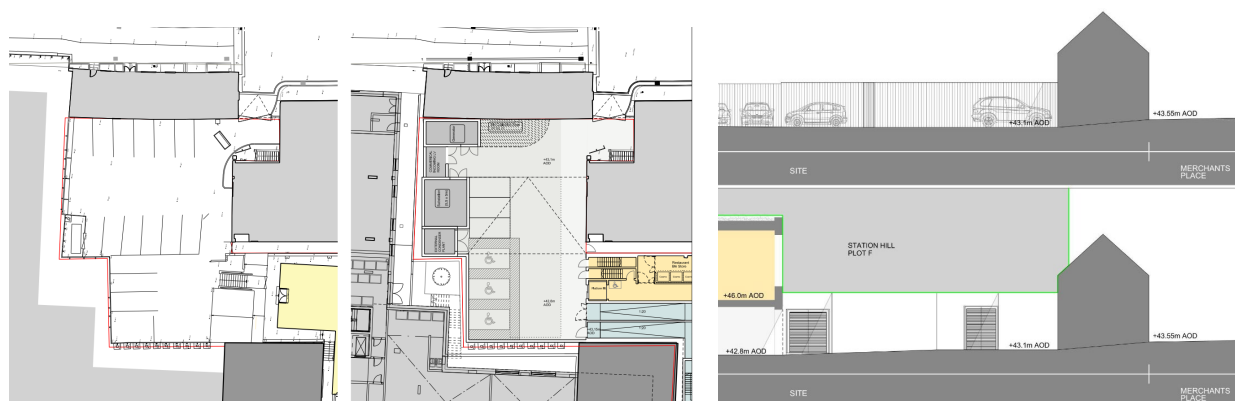


Figure 23 - Existing and Proposed Servicing & Parking Yard (floor plans left / sections right) in the context of 8 Merchants Place.

v. Landscaping and public realm

- 7.30. In response to the RBC Natural Environment Team's observations at paragraphs 5.29 – 5.32 above, the scheme includes some welcomed greening on-site, within the 1st and 7th floor terrace spaces (visualisation shown below at **Figure 24**). This will improve the quality of accommodation for future occupiers, as well bringing biodiversity, thermal efficiency and reduce run-off benefits. No ground level landscaping is proposed at ground level, owing to the footprint and layout of the proposed building, meaning there are limited opportunities within the red line boundary.



108 Illustrative view of the 7th floor communal roof terrace. Planters with integrated seating allow for larger trees to flourish and encourage a varied ecology. The south facing roof terrace will offer residents a space for communal living whilst enjoying panoramic views over Reading Town Centre.

Figure 24 - Extract from DAS at outset of application showing the 7th floor terrace

- 7.31. It is however pertinent that the proposals have been considered within the context of the existing (recently installed) landscaping and public realm along Friars Walk, which is outside the red-line boundary of the site. In short, the proposed development is not considered to undermine or compromise the existing context, with the two being able to co-exist in harmony and complimenting one another to assist in the overall townscape at this point. Whilst the proposals have been considered against the current landscaping/public realm along Friars Walk adjacent to the site (and being considered appropriate as outlined above), it is acknowledged that the applicant has indicated it intends to seek to pursue alternative proposals in this space in due course. The Design Update April 2024 by Stefan Shaw Studio states:

“Should the Shaviram scheme gain planning approval, the intent remains to proceed with these landscape revisions through detailed design, planning submission and construction stages”.

- 7.32. Officers can advise that any such separate altered landscaping / public realm proposal along Friars Walk (as shown below in Figure 25, as existing) would be considered on its own merits in due course, with this naturally requiring input and agreement from separate landowners too. A separate standalone application would be required to facilitate any such works.

vi. Quality of accommodation

Residential occupiers

- 7.33. For future residential occupiers it is considered in overall terms that a high quality of urban accommodation is proposed. Each of the 103 units comply with the nationally-described space standards (Policy H5a), with the units being regular in size and shape, with some natural outlook. The residential units are solely located on the upper floors of the building and will be served by two separate cores, directly off both Friar Street and Friars Walk. The double height reception area on Friars Walk is the primary entrance, providing support services typical of build to rent developments, such as a concierge. This area is also adjacent to the first floor ancillary residential space, which provides an area for future occupiers which could be utilised for a variety of functions, such as working from home spaces. Separate cycle and waste storage areas are proposed, which specialist transport and waste officers are content with (see section 5 above), subject to conditions. In particular, the excess of cycle parking is seen as a benefit of the proposals. Future occupiers will also be protected from the effects of overheating, noise disturbance and potential contaminated land through a variety of conditions recommended by RBC

Environmental Protection (see paragraph 5.18 – 5.26 above). Specifically in terms of air quality, the applicant has demonstrated sufficient mitigation is included within the proposed design to result in no harm being caused to future occupiers. With regards to wind and microclimate matters, Arc Aero's assessment on behalf of officers, as per paragraphs 5.59 – 5.61 above, demonstrate that conditions will be suitable for future occupiers.

- 7.34. The proposed layouts have been carefully designed in light of the surrounding existing context, whilst simultaneously seeking to create a high quality living environment for future occupiers. No single-aspect north-facing units are proposed, with dual-aspect sought to be maximised where possible. Meanwhile, the layout of rooms has sought to minimise overlooking between future occupiers at the application site and in the context of existing neighbouring occupiers. For example, the northernmost unit on the Friars Walk elevation has been set back slightly from the other units, recognising the proximity to the edge of the Plot E (Ebb) residential units as part of the Station Hill development. Whilst a 14m window-to-window separation distance is below the Policy CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity) referenced 20m back-to-back distance, given the central location of the site and the overarching Policy CR11 (Station/River Major Opportunity Area) vision, this shortfall can be accommodated in this specific context in the overall planning balance. Further to the south of the Friars Walk elevation the distance reduces down to 10m, but windows are offset at this point to prevent direct overlooking of future occupiers. On the northern tip of the application site no windows are proposed on the northern elevation, preventing overlooking from Plot F (Flow) at Station Hill towards this part of the application site, with windows on the west elevation of the application site building limited to areas where the eastern elevation of Plot F contains a corridor rather than habitable rooms. The orientation and distances involved means future occupiers are unlikely to be significantly overlooked by existing residential occupiers to the south and east on Friar Street.

Daylight and sunlight

- 7.35. With regard to daylight and sunlight for future occupiers, BRE's findings of the information submitted by the applicant is summarised at paragraph 5.58 above, also incorporating Figure 15. It is evident that there are shortfalls in the provision of both daylight and sunlight for a number of future occupiers, particularly on the lower floors of the building. There is a degree of inevitability in this shortcoming, given the existing surrounding context and also the proposed layout incorporating a series of inset terrace areas, which invariably reduces access to light within the recessed rooms. In this regard, there are evidently competing demands between the benefits of providing private amenity space for occupiers (which is welcomed, as discussed below) and the need to provide suitable access to natural light. In overall terms, it is considered that an appropriate balance has been struck in this instance, with the resultant shortfalls in access to light, although disappointing, being able to be considered adequate on this basis. Moreover, within this major opportunity area location, providing the required high-density mix of uses means some flexibility is required in respect of some standards.

Accessibility and Wheelchair user units

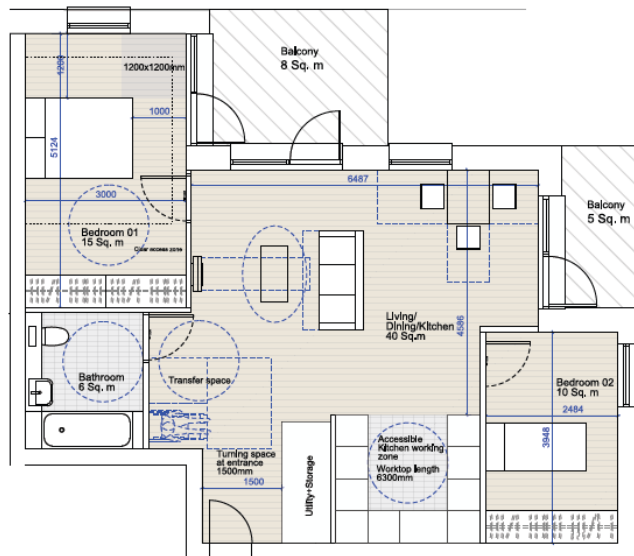
- 7.36. As per paragraph 5.35 above, the RBC Access Officer strongly welcomes the wheelchair accessibility design approach which has been applied by the applicant. More specifically, Policy H5f (Standards for new housing) requires at least 5% of new build dwellings to be wheelchair user dwellings. In this instance, the applicant has shown 6 x 2-bedroom units (2 each at 5th to 7th floor level) to be wheelchair accessible, with 4 specified as Affordable Private Rent Housing units and 2 market Build to Rent units. Details of the features incorporated within a typical unit are detailed below in Figure 25. This equates to a 5.83% provision, in excess of the policy requirement. In order to ensure that the applicant fully implements the intended measures, a planning condition will secure final details of 4 'wheelchair accessible' (affordable) and 2 'wheelchair adaptable' (market) units, prior to the first occupation of any of the 103 units at the site. In addition, all of the proposed on-site car-parking (3 spaces) are for future disabled occupiers, which is also welcomed and supported as detailed in the Transport comments. The submitted Design and Access Statement also suitably confirms that the remainder of the residential accommodation will

be accessible and adaptable in line with Part M4 (2) of the Building Regulations, in line with Policy H5e.

or nominating an individual may be 'wheelchair accessible' Reading Borough Local Plan

These homes will incorporate:

- Access via two communal lifts (where possible), to ensure they are still accessible should one lift be out of use for repair/maintenance
- At least 800mm effective clear width at the apartment entrance door
- At least 300mm unobstructed clear space at the leading edge of doors to the side wall, where the door opens towards direction of approach, also space to manoeuvre back clear of the door swing
- A usable kitchen space with 1800 x 1500mm space between counters with a minimum length of 4330mm for up to 2 people, and 4730mm for 3 and 4 person.
- Manoeuvring space of 1500 x 1500mm clear of any fittings.
- A minimum of 1100mm in front of the WC pan clear of any fittings or door swing 1000 x 1000mm level shower area with drainage or 1700 x 700mm bath with end transfer space and 300mm clear of any side wall for access to taps.
- 1500mm width from the WC wall to provide lateral transfer space.
- Walls and ceiling of sufficient strength to take future grab rails or hoist.



2 Bedroom 3 people: 74sq.m, wheelchair adapted

Figure 25 – Extract from DAS indicating the proposed wheelchair user layout and features.

Other Policy H5 standards

- 7.37. Previous paragraphs have demonstrated compliance with Policies H5a, e and f. It is also confirmed that Hoare Lea's sustainability review (on behalf of the LPA) confirms that the proposal meets the water efficiency standards under Policy H5b. In terms of H5c (major new-builds to achieve zero carbon), Hoare Lea's energy review and officer's subsequent assessment, as discussed separately below, confirms that whilst zero carbon is not achieved, the proposals will exceed the minimum 35% improvement in regulated emissions over the Target Emissions Rate in the 2013 Building Regulations. Policy H5c is not applicable in this instance. Hence, in overall terms, the proposals have demonstrated compliance with all relevant Policy H5 standards for new housing.

Open Space

- 7.38. In terms of open space for residents, all occupiers will have access to both the first floor external terrace and the more expansive seventh floor terrace. As per sunlight analysis by BRE (see paragraph 5.58 above) the first floor terrace is compromised in terms of access to sunlight, although this is somewhat inevitable given its location and the surrounding context. In contrast, the seventh floor terrace would be sunny and includes areas of seating, play space, 'grow your own' planters and quieter areas. Moreover, each residential unit includes its own individual private terrace space, either in the form of an inset terrace (typically on the Friar St and Friars Walk elevations) or projecting balconies (on the inward facing elevations). This is shown in Figure 26 below. Accordingly, each unit will have its own private amenity area for the benefit of occupiers. The proposals therefore comply in full with Policy H10 (Private and Communal Outdoor Space). In terms of wider open space at the site, mindful of Policy EN9 (Provision of Open Space) and the proposals including more than 50 dwellings where new provision is sought, none is realistically able to be provided in this instance owing to the limited size of the site, the nature of the proposals and the existing surrounding context. In this instance, it is considered that any wider impacts on open space provision as a result of the development will be captured through CIL contributions.

5.9. RESIDENTIAL APARTMENTS

5.9.5. Private Amenity

Private external residential amenity space will be provided for each apartment. A level threshold from each apartment to the exterior will ensure ease of access for residents.

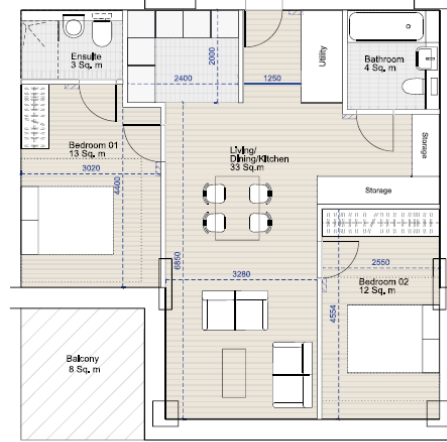
The majority of homes have inset balconies that have an increased level of privacy and protection from the elements.

Several apartments will face directly onto the 1st floor and 7th floor roof terraces. These homes will have their own private roof terrace separated from the communal roof terrace areas by planted defensible space that provides residents with privacy and visual amenity.

Minimum space provision within proposed scheme (in cases this number is exceeded)

Apartment Type	Private external amenity (sqm)
1 bed 1 person	5 sqm
1 bed 2 person	5 sqm
2 bed 3 person	6 sqm
2 bed 4 person	7 sqm
3 bed 5 person	8 sqm

1. Inset balcony
2. Bolt on balcony
3. Juliet balcony
4. Private roof terrace
5. Planted defensible space
6. Communal roof terrace



2 Bedroom 4 people: 72sq.m

Figure 26 – Information extracted from the DAS showing proposed balcony areas

Fire strategy

- 7.39. As a 'gateway one' building (owing to the proposed height) the applicant has submitted a Fire Strategy with the application. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) was formally consulted on the application, but has not provided a response on this occasion. Based on an officer review of the information provided, this is evidently a draft strategy which will be advanced further at a later stage, with there being a number of areas where it is acknowledged that the strategy requires development. As such, the information submitted is a useful starting point in outlining an intended approach, without categorically covering all matters. As such, a pre-commencement (barring demolition) condition will secure fuller details in relation to fire matters in order to safeguard the amenity of future occupiers.

Non-residential

- 7.40. Turning to consider the quality of the non-residential uses proposed, it is considered that the three Class E (a-f) uses will be suitably attractive to a wide array of potential future occupiers. The larger unit fronting Friar Street, earmarked for continued occupation by current occupier Cosmo Restaurant in the submission (but in reality potentially occupied by any Class E (a-f) uses) provides expansive space at both basement and ground floor level. On the Friar Street frontage, as shown below in Figure 27, the largely glazed shopfront will assist the vitality and viability of Friar Street at this point, with 'active window displays' without vinyls or roller shutter being secured via condition. This will also assist in maintaining passive surveillance at this point too. The two smaller units will also take a similar approach and will assist in activating the route between Friar Street and Reading Station, aligning with the character of the Station Hill development. The presence of a colonnade feature also provides opportunities for potential spill out space for these occupiers. The servicing and support facilities associated with each of the non-residential units is deemed acceptable, meaning in overall terms these units are likely to be attractive to future occupiers and beneficial to the town centre as a whole, complying with the CR11a (Friar Street and Station Road) requirements.



View of restaurant frontage facing onto Friar Street



View of incubator retail unit facing onto colonnade

Figure 27 – Visualisations of the ground floor uses from Friar St and the corner with Friars Walk

vii. Amenity for nearby occupiers

- 7.41. The application site is located within an already dense urban environment, which in the very recent past has become significantly more residential in nature with the continuing to emerge Station Hill development. In future, as the Station Hill development is built out in full and other sites within the town centre (particularly in the Major Opportunity Areas) come forward, the character of the area will be becoming ever-increasing residential. Hence, the proposals are required to be carefully considered in terms of its impacts on existing/future nearby occupiers, mindful of policies such as CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity) and CR6 (Living in the Central Reading) in particular.

Privacy and overlooking

- 7.42. Considering privacy and overlooking matters first, the absence of habitable room windows on the north elevation of the proposed building means no harmful overlooking to the south elevation of Plot F (Flow) at Station Hill is anticipated. The office use at 30-31 Friar Street and distances/orientations of the rears of 32-34 Friar Street downplays impacts at these points. The width of Friar Street means there is suitable separation between the application site and any residential units on the upper floors of building on the south side of Friar Street.
- 7.43. On the western elevation of the proposed development, the distances towards Plot E (Ebb) at the Station Hill development are 10-14m at the closest points. The proposed layout is such that direct overlooking has been sought to be minimised, including the provision of inset balconies to move habitable rooms further away. However, in practice it is recognised that a degree of overlooking between this recently constructed block and the proposed building will be possible at close quarters. This is considered to be a shortcoming of the proposal. However, given the location of the site within the very heart of the town centre and the major opportunity area, where Policy CR11 (Station/River Major Opportunity Area) seeks a high density mix of uses, some shortfalls can be expected and accommodated, with this returned to within the final planning balance. In terms of the northern tip of the proposed development, on the western side this is in close proximity to the east (rear) elevation of Plot F (Flow), with the distance being increased by 3m during the application, albeit the footprint of the upper floors were moved further north at this time too. On this elevation two windows are proposed at each upper floor, with these facing a blank façade element of Plot F (serving an internal corridor), meaning no harmful direct overlooking would occur.

Daylight and sunlight

- 7.44. The BRE undertook an assessment on behalf of officers in terms of the supporting information submitted by the applicant, as summarised at paragraphs 5.53 – 5.58 above (including Figures 13 & 14). The guidelines assess loss of daylight (diffuse light from the sky) and loss of sunlight (direct light from the sun) separately and are designed to be used for habitable rooms of dwellings (living rooms, kitchens and bedrooms). BRE advise that there are a number of instances where the proposed development would result in a reduction of daylight and sunlight, with the impacts being major adverse on many occupiers of Plots E and F at the neighbouring Station Hill (the internal layouts at first and second floor level of these blocks are shown below in Figure 28). Although there are a number of considerable shortfalls, officers consider that given the dense urban location of the site and the recent context (Station Hill – which are large buildings located close to the boundary of the application site) these can be justified in overall terms in this instance, particularly bearing in mind that the BRE guidelines are not mandatory and can be interpreted flexibly (as also referenced at paragraph 129c) of the NPPF) and Policy CR11 (Station/River Major Opportunity Area) seeks a high density mix of uses in this location. This is nevertheless a shortcoming of the proposal, which will be discussed further in the subsequent planning balance. BRE report that there is a lesser impact on all other neighbouring buildings, which officers consider not to be significantly harmful.

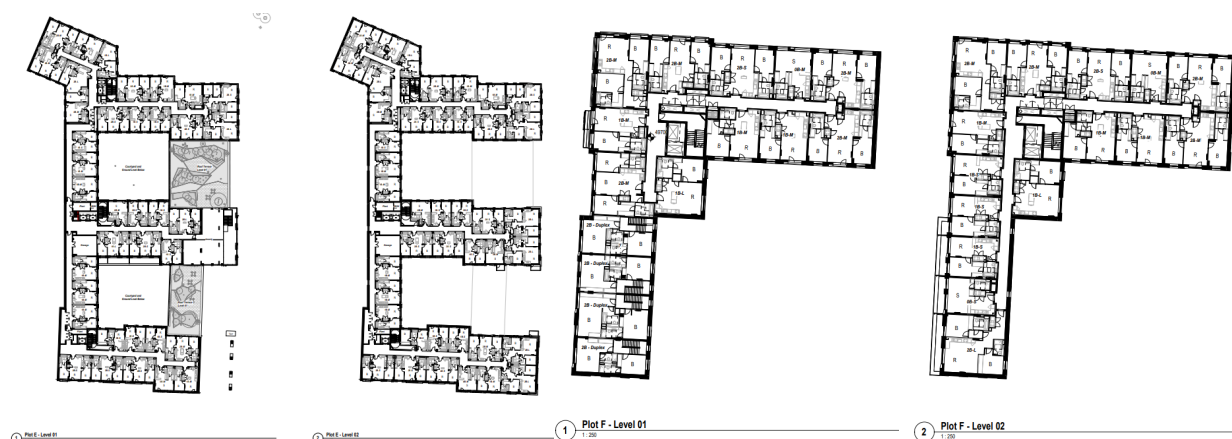


Figure 28 - Approved Plot E (Ref 201537) and F (Ref 201533) floor plans showing the internal layout at first and second floor & above floor levels.

Outlook and related matters

- 7.45. Turning to consider outlook, visual dominance and the overbearing effects of a development, given the proposed scale and massing of the proposed development, it is readily acknowledged that all neighbouring and nearby occupiers will experience a new relationship with the site when compared with the existing arrangements. There will be reductions in outlook and instances of visual dominance and overbearing caused by the proposed development for existing nearby occupiers. These impacts are more significant in some parts of the site than others, depending on the distances involved and the height of the proposed building at these specific locations. However, again mindful of the aspirations of Policy CR11 for a high density mix of uses, the harmful impacts in these regards are not considered so detrimental to lead to the refusal of this application on this basis.

Noise and disturbance, artificial lighting, vibration, dust and fumes and smells

- 7.46. In these regards, a number of recommended conditions will protect amenity to ensure that no detrimental impacts, beyond that reasonably expected in a dense urban town centre mixed-use location, are envisaged to occur. In particular, RBC Environmental Protection recommend a series of conditions (see paragraphs 5.18 – 5.28 above) which seek to protect nearby amenity from future harmful impacts. With these conditions secured, the proposals are considered acceptable in these regards.

Crime and safety

- 7.47. In terms of crime and anti-social behaviour matters, the DOCO at Thames Valley Police raised a number of concerns in relation to the originally submitted scheme. The applicant sought to address the matters raised when revising the scheme, but the DOCO did not respond to the subsequent re-consultation. Officers consider that it is clear that a number of the original concerns appear to have been addressed in the revised proposal and that none of the original comments raised insurmountable issues with the proposals. In the circumstances, it is considered reasonable and necessary to secure details of a robust security strategy in full via condition (at which point DOCO input will be sought), for the benefit of existing/future occupiers of the area, as well as future occupiers of the proposed development too.

Wind and microclimate

- 7.48. With regard to wind/microclimate matters, Arc Aero's assessment on behalf of officers (as summarised at paragraphs 5.59 – 5.61 above), concludes that the proposed development will not cause harmful wind impacts in the vicinity of the site for nearby occupiers or users of the area and no specific wind conditions or mitigations are considered to be necessary, with the development producing a suitably pleasant urban environment and comply with Policy CR13.

viii. Transport and Highways

- 7.49. Detailed Transport comments are summarised from paragraph 5.1 above, with no objections raised subject to a series of conditions being secured. In overall terms, the access arrangements are considered appropriate following the submission of further and revised information during the application, the non-residential components being car-free is supported, as is the below-policy compliant on-site residential vehicle parking (limited to 3 disabled spaces owing to the highly sustainable site location). In addition, cycle parking in excess of policy requirements is proposed, with this amended to be located at ground floor level to ensure it is as convenient as possible for occupiers.

ix. Sustainability and Energy

- 7.50. Considering specific sustainability matters first, the submission includes a Sustainable Design and Construction Statement and BREEAM 2018 New Construction (Retail) Pre-Assessment – Shell Only report. When additional information was submitted in July 2023, a BREEAM 2018 New Construction (Retail) Pre-Assessment – Shell & Core report was included. This has all been assessed by Hoare Lea on behalf of officers, as summarised at paragraphs 5.62 – 5.64 above. It is noted that both Hoare Lea's initial and follow-up reviews raised some outstanding points of detail which required input from the applicant. A number of these were relatively minor technical points, but most substantially, neither of the two separate BREEAM pre-assessments (one relating to the building 'shell' only and the other 'shell and core' only) is targeting to adhere to the policy requirement of achieving BREEAM Excellent. Subsequent to Hoare Lea's review, the applicant has submitted further information to explain that this is primarily owing to the shell / shell and core stages the pre-assessments have been based on, whereby the number of credits available is fewer than in fully fitted BREEAM assessments. In-turn that means a larger proportion of credits need to be targeted to achieve an Excellent rating, with that inherently more difficult to commit to based on a shell only assessment.
- 7.51. Therefore, whilst officers are naturally disappointed that the pre-assessment is not achieving the required BREEAM Excellent rating at this initial juncture, with this being a shortcoming of the submission, this is partly a consequence of the shell/ shell & core basis for the pre-assessments submitted. Officers anticipate that at the design and post-construction stages there is likely to be greater scope for an BREEAM Excellent rating to be achieved, with a full set of credits available to be targeted and these details required to be submitted / approved via the two standard conditions applied to proposals of this nature. Accordingly, these two conditions are recommended, with the required rating being BREEAM Excellent, as per the policy requirement for non-residential proposals including in excess of 1000sqm of floorspace such as this.
- 7.52. In terms of energy matters, the applicant has submitted an Energy Strategy, with a revised version of the document received during the application following initial concerns being raised by the Council's consultant, Hoare Lea (see paragraphs 5.62 – 5.64 above). The revised strategy stipulates that a headline 38.4% reduction in carbon emissions will be achieved, which is significantly short of the Policy H5 (Standards of New Housing) aspiration for all major new-build housing to be designed to achieve zero carbon, but exceeds the minimum 35% improvement in the dwelling emission rate over the target emission rate (as defined in the 2013 Building Regulations) referenced in the supporting text to Policy H5. This is achieved through a variety of measures, following the standard hierarchy, including the consideration and inclusion of decentralised energy options. More specifically, in this instance air source heat pumps (ASHP) have been preferred to ground source heat pumps (GSHP) on cost grounds and for practical reasons, with the applicant stating that the spatial constraints of the site mean GSHP would not be able to fulfil the energy demands of the number of residential units proposed. Instead, a combination of ASHP and a significant array of rooftop photovoltaics will make a valuable contribution to the overall carbon savings proposed at the site. It is acknowledged that Hoare Lea's second review continued to raise a series of unresolved matters, but subsequent information provided, although fairly limited in nature, provides sufficient assurance to officers (without the need for further input from Hoare Lea) that in overall terms the

applicant has demonstrated that the proposals make sufficient carbon savings to adhere to the thrust of all relevant policies, including CC4 (Decentralised Energy).

- 7.53. In practice, given the scheme is not seeking to achieve zero carbon, the two standard energy conditions are recommended. First, a 'design stage' Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) assessment is required to demonstrate that the minimum 35% improvement (as presently envisaged) continues to be achieved. This is then supplemented by the second condition, which secures the 'as built' SAP assessment, to essentially evidence what has been demonstrated in the 'design stage' assessment is achieved.
- 7.54. These conditions connect into the carbon offset financial contribution, as required to be secured via S106 Legal Agreement. The exact details of the SAP assessments will ascertain the final carbon savings, which will then formulate the precise financial contribution required (as per the Sustainable Design and Construction SPD). Accordingly, it is not appropriate to specify any carbon offsetting financial contribution at this juncture. With the conditions and legal agreement obligation secured, the energy elements of the development will be policy compliant.

x. Other matters

Ecology

- 7.55. From an ecology perspective, as per the summarised GS Ecology comments at paragraphs 5.33 – 5.34 above, there are no objections to the scheme, subject to a condition securing details of the various biodiversity enhancements referenced (but not shown in full) by the applicant. For clarification, a full Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) calculation was not necessary in this case, as the current site comprises solely buildings and hardstanding with no wildlife value. The proposed rooftop landscaping will result in new planting, meaning there will be a marginal gain in habitat units at the site. In addition, the application was submitted prior to the mandatory BNG requirements being introduced earlier in 2024, although there are still requirements in this regard given Policy EN12 (Biodiversity and the Green Network) states that development should not result in a net loss of biodiversity. The enhancement details, as secured via condition, will ensure the policy requirements are met.

SuDS

- 7.56. The LLFA comments, summarised at paragraph 5.37 above, confirms that the principle of the drainage strategy is appropriate, with reduced (compared with existing) surface water run off rates proposed. The full details of the strategy will be secured via condition, as is typical in this regard.

Archaeology

- 7.57. As per comments summarised at paragraph 5.42 above, Berkshire Archaeology consider it necessary for a condition to secure a scheme of archaeological work. This will further assess the potential for survival of remains at the site and in-turn mitigate any harm resulting from the development.

Legal Agreement

- 7.58. A number of the matters already discussed in this assessment will be secured in full via the S106 Legal Agreement, such as securing the 70 market residential units as Build to Rent properties, securing 33 Affordable Private Rent Housing units and all the associated matters in those regards (including if the site is extended/alterd to create further residential units), and the Zero Carbon Offset financial contribution. In addition, the scheme is also required to secure a construction and end user stage Employment and Skills Plan (ESP), with this being secured via legal agreement too. The REDA consultation response, summarised at paragraph 5.41 above, sets out the context for this requirement. Furthermore, the legal agreement will also be subject to the usual monitoring costs, terms and conditions and indexation rates.

- 7.59. It is considered that each and every obligation, as also summarised at the outset of this report, would comply with the National Planning Policy Framework and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) in that they would be: i) necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms, ii) directly related to the development and iii) fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development, as set out in the National Planning Practice Guidance. The Heads of Terms have been agreed with the applicant and a Legal Agreement is in the process of being prepared to secure these matters.

Pre-commencement conditions

- 7.60. In line with section 100ZA(5) of the Town and Country Planning Act the wording of the recommended pre-commencement conditions have been agreed with the applicant prior to the determination of the application. These relate to 1) Demolition and Construction Method Statement, 2) Archaeology; 3) Contaminated Land Assessment; 4) Contaminated Land Remediation Scheme; 5) Biodiversity Enhancements; 6) Arboricultural Method Statement. Emails from the case officer to the applicant on 01/08/2024 and 20/08/2024 detailed the conditions in full, with the applicant agreeing to these via return email on 11/08/2024 and 20/08/2024.

8. Equality implications

- 8.1. Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to—
- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 8.2. The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation. It is considered that there is no indication or evidence that the protected groups have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular application

9. Conclusion & planning balance

- 9.1 As with all applications considered by the Local Planning Authority, the application is required to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise, as per Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
- 9.2 In this case the harmful impacts of the proposals need to be weighed against the benefits. On the basis of the assessment above harmful impacts firstly comprise instances of overlooking and loss of privacy at close distances between Plots E (Ebb) and F (Flow) of the recently constructed Station Hill development and the proposed scheme. Secondly, there will be reductions in outlook and instances of visual dominance and overbearing caused by the proposed development for existing nearby occupiers. Thirdly, there are a number of instances where the proposed development would result in a reduction of daylight and sunlight, with the impacts being major adverse on many occupiers of Plots E and F. Fourthly, the first floor terrace is compromised in terms of access to sunlight, which reduces the quality of accommodation to some degree for future occupiers. Finally, it is disappointing that the BREEAM Pre-assessment for the proposed non-residential uses is not achieving the required BREEAM Excellent rating.
- 9.3 The harmful impacts of the proposed development are required to be weighed with the benefits of the proposals. It is considered that the proposals would contribute towards providing a high-density mix of uses as Policy CR11 (Station/River Major Opportunity Area) requires. More specifically, the policy promotes mixed-use redevelopment, to include ground floor retail and leisure uses (which the proposed Class E uses could

deliver), and the provision of residential on the upper floors is part of the mix the policy promotes.

- 9.4 The proposed 103 residential units would make a substantial contribution to the Council's annual housing targets, while the provision of 32.04% on-site affordable housing, in excess of the policy requirement, is a key tangible benefit of the scheme. The provision of this affordable housing makes the proposal an exemplar scheme in terms of the form, nature and amount of affordable housing in the Borough. Securing slightly in excess of the 30% policy requirement is necessary and required in this particular case to offset some of the harmful impacts of the development mentioned above, assisting in balancing the assessment of the proposals in support of the officer recommendation.
- 9.5 This proposed build to rent scheme has also been shown to accord in full with all of the requirements of the relevant policy (Policy H4 – Build to rent schemes), with this being secured via legal agreement, and considered another welcomed benefit of the scheme. Furthermore, the scheme provides a suitable mix of unit sizes, with the provision in excess of the guidance 5% 3-bed family units. The proposals also exceed the policy requirements in terms of the provision of wheelchair user dwellings and provide almost double the minimum number of required cycle parking spaces for future residential occupiers, meaning an overall good standard of accommodation is proposed.
- 9.6 In addition to the residential component, three active ground floor units are proposed, adding to the vitality and viability of the town centre through a variety of possible town centre uses (Class E a-f). This signifies a marked improvement in comparison with the currently blank boundary on Friars Walk.
- 9.7 From design and heritage perspectives, the layout, scale and massing is considered to be justified by responding positively to the local context and complimenting, whilst not competing with the neighbouring Plots E and F at the Station Hill development. A high quality appearance is achieved through a variety of detailing features, which reinforce both the historic and contemporary character of the immediate area, assisting the legibility of the future route between Friars Walk and Reading Station. The design is therefore considered to be a welcomed addition to both Friar Street and the wider area in the long term, whilst simultaneously not impacting on any nearby designated heritage assets.
- 9.8 In summary, the combined benefits of the proposals means in overall terms the development meets the NPPF objective of achieving sustainable development.
- 9.9 Ultimately, when weighing up the benefits and harmful impacts of the proposals, officers consider that the cumulative benefits in overall terms outweigh all shortfalls both individually and collectively, when balancing the competing factors. Given the extent of the harmful impacts in this instance, securing the provision of an on-site affordable housing provision slightly in excess of the policy requirement is considered to be justified. As such, officers advise that the conflicts with the development plan are considered to be outweighed by the benefits of the proposals in this specific instance. It is considered that officers have applied a suitable planning balance when reaching this conclusion.
- 9.10 Accordingly, in overall terms the proposals are considered to be acceptable within the context of national and local planning policies, as detailed in the appraisal above. Therefore, full planning permission is recommended for approval, subject to the conditions and completion of a S106 Legal Agreement, the Heads of Terms for which are summarised at the outset of this report.

Appendix 1 - List of the plans and information submitted and considered

Plans (only the latest version of plans are referenced)

0083-A-01-LB02-098 Rev P7 - Existing Basement Level -2 Plan
0083-A-01-LB01-099 Rev P7 - Existing Basement Level -1 Plan
0083-A-01-L00-100 Rev P7 - Existing Ground Floor Plan
0083-A-01-L01-101 Rev P7 - Existing First Floor Plan
0083-A-01-L02-102 Rev P7 - Existing Second Floor Plan
0083-A-01-L03-103 Rev P7 - Existing Third Floor Plan
0083-A-01-L04-104 Rev P7 - Existing Roof Plan
0083-A-01-LXX-200 Rev P7 - Existing Section AA
0083-A-01-LXX-201 Rev P7 - Existing Section BB
0083-A-01-LXX-202 Rev P7 - Existing Section CC
0083-A-01-LXX-300 Rev P7 - Existing South Elevation
0083-A-01-LXX-301 Rev P7 - Existing West Elevation
0083-A-01-LXX-302 Rev P7 - Existing East Elevation
0083-A-01-LXX-303 Rev P7 - Existing North Elevation
0083-A-03-L08-108 Rev P7 - Proposed 8th Floor Plan
0083-A-03-L09-109 Rev P7 - Proposed 9th Floor Plan
0083-A-03-L10-110 Rev P7 - Proposed 10th Floor Plan
0083-A-03-LRF-114 Rev P7 - Proposed Roof Plan
0083-A-03-LB02-097 Rev P7 - Existing and Proposed Yard
0083-A-04-LXX-000 Rev P7 - Proposed Site Section A-A
0083-A-04-LXX-001 Rev P7 - Proposed Section A-A
0083-A-04-LXX-002 Rev P7 - Proposed Section B-B
0083-A-04-LXX-003 Rev P7 - Proposed Section C-C
0083-A-04-LXX-004 Rev P6 - Proposed Site Section D-D (wider site section)
0083-A-04-LXX-004 Rev P7 - Proposed Site Section D-D
0083-A-04-LXX-006 Rev P7 – Proposed Sections_Inset Balconies
0083-A-04-LXX-008 Rev P7 – Existing & Proposed Section G-G
0083-A-04-LXX-008 Rev P7 – Proposed Section G-G
0083-A-04-LXX-200 Rev P7 – Proposed Roof Landscape Section
0083-A-05-LXX-001 Rev P7 - Proposed South Elevation
0083-A-05-LXX-002 Rev P7 - Proposed West Elevation
0083-A-05-LXX-003 Rev P7 - Proposed East Elevation
0083-A-05-LXX-004 Rev P7 - Proposed North Elevation
0083-A-05-LXX-005 Rev P7 - Proposed West Elevation
As received 03/07/2023

0083-A-05-LXX-101 Rev P7 - Proposed Long South Elevation
0083-A-05-LXX-102 Rev P7 - Proposed Long West Elevation
0083-A-05-LXX-103 Rev P7 - Proposed Long East Elevation
0083-A-05-LXX-104 Rev P7 - Proposed Long North Elevation
As received 05/07/2023

0083-A-00-LXX-100 Rev P8 - Site Location Plan
0083-A-00-LXX-101 Rev P8 - Site Plan
0083-A-00-LXX-102 Rev P8 - Site Context Plan
0083-A-03-L02-102 Rev P8 - Proposed 2nd Floor
0083-A-03-L03-103 Rev P8 - Proposed 3rd Floor
0083-A-03-L04-104 Rev P8 - Proposed 4th Floor
0083-A-03-L05-105 Rev P8 - Proposed 5th Floor
0083-A-03-L06-106 Rev P8 - Proposed 6th Floor
0083-A-03-L07-107 Rev P8 - Proposed 7th Floor
0083-A-03-LB02-098 Rev P8 - Proposed Basement Level
As received 03/04/2024

0083-A-03-LXX-400_Proposed Tenure Mix and CIL Area Plans
As received 22/05/2024

0083-A-01-L00-100 Rev P10 - Existing Ground Floor Plan
0083-A-03-L00-100 Rev P10 - Proposed Ground Floor
0083-A-03-L01-101 Rev P10 - Proposed 1st Floor Plan
As received 11/08/2024

Other plans and documents submitted (only the latest version of documents are referenced):

Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment by RPS Ref JAC27861 dated 09/06/2022
Utilities Statement by CPW Rev A dated 11/03/2022
BREEAM 2018 New Construction Pre-Assessment Report by CPW Rev A dated 11/05/2022
Letter from Lichfields '35-39 Friar Street, Reading, RG1 1DX: Full Planning Application' Ref 63105/01/DW/SWts/ dated 23/06/2022
Daylight and Sunlight Report by Delva Patman Redler LLP Ref 21384 Version 3.0 dated 07/06/2022
Biodiversity Assessment (BREEAM Compliant) by Greengage Ref 551984JB16FEB22FV01.Eco dated May 2022
Draft Fire Statement form by Basheer Youssef dated 06/06/2022
Phase 1 Desk Study 35-39 Friar Street – Reading (Contaminated Land) by Lustre Consulting Ref R18-PH1-01/0_4263 dated February 2022
Statement of Community Involvement by Cratus dated June 2022
Sustainable Design and Construction Statement by CPW Rev C dated 09/06/2022
Townscape & Heritage Visual Impact Assessment by KM Heritage dated May 2022
Transport Statement By Evoke Transport Ref R-21-0075-02 dated 09/06/2022
Residential Travel Plan By Evoke Transport Ref R-21-0075-03 dated 09/06/2022
MBS20730-T-01 - Topography
MBS20730-T-02 - Topography
MBS20730-B2 – Basement 2
MBS20730-B1 – Basement 1
MBS20730-FPG – Ground Floor (x2)
MBS20730-FP1 – First Floor
MBS20730-FP2 – Second Floor
MBS20730-FP3 – Third Floor
MBS20730-R – Roof (x2)
MBS20730-E-1 – Elevation 1
MBS20730-E-2 – Elevation 2
MBS20730-E-3 – Elevation 3
MBS20730-XS-1 – Section A-A
MBS20730-XS-2 – Section B-B
MBS20730-XS-3 – Section C-C
As received 27/06/2022

35-39 Friar Street Reading Design and Access Rev P4 by Stefan Shaw Studio dated 20/09/2022
Planning Statement (including affordable housing and open space matters) by Lichfields dated June 2022
Existing Area Schedule 35-39 Friar Street Ref 12/08/2022 by Stefan Shaw Studio dated 12/08/2022
As received 22/09/2022

Air Quality Assessment by GEM Air Quality Ltd Ref AQ2058, dated March 2022
Application form
Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) - Form 1: CIL Additional Information
Flood Risk Assessment & Drainage Strategy (including SUDS) by JM Enviro Limited Ref JME253.FriarStreet.FRA_RevA dated 10/05/2023
Shaviram Plan Station Hill Phase 1 by LDA Design dated February 2023
Environmental Noise Survey and Acoustic Design Statement Report by Hann Tucker Associates Ref 29244/ADS1 Rev 3 dated 24/05/2023

Acoustic Performance for Large Attenuated Unit by TEK Ltd
Acoustic Performance for Small Attenuated Unit by TEK Ltd
Photographs of 1) window and louvre 2) Inside of a room (associated with noise based information submitted)
Wall Attenuator Unit Glazed-In Example (Natural Ventilation)
General Arrangement Wall Attenuator Unit (Natural Ventilation)
Letter by Delva Patman Redler '35-39 FRIAR STREET, READING: Daylight, sunlight and overshadowing' Ref 21384/CH dated 28/04/2023
Energy Statement by CPW LLP Ref 210771 Rev D dated 11/05/2022
Wind Microclimate Peer Review Responses by RWDI Ref 2200857 dated 06/12/2022
Transport Statement Addendum By Evoke Transport Ref R-21-0075-TAA-04 dated May 2023
35-39 Friar Street Reading Design and Access Addendum June 2023 by Stefan Shaw Studio
1030 Friar Street Planning Comments & Response Matrix, dated 25/05/2023 by Elmsbrook
As received 03/07/2023

0083-A-01-L00-401 Rev P3 - Existing CIL Area Plans
Pedestrian Level Wind Microclimate Assessment Final Report by RWDI Ref 2200857 dated 23/06/2023
As received 04/07/2023

General Arrangement Wall Attenuator Unit
Photo ref AX9A0180
As received 23/02/2024

ST_003 Key Window Locations Plan View First-Fourth Floor Layouts
Daylight Sunlight Self-test – Ref SR_2023.04.13 BY Delva Patman Redler
Email from Elmsbrook '35-39 Friar St, Reading (220933) - Comment Response Matrix - Daylight Sunlight'
1030 Friar St Planning Comments & Response Matrix, dated 24/02/2023 by Elmsbrook
As received 14/03/2024

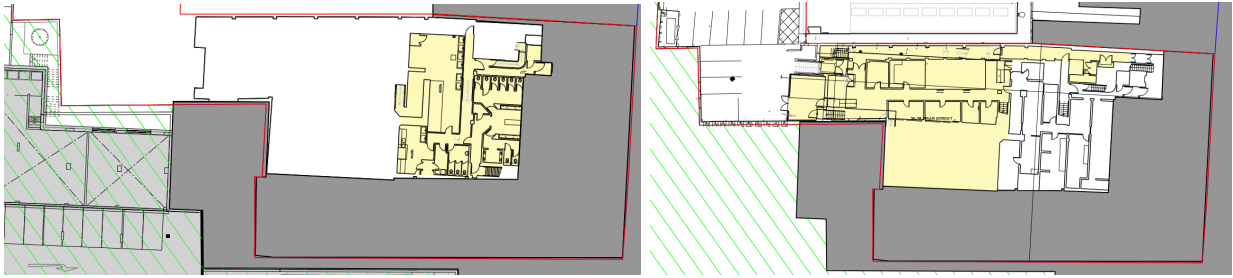
R-21-0075-001-Rev F – Refuse Vehicle Swept Path Analysis
35-39 Friar St_Cycle Parking Numbers Summary
35-39 Friar Street Reading Design Update April 2024 by Stefan Shaw Studio
1030 Friar St Planning Comments & Response Matrix_Rev E, dated 12/01/2024 by Elmsbrook
As received 03/04/2024

Friar Street Breeam by CPW dated 07/05/2024
As received 10/05/2024

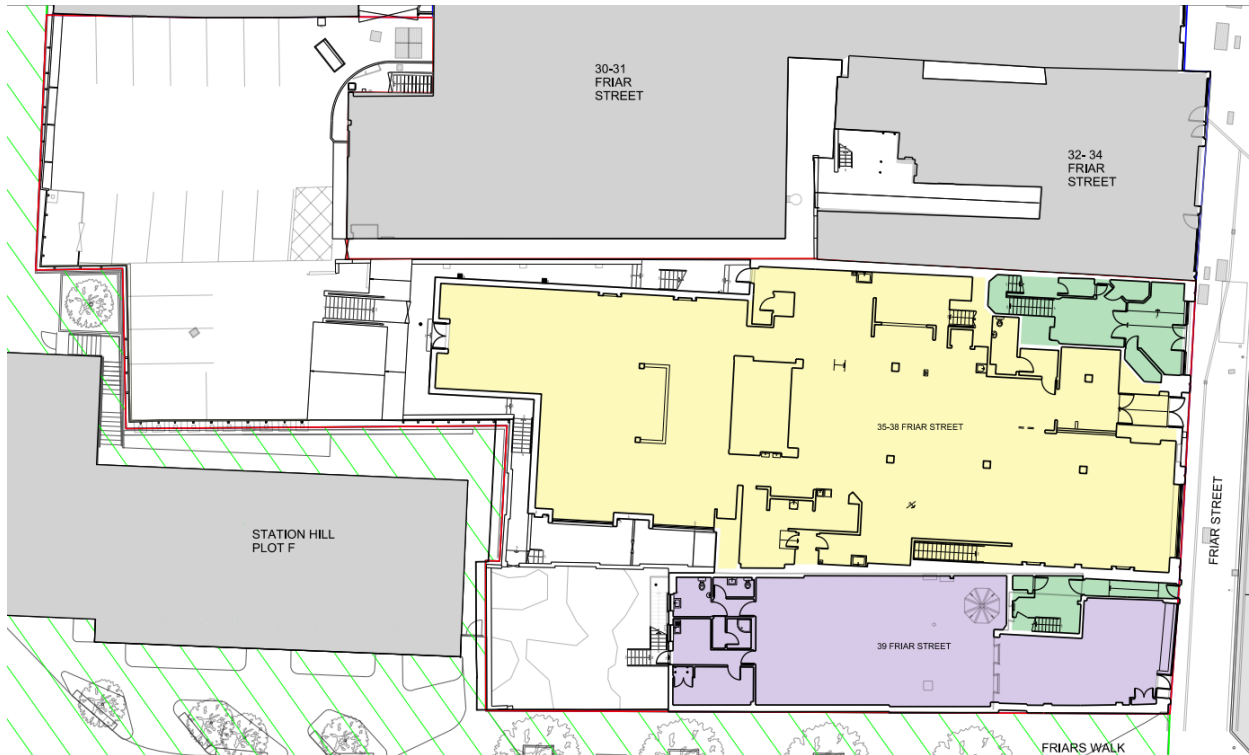
35-39 Friar Street, Reading: Daylight and Sunlight Addendum by Delva Patman Redler, Ref 21384/CH, dated 02/07/2024
As received 03/07/2024

Email from Elmsbrook '35-39 Friar St, Reading (220933)'
Acoustic and Air Quality Mitigation by Stefan Shaw Studio dated August 2024
Tree Protection Options & Arboricultural Method Statement Rev_ 'Friar Street, Friar Walk Planter; by Neil Tully Associates, dated August 2024
D01030_001 - Tree Survey & Constraints Plan
D01030_002 - Tree Protection Plan Proposed Development
D01030_003_ - Tree Protection Details Proposed Development
As all received on 11/08/2024

Other Plans

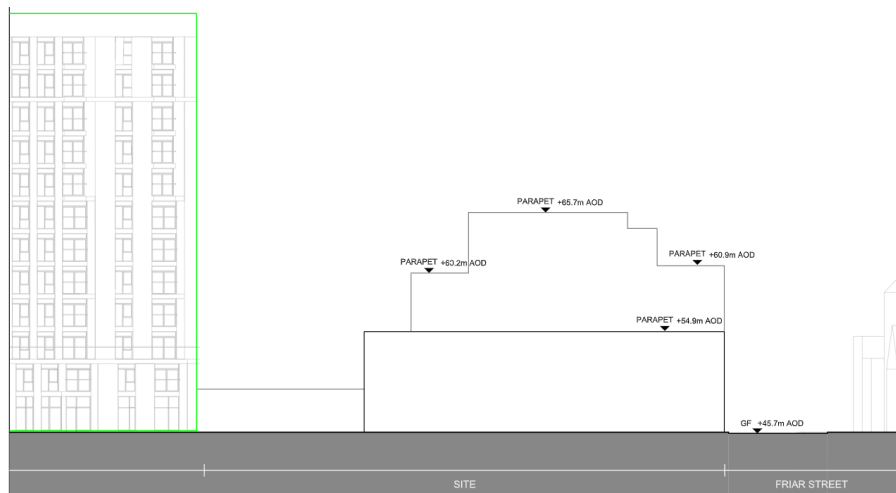
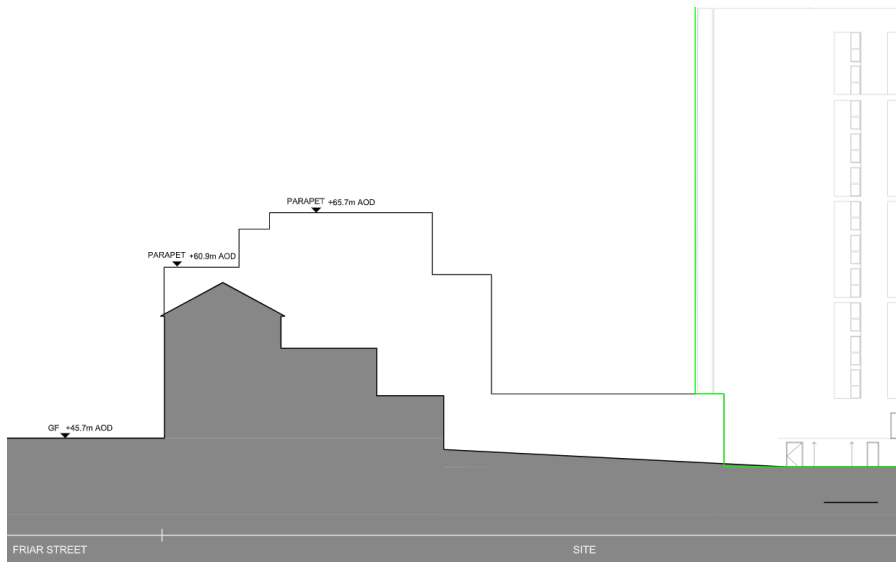
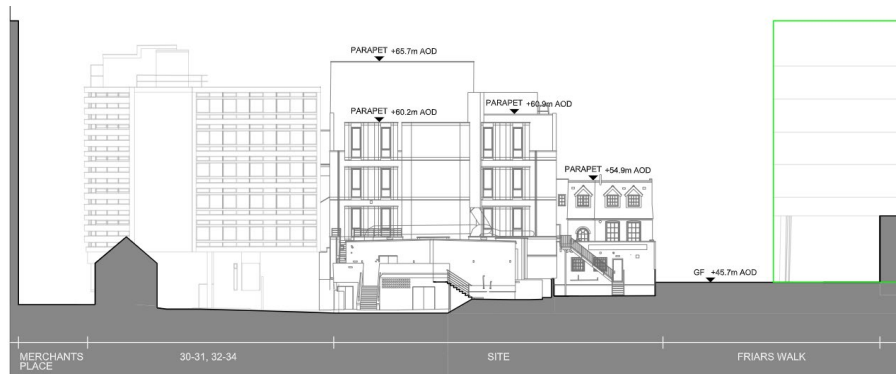


Above: Existing basement floor plans at 35-38 Friar Street



Existing Ground Floor Plan above and upper floors (1st-3rd & roof) below, as received 03/07/2023





Existing elevations (north, east, south and west)



Proposed 2nd floor plan, as received 03/04/24



Proposed 3rd floor plan, as received 03/04/24



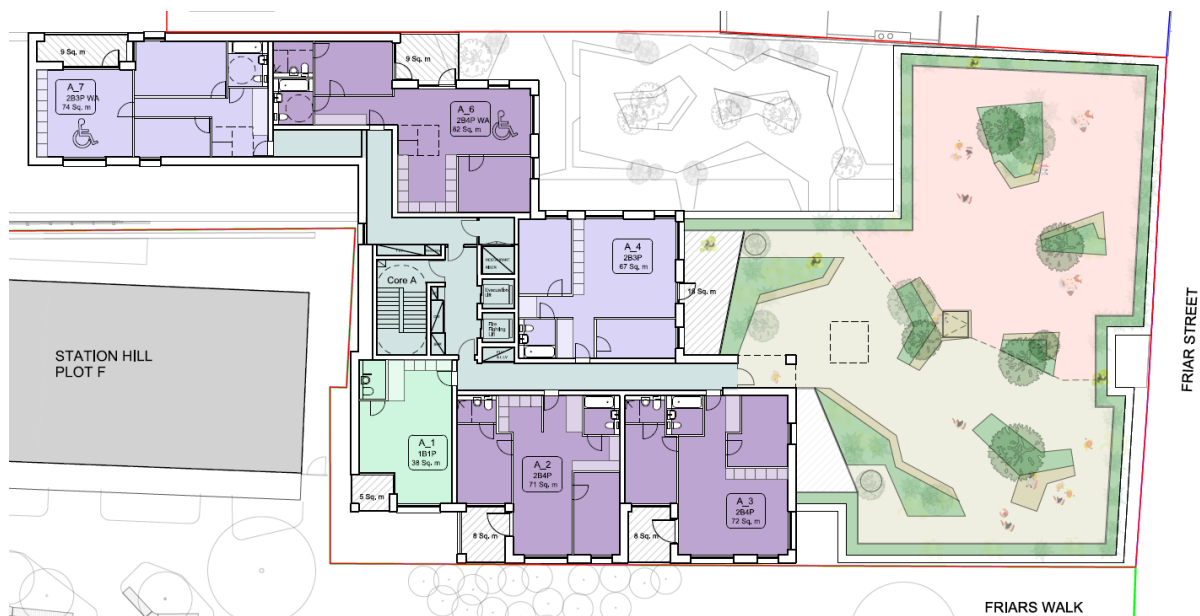
Proposed 4th floor plan, as received 03/04/24



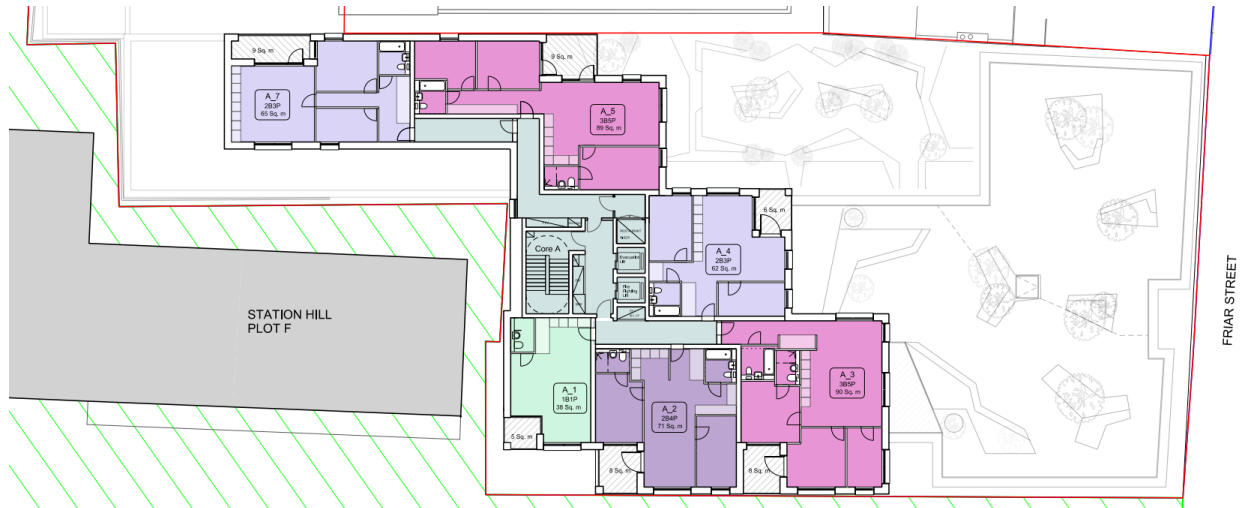
Proposed 5th floor plan, as received 03/04/24



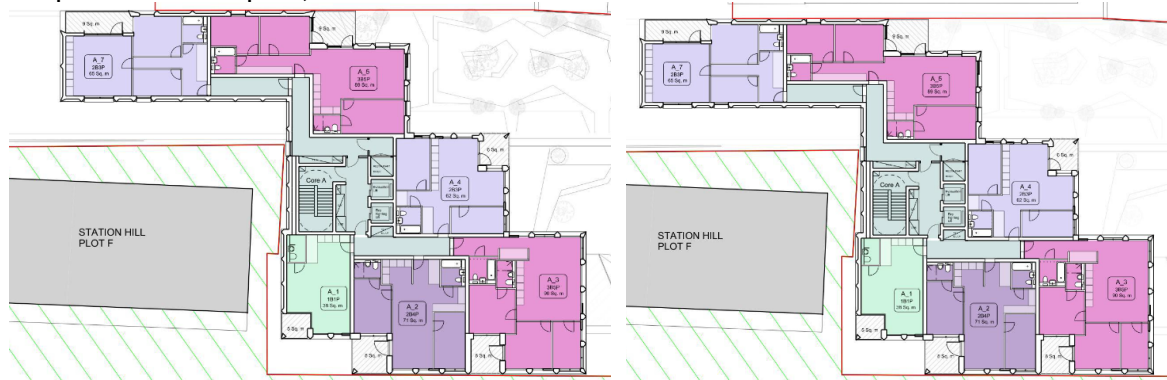
Proposed 6th floor plan, as received 03/04/24



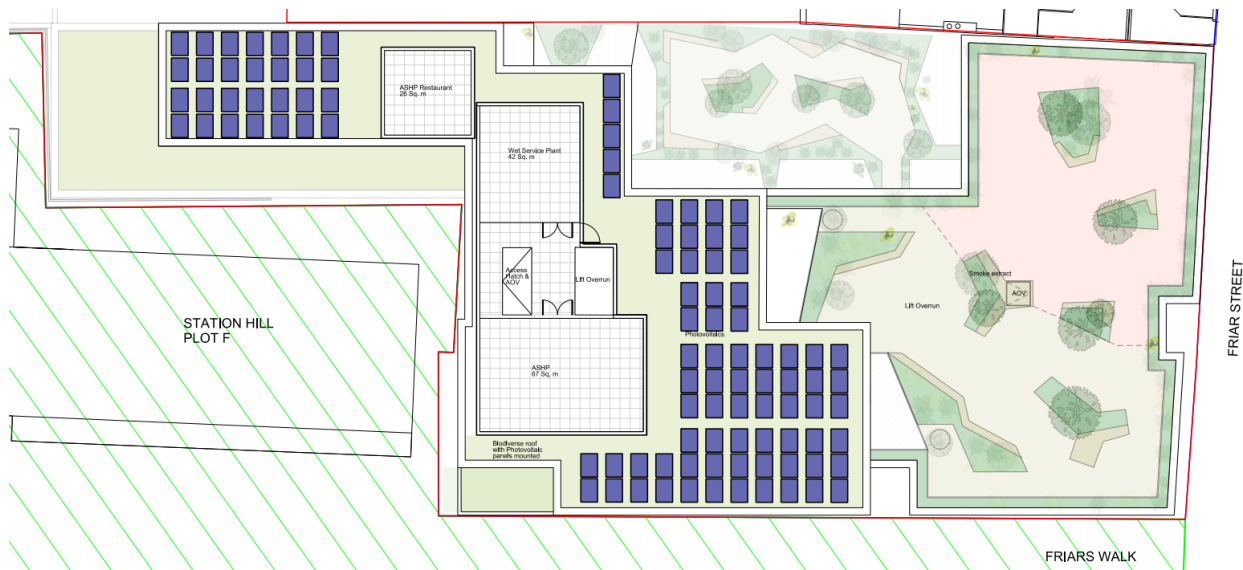
Proposed 7th floor plan, as received 03/04/24



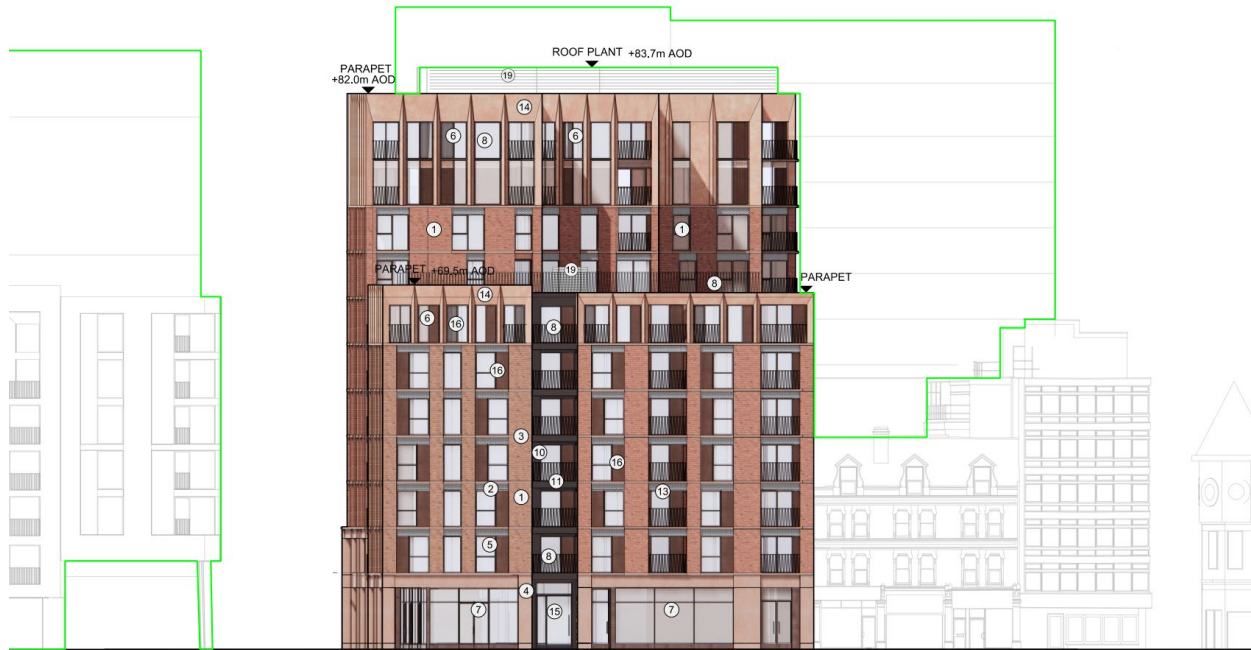
Proposed 8th floor plan, as received 03/07/23



Proposed 9th and 10th floor plans, as received 03/07/23



Proposed roof plan, as received 03/07/23



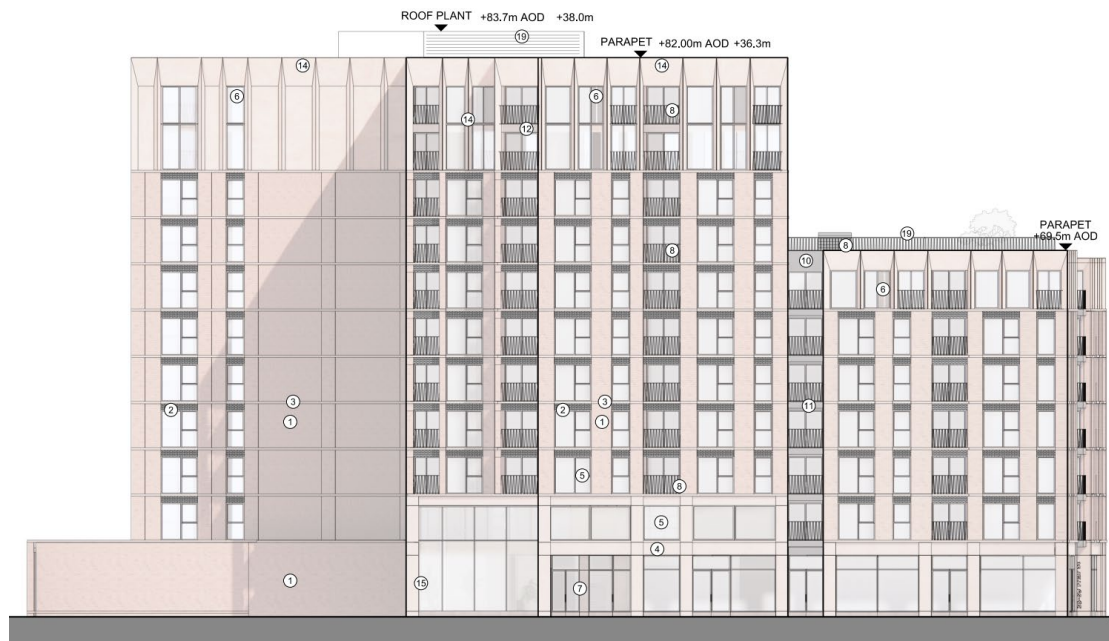
Proposed south (above) and west with Station Hill Plot F (below) and details of materials

Key

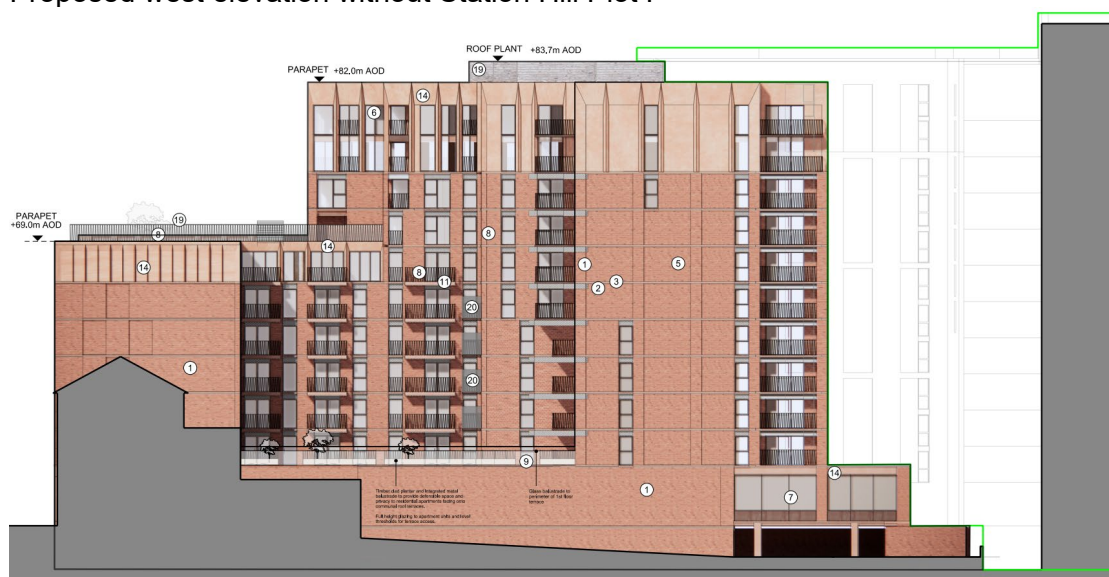
1. Textured red brick
2. Sawtooth blue brick slips
3. Concrete effect banding with coloured pigment
4. Textured concrete effect with coloured pigment
5. Anodised aluminium opening
6. Anodised aluminium opening with integrated mesh panel
7. Anodised aluminium curtain walling system
8. Metal balustrade
9. Glass balustrade
10. Dark anodised aluminium cladding
11. Balcony - dark metal fascia & soffit
12. Balcony - GRC effect fascia & soffit to match concrete effect banding (3)
13. Balcony - Sawtooth blue brick slip fascia & GRC effect soffit
14. Texture concrete/ GRC effect cladding to match concrete effect banding (3)
15. Dark textured anodised aluminium framed residential entrance
16. Anodised aluminium opening with integrated acoustic ventilation panel
17. Louvred bronze coloured metal door
18. Bronzed coloured metal gate
19. Metal louvred plant screen

- Site Boundary
- Land within applicant ownership
- Station hill development
Currently under construction
Planning ref: 192032

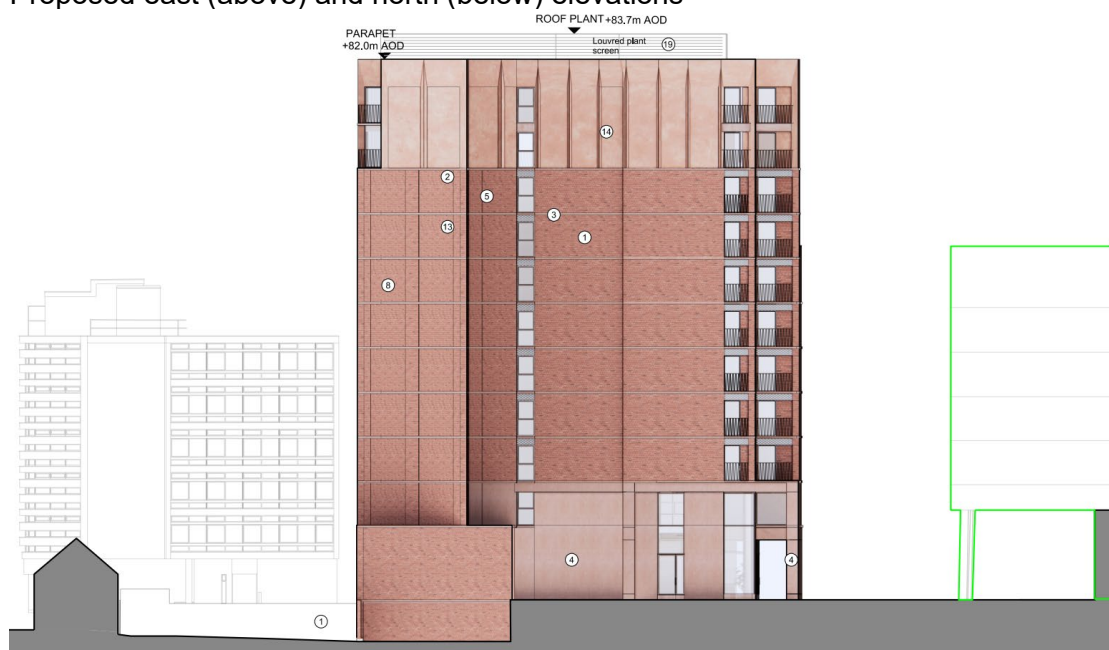


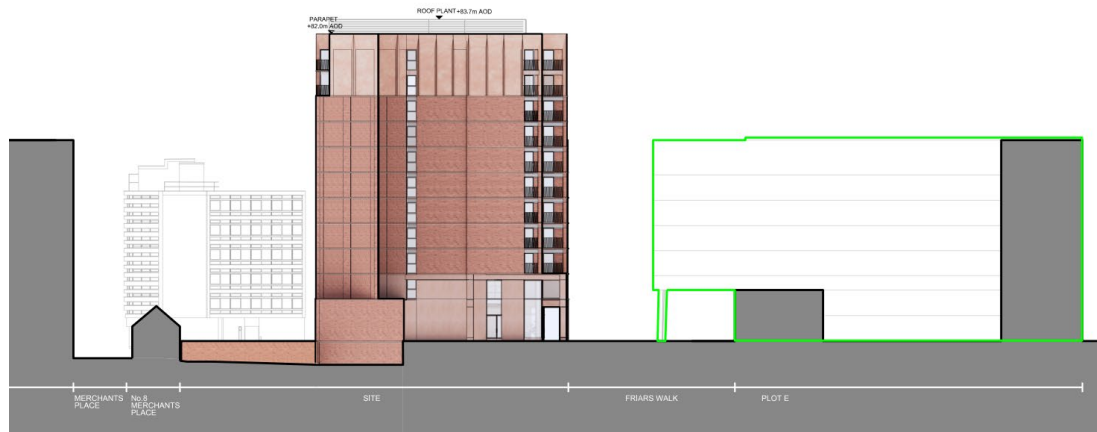


Proposed west elevation without Station Hill Plot F

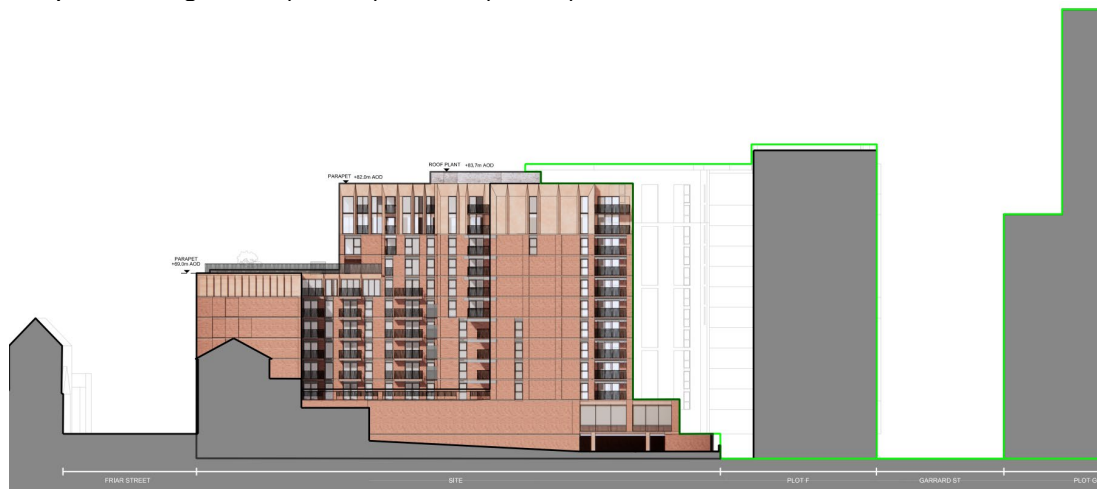


Proposed east (above) and north (below) elevations



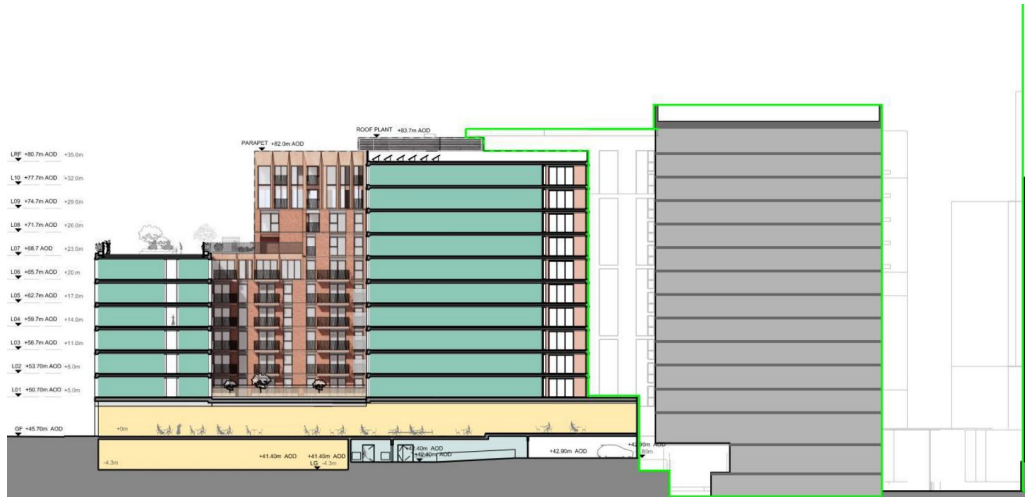


Proposed long north (above) & east (below) elevations, as received 05/07/2023



Proposed long south (above) & west (below) elevations, as received 05/07/2023





Proposed sections above and below



2.5 MATERIALITY

2.5.2 Upper Floors

The proposal differentiates the uppermost levels to give the top of the massing a light 'lantern' type articulation. This helps to break down the overall massing into a tripartite composition of top, middle and bottom. Such articulation can be seen in much of Reading's Historic architecture, where the tops of buildings are celebrated with expressive delicate forms.

The proposed 'lantern' levels are characterised with angled fins of a textured red/orange concrete effect cladding that offer relief to the facade.

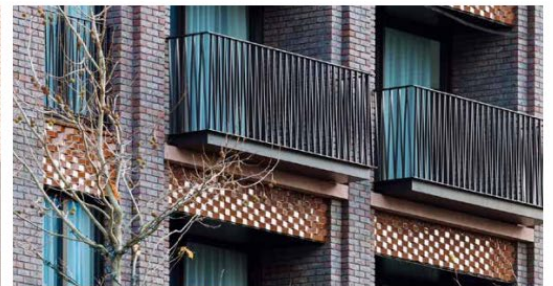


Tripartite composition with an expressive top, middle and bottom at 158 Friar Street

1. Red/ orange textured multi brick
2. Grey/ blue sawtooth brick fascia
3. Textured concrete effect with exposed aggregate
4. Bronze coloured metal framing to glazing



1. Textured red concrete banding with texture red brick (Image Duggan Morris)



2. Sawtooth brickwork (image Macreanor Lavington)