

CONTRIBUTION OF SETTING TO SIGNIFICANCE

- 5.30 The immediate church yard setting of the church contributes to its historic interest in illustrating the historic function and spatial relationship of the parish church with the surrounding settlement and the vicarage to the south. The Church Hall, which is identified as a Building of Townscape Merit within the Market Place and London Street CAA, further contributes to an understanding of this relationship and the function of the church.
- 5.31 Within the church yard there are a number of tombs, which contribute to the historic and architectural special interest the church. The church yard is planted with mature trees which shields the church from modern development to the north and east and creates an enclosed atmosphere.
- 5.32 Outside of the churchyard, and with the exception of the vicarage and Village Hall, the wider historic setting of the church has largely been eroded. The vicarage itself has a private setting, positioned within walled gardens. Little of the architectural detailing is visible from Church Street and the dwelling is best appreciated from within the walled gardens. There is no visual relationship between the vicarage and the Site.
- 5.33 The church spire is a prominent feature in the locality and in longer distance views from the south and north. Local Plan View 2 looks north from Whitley Street and encompasses St Giles Church, Reading Minster and Greyfriars Church as a trio of important ecclesiastical sites. The CAA identifies an important framed view of the church and spire, looking west on Church Street with historic residences in the foreground. The CAA does not identify other significant views of the spire from elsewhere within the CA, nevertheless the Spire is prominent in views from the north, on the boundary between Sub Areas 1 and 3.
- 5.34 To the west of the church, the A327 negatively impacts the understanding of the historic and architectural interest of the church. Views of the church from the south are obscured by overhead road signage that spans the A327. The west side of the church yard is not planted with trees which preserves views of the church on a principal route to the town centre; however, the vehicular traffic and busy streetscape of this road detracts from the seclusion of the churchyard. The presence of this busy, noisy road in the church’s immediate setting reinforces the church’s proximity to the urban centre of Reading.



Figure 5.10 Church of St Giles and St Giles Hall



Figure 5.11 Church of St Giles churchyard



Figure 5.12 Road signage in front of the Church of St Giles

- 5.35 To the west of the church, on the opposing side of the A327 there is modern development which contrasts poorly with the historic character of the church. In views looking north along the A327, the taller scale development of the town centre is discernible and the proximity of the church to the intensely urbanised centre of Reading.
- 5.36 The Site is located to the northeast of the churchyard. The Site is visible in glimpsed views from within the church yard; however, it is largely screened by mature vegetation and has no visual relationship with the church itself. The materiality of the current buildings on Site contrast to the historic fabric of the church.

26, SOUTHAMPTON STREET (GRADE II), AND 28, SOUTHAMPTON STREET (GRADE II) – MAP REFS 42 AND 43

- 5.37Nos. 26 and 28 Southampton Street are located approximately 115m to the west of the Site.
- 5.38No. 26 was constructed in the early 19th century and is two and a half storeys. The northern portion of the building is original, constructed with grey brick laid in header bond and a mansard roof with dormer. No. 28 was constructed in the 20th century and designed to appear of 17th century construction. It is a two–storey building with a timber framing, jetty and brick noggin to the first floor.
- 5.39Nos. 26 and 28 form an attractive pair of buildings, deriving architectural interest from their vernacular style and illustrating early 19th century architecture in Reading.

CONTRIBUTION OF SETTING TO SIGNIFICANCE

- 5.40The immediate setting of the buildings detracts from their architectural and historical interest. The original setting of the building on what was historically the principal route into the medieval settlement from the south, has been entirely eroded through 20th and 21st century infrastructure and large–scale developments. The buildings have a setting relationship with St Giles Church and other listed buildings to the south, however, the heritage assets are separated by the busy A327 and infill development.
- 5.41There is no spatial or visual relationship between the Site and the listed buildings.
- 63 SOUTHAMPTON STREET AND 50 CROWN STREET – MAP REF 40
- 5.42The listed building is located approximately 185m to the south of the Site.
- 5.4363 Southampton Street is a two–storey building dating from the early 18th century. Formerly a terrace of modest town houses, the buildings have been amalgamated to form one building, perhaps during its conversion to a pub. The buildings are red brick, one with grey brick headers which are distinctive of Reading. 50 Crown Street is joined to the south and occupies a corner plot where Southampton Street and Crown Street meet. This building has a curved façade and dates from the 19th century.
- 5.44The architectural and historic interest of these buildings derives from their vernacular style and as an illustration of local building materials and practices in the 18th and 19th centuries.

CONTRIBUTION OF SETTING TO SIGNIFICANCE

- 5.45The listed buildings are situated on a busy vehicular junction, which forms their immediate setting. To the north, east and west there are other historic townhouses dating from the 18th and 19th centuries. To the north, the spire of the Church of St Giles is prominent. Together, these buildings signify the development of the market town during this time. The setting of the building therefore contributes positively to an understanding of the buildings interest.
- 5.46There is no intervisibility between the listed buildings and the Site.
- 92-96 SOUTHAMPTON STREET, AND ROSE COTTAGE, AND 106 SOUTHAMPTON STREET – MAP REF 64, 70 AND 75
- 5.47This group of buildings on the west side of Southampton Street are located approximately 230m to the south of the Site.
- 5.4892–96 Southampton Street are a set of three early 19th century townhouses, constructed in red brick with gauged brick work to the windows and doorway. The townhouses are three storeys over basement and the uniform in appearance.
- 5.49Rose Cottage, 98 and 100 Southampton Street, are a pair of terraced, two storey brick houses with tile roof, constructed in the 18th century. 106 Southampton Street is a three storey former townhouse constructed in the 19th century. The building is four bays of sash windows and has a double gable roof. At ground floor there is an infilled shop front, now residential.
- 5.50The buildings in this grouping have historic and architectural interest as an illustration of residential development in Reading in the 18th and 19th centuries.
- CONTRIBUTION OF SETTING TO SIGNIFICANCE
- 5.51The buildings have an important spatial and visual relationship, and together inform an understanding of the development of this area of Reading during this period. The buildings are set within a wider context of historic urban development, however there is modern infill in places. The immediate setting of the building is busy to vehicular traffic. There is an important visual relationship between the listed buildings and the spire of the Church of St Giles to the north, which helps to illustrate the special arrangement of the historic settlement.
- 5.52There is no intervisibility between the listed buildings and the Site.

QUEEN’S CRESCENT – MAP REF 67

- 5.53Queen’s Crescent, 24–52 Queen’s Crescent, is located approximately 205m to the east of the Site.
- 5.54The listed terrace comprises a series of uniform townhouses, constructed in the 1830s. The townhouses follow the curve of the road and are three storeys over basement. Formerly 15 individual houses, the terrace is constructed in Bath stone, with a channelled ground floor and parapet roofline. At ground floor, the windows are round headed and at first floor the central sash window of each house has a pediment.
- 5.55The terrace derives historic and architectural interest as a fine example of Georgian townhouses and planned residential layouts. The houses use imported Bath stone, which signifies the status of the house and changing building practices in Reading during the 19th century.

CONTRIBUTION OF SETTING TO SIGNIFICANCE

- 5.56The setting of the individual listed houses comprises the terrace and together the houses form a distinct grouping with important visual and spatial relationships. The wider setting of the terrace has been entirely eroded by modern infrastructure and development. The modern development which surrounds the terrace is of a greater scale and footprint than the fine grain historic terrace. The setting of the listed terrace makes no contribution to the special interest of the buildings.
- 5.57There is no intervisibility between the listed crescent and the Site.
- BUILDING NOW PART OF COURAGE’S BREWERY – MAP REF 68
- 5.58The building now part of Courage’s Brewery is located approximately 250m to the west of the Site. It dates to the early 19th century and is likely a former malthouse, it is constructed of red brick with timber boarding at its upper storeys.
- 5.59The building forms a group with the former Simmonds Malthouse (Grade II) as surviving elements of 19th century brewery buildings. Together these buildings are illustrative of the prominence of brewing as an industry within Reading. The industrial function of the two buildings is evident from their architectural form.

CONTRIBUTION OF SETTING TO SIGNIFICANCE	
5.60	The proximity of the building to the River Kennet contributes to an understanding of the buildings historic function and strategic location on this principal river route. Beyond this initial enclosed setting, the wider setting comprises a modern residential estate which bears no spatial or functional relationship to the former brewery building. The historic setting of former malthouse has been completely eroded.
5.61	Owing to the topography of this area of Reading and intervening development, notably the IDR, the Site is not visible in the wider setting of the listed building. The Site therefore makes no contribution to the setting and special interest of the former brewery building.
LISTED BUILDINGS ON SOUTH STREET AND SIDMOUTH STREET	
5.62	The heritage assets in this group are located approximately 265m to the east of the Site at the closest point. This group includes: • 43-49 South Street – Map Ref 77 • 3 and 5 Sidmouth Street – Map Ref 101 • 9 Sidmouth Street – Map Ref 102 • Wesley Methodist Church – Map Ref 138
5.63	The buildings in this grouping comprise historic residential buildings, dating from the mid to late 19th century, and the Wesley Methodist Church, completed in 1812. The residential buildings vary in style, with two storey terraced buildings faced in brick or stone, and an asymmetrical pair of three storey Vicarage-style houses with turrets. The Wesley Methodist Church is constructed in red brick with tiled roof, lancet windows and decorated tracery in the northern window. The listed church has a prominent spire, which together with the spire of St John’s, are distinct landmarks in this residential suburb of Reading.
5.64	The listed buildings in this group have architectural and historic interest as examples of residential and religious architecture throughout the 19th century. Together, the buildings help to illustrate domestic life in Reading during this period and display a variety of architectural styles.
CONTRIBUTION OF SETTING TO SIGNIFICANCE	
5.65	The listed buildings within this group share a spatial and visual relationship with one another, which illustrates the historic development of Reading.

	The setting of the listed buildings comprises other fine grain houses and churches, which contribute positively to an understanding of the listed buildings’ significance. Throughout the area there are examples of modern infill development and in places, views of large scale commercial and retail development.
5.66	There is no intervisibility between the listed crescent and the Site.
CONSERVATION AREAS	
LONDON STREET/ MARKET PLACE CONSERVATION AREA – MAP REF A	
5.67	The London Street/ Market Place CA was first designated in 1972 and extended in 1982. The CA is the subject of an Appraisal adopted by the Council in 2007. The CA extends from Crown Street to the south, to Garrard Street at its northernmost extent.
5.68	Prior to the 12th century, the principal route from London and elsewhere passed up what is now known as Southampton Street, towards the historic centre of the settlement at the Minster Church of St Mary the Virgin. After the founding of the Abbey in the 12th century, trade and travel was realigned with a new market outside the Abbey gates in the northeast of the settlement. By the 14th century, what is now known as London Street was the principal route in to Reading.
5.69	The CA signifies the historic mercantile and civic core of Reading. The CA boundary encapsulates the principal historic thoroughfare and the site of the market, outside the church of St Laurance.
5.70	The 2007 Appraisal further divides the CA into four sub-areas: <i>South of the IDR</i> • Area 1: London Street, south of the IDR; • Area 2: Church Street and environs of St Giles’ Church; <i>North of the IDR</i> • Area 3: Jackson’s Corner including King Street, London Street (north), Duke Street and the River Kennet; • Area 4: Market Place and environs of St Laurence’s Church and Town Hall including part of Blagrove Street and The Forbury

5.71	The north and south of the CA are divided by the IDR, which forms a physical barrier between the two parts. The special interest of the northern portion derives primarily from the Church of St Laurence, the Town Hall complex and the Market Place to the south. This area has medieval origins, and the morphological framework is still evident, complemented by the 19th century civic complex.
5.72	The southern portion of the CA illustrates the medieval development of Reading as a market town, and there are several designated buildings of special architectural interest including the Church of St Giles to the west. The 16th to 18th century townhouses that line London Street are typical of ribbon development in market towns, with narrow and architecturally varied street frontages.
5.73	There is a history separation between the north and south parts of the CA, established by the natural course of the River Kennet and, from the late 18th to late 20th century, the industrial seam that was established along the banks of the river. This separation has been negatively reinforced by the construction of the IDR, which forms a divisive and detracting feature at the core and in the setting of the CA.
5.74	The CA appraisal map identifies designated and non-designated heritage assets (Buildings Townscape Merit) within the boundary, in addition to landmark buildings, significant green open spaces and important views. The non-designated heritage asset plan within Appendix 1 identifies the buildings of townscape merit within the CA and within 250m of the Site.
5.75	Sub Area 1 comprises two religious buildings and historic residential development on Church Street. This area has an enclosed character that is distinct from the thoroughfare of London Street and is reminiscent of the smaller development of south Reading in the 18th and 19th centuries. The area contains two significant open green spaces associated with the religious buildings, which each contain significant trees. The area therefore has a green character. The boundary for Sub Area 1 is tight to surviving historic fabric and is set against modern redevelopment which is contrasting in character.



Figure 5.13 Sub Area 1 and 2 of the CA. Source: Market Place/London Street CA Appraisal (2007).

5.76 Sub Area 2 comprises the busy historic thoroughfare of London Street and is characterised by a wide road and fine grain residential premises with converted commercial ground floors. The plot sizes are narrow, which is typical of ribbon development in a market town, and there is a generally consistent building line. In places, covered carriageways leading to back land areas remain.

5.77 Three important views are identified within Sub Areas 1 and 2. These include two axial views looking north and south on London Street. The focus of these views is the continuous street frontages of the historic buildings on the west side of London Street. The third view looks west on Church Street, past a terrace of historic houses towards the Church of St Giles. The spire is prominent in this view.

CONTRIBUTION OF SETTING TO SIGNIFICANCE

5.78 There is an established character of large scale commercial and residential developments and modern infrastructure within and in the immediate setting of the CA. These developments, on Mill Lane and Queens Road have eroded the historic setting of the CA and detract from its character and appearance. The CAA identifies ‘modern development at north and south extremities of London Street, adjacent to road junctions’ as a detracting feature in the setting of the CA.

5.79 The Site is located outside of the CA boundary on Crossland Road; however, it borders Sub Area 1 and 2. From within these subareas, the Site is visible from the rear of the designated and non-designated buildings on the west side of London Street, within the Quakers Meeting House burial ground and Church of St Giles churchyard. Both the Quakers’ Meeting House burial ground and Church of St Giles are identified as ‘significant open space’ in the London Street/ Market Place CA appraisal. The Site in its present form is poor in terms of landscaping and architectural quality and is a detracting feature in the wider setting of these sub areas.



Figure 5.14 Significant trees within churchyard of Church of St Giles

SECTION SUMMARY

5.80 Table 5.1 below presents a summary of the heritage assets included in this assessment.

Table 5.1 Summary of Built Heritage Baseline

MAP REF.	NAME	GRADE (IF APPLICABLE)	FULL ASSESSMENT REQUIRED?
Designated Heritage Receptors			
Listed Buildings			
17	54–58, London Street	II	Yes
18	48–52, London Street	II	Yes
19	62–66, London Street	II	Yes
20	44 and 46, London Street	II	Yes
21	Reading Quaker Meeting House	II	Yes
22	68, 70, and 72, London Street	II	Yes
23	74 and 76, London Street	II	No
24	Nos 49–53 London Street	II	Yes
25	41, London Street	II	Yes
26	37 and 39, London Street	II	Yes
27	6b, Church Street	II	Yes
28	6a, Church Street	II	Yes
29	80, London Street	II	No
30	6c, Church Street	II	Yes
31	35, London Street	II	Yes
32	No 33 (Former Everyman Theatre)	II	Yes
34	11, Church Street	II	Yes
36	7 and 9, Church Street	II	Yes
38	Wall enclosing St Giles's Vicarage Garden	II	Yes
39	Church of St Giles and Churchyard Tombs	II	Yes
40	63 Southampton Street and 50 Crown Street	II	Yes

MAP REF.	NAME	GRADE (IF APPLICABLE)	FULL ASSESSMENT REQUIRED?
41	St Giles Vicarage / St Giles's Vicarage	II	Yes
42	26, Southampton Street	II	Yes
43	28, Southampton Street	II	Yes
45	St Giles' War Shrine	II	Yes
54	63 Southampton Street and 50 Crown Street	II	Yes
64	92–96, Southampton Street	II	Yes
67	Queen's Crescent	II	Yes
68	Building now part of Courage's Brewery	II	Yes
70	Rose Cottage	II	Yes
75	106 Southampton Street	II	Yes
77	43–49 South Street	II	Yes
101	3 and 5 Sidmouth Street	II	Yes
102	9 Sidmouth Street	II	Yes
138	Wesley Methodist Church	II	Yes
Conservation Areas			
A	Market Place and London Street	N/A	Yes

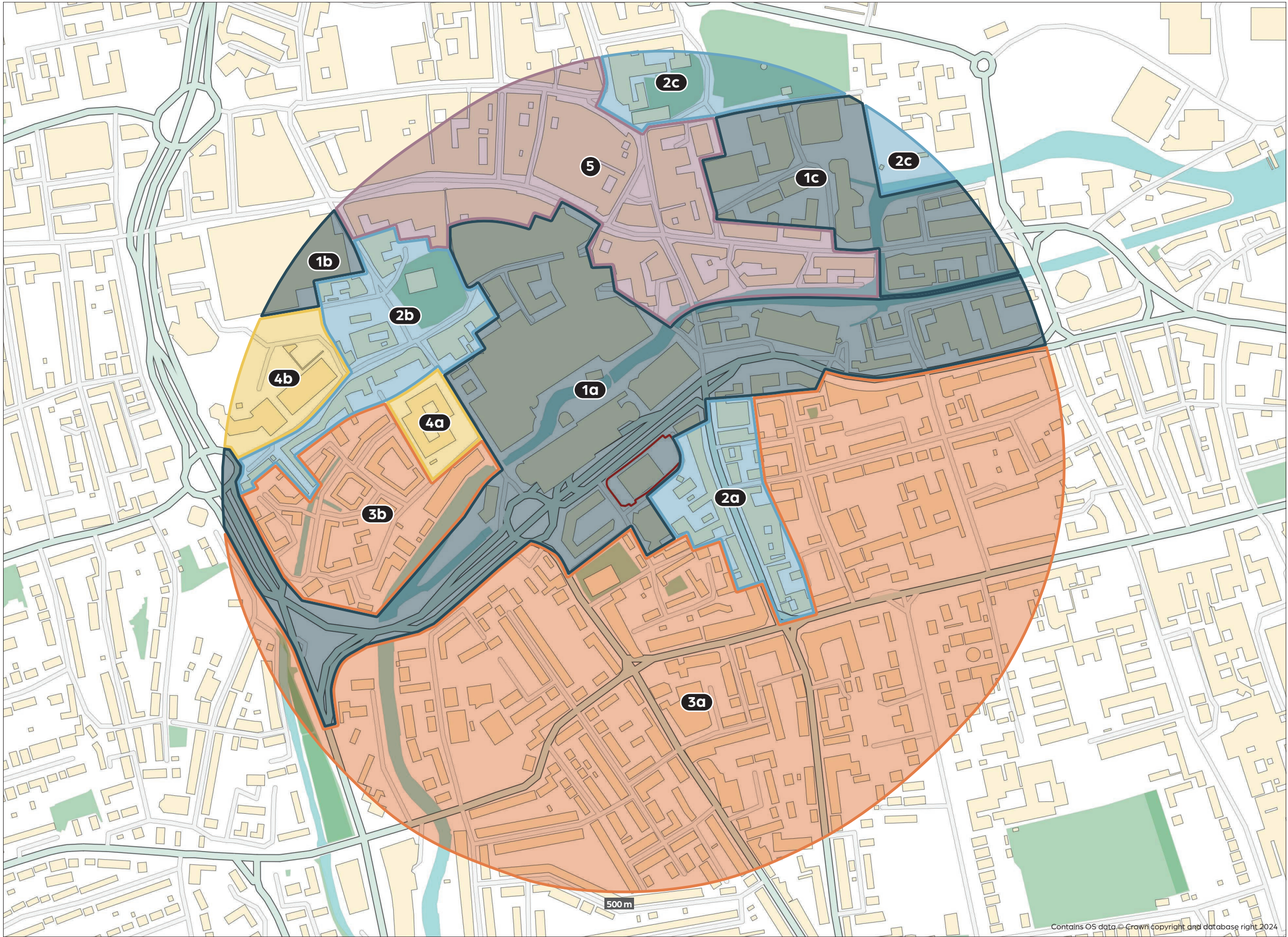
6.0

BASELINE: TOWNSCAPE

FORMER JOHN LEWIS DEPOT, LETCOMBE STREET, READING (ALSO KNOWN AS JLP MILL LANE)

BASELINE: TOWNSCAPE

- 6.1 This section of the report describes the townscape character of the Site and its surrounding context. Following site surveys, detailed desk-based assessment and an assessment of the surrounding urban grain, the townscape surrounding the Site may be categorised into five distinct areas (referred to as 'TCAs' throughout this Section). For the purposes of this assessment the character areas are referred to as:
- TCA1: Large Scale Commercial/Retail
 - TCA2: Historic Core
 - TCA3: Residential
 - TCA4: Civic Centre
 - TCA5: Town Centre
- 6.2 The broad boundaries of the character areas are identified in **Figure 6.1**. The character and appearance of the character areas is discussed below.



TOWNSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

- Application Site
- a. Large scale commercial/retail
b. Large scale commercial
c. Large scale commercial
 - a. Historic core
b. Historic core
c. Historic core
 - a. Residential
b. Residential
 - a. Civic centre
b. Civic centre
 - Town centre

LOCATION:
Mill Lane, Reading

DATE:
May 2024

SCALE:
1:5,000 @ A3

FIGURE 6.1 Townscape Character Area Plan

▲ NORTH



MONTAGU EVANS
CHARTERED SURVEYORS
70 ST MARY AXE,
LONDON, EC3A 8BE
T: +44 (0)20 7493 4002
WWW.MONTAGU-EVANS.CO.UK

TCA1: LARGE SCALE COMMERCIAL/RETAIL

- 6.3
- TCA1 is formed of three separate areas, the largest being TCA1A, which comprises the Oracle Shopping Centre and other commercial/retail development located along the northern and southern frontages of the Inner Distribution Road ("IDR"). TCA1b comprises the Broad Street Mall Shopping Centre, located to the northwest of the town centre, with TCA1c comprising an area of predominantly commercial/office use to the northeast of the town centre. Given the location of the Site within TCA1a, the focus of this assessment will be on this element of the character area.
- 6.4
- The area is defined by its consistent commercial/retail use, which has been a slow process of evolution from the area's industrial history. Immediately opposite the Site is the Oracle Shopping Centre and associated car park, Vue Cinema, with buildings transitioning to a more commercial, office use to the western part of the TCA. The current building on Site has most recently been used as a warehouse for John Lewis which further reinforce the prevailing use of the area. The Site (prior to the November 2023 Reading Local Plan Partial Update) had an allocation for commercial development under Local Plan Policy CR14, together with land across the A329 occupied by the Oracle Shopping Centre, specifically for "1.67 ha 1,600–2,000 sqm of retail or town centre uses".
- 6.5
- The form and architectural quality of buildings within the TCA is a reflection of the area's retail/commercial character. Buildings generally adopt a large urban footprint and are constructed of mass-produced, lower quality materials including cladding, glazing and concrete. Buildings have very low to no architectural quality or interest, reinforced by the lack of architectural features and detailing.
- 6.6
- The scale of buildings within the TCA is a further reflection of the area's use. Buildings of up to nine storeys are a key feature including that of the Oracle Shopping Centre. The rooflines of these taller buildings have been designed in such a way that their height stands out from the surrounding roofscape. The angular, glass structure on the roof above the Oracle, as well as the circular roof form on the seven storey Premier Inn building. The taller scaled buildings within the TCA tend to be located on the frontage of the IDR, the extent of which minimises the TCA's overall sensitivity to tall buildings.

- 6.7
- The large urban footprints of buildings, usually with associated service yards or car parks has established a coarse urban grain, which contrasts with the surrounding more historic residential development.
- 6.8
- The IDR is also a key feature of the TCA, serving as a 'spine' for the commercial and retail development either side of it, simultaneously providing an accessible means of travel to the commercial and retail buildings. It's presence also reinforces the busy, urban nature of the TCA. The urban design of the IDR and associated landscape around it has contributed to a poor-quality townscape character, especially around the Site, which reinforces its position as a detracting townscape feature.
- 6.9
- An increasing number of planning applications within the TCA have indicated the direction of travel for the area. This has included the submission of the planning application at Broad Street Mall (located within TCA1b) (planning ref: 240173) for residential development of up to 30 storeys as well as the Yield Hall Place Development, comprising a mixed-use scheme of residential and commercial space of up to 20 storeys (planning refs: 221916 and 221917). This has been further reinforced by policy aspirations for the area, as indicated in the Local Plan Partial Update (2023) which has explored alternative options for development on Site, including "the redevelopment of the warehouse for around 200 build to rent dwellings." It is thus evident that the direction of travel for this part of Reading, is towards an increasing residential use, through the provision of buildings of a taller scale.
- 6.10
- Associated viewpoint: 1, 9, 10
- 6.11
- Townscape value: **Low**



Figure 6.2 The Oracle Shopping Centre and associated multi-storey car park on the northern side of the IDR.



Figure 6.3 Commercial development on the southern side of the IDR.

TCA2: HISTORIC CORE

- 6.12

TCA2 is formed of three separate areas which comprise the historic core of Reading. This includes TCA2a on the eastern boundary of the Site, TCA2b to the north west of the Site and TCA2c to the north. The separate areas of the TCA are bound in the historic character, comprising some of the oldest buildings within Reading and survive as historic pockets within the wider townscape of Reading.
- 6.13

The boundaries of TCA2a run broadly concurrent with the St Mary Butts and Castle Street CA. The area includes a number of highly graded heritage assets including the Church of St Mary (Grade I) from which the CA has evolved. The historic character of the area is distinctive in an otherwise largely modern area of the town centre. The boundaries of the TCA are well defined by the surrounding development on three sides, dating to the 1970s or later, and only to the north by the more historic Broad Street.
- 6.14

The street form comprises two sets of crossroads to the north and south of the TCA. This characteristic is reflective of the medieval street pattern of this part of Reading, which is recognised as the original core and marketplace of the town. As such, the TCA includes a number of highly graded designated assets and Reading landmarks, as well as some of the oldest surviving buildings in Reading including the Allied Arms, The Horn and The Sun. The majority of buildings within the TCA are at least Grade II listed, with examples dating from the sixteenth century to the present day. A result of this is that the architectural character of the TCA is highly varied, comprising red brick Georgian style buildings, smaller scale timber framed buildings and ornate early 20th century buildings in the Arts and Crafts Style. Building uses are now more varied comprising retail, leisure and residential uses. Retail and catering uses predominate at ground floor level. Buildings comprise their original medieval burgage style plots which align Castle Street and St Mary’s Butts which has resulted in a tight knit urban structure.

- 6.15

TCA2b comprises the key thoroughfare of London Street, which forms part of the wider London Street CA which signifies the historic mercantile core of Reading. The streetscape is defined by 16th to 18th century townhouses which are typical of ribbon development in market towns, with narrow and architecturally varied street frontages, many of which are listed.
- 6.16

TCA2C to the north, comprises a group of historic buildings and structures, including Reading Gaol, the former Reading Abbey Ruins and the Church of St Laurence. Given the unique nature of some of the heritage assets within this part of the TCA, i.e. Reading Gaol and Forbury Gardens, the streetscape and layout diverges from the other, more medieval layouts seen in other parts of the TCA.
- 6.17

The principal green space within the TCA is the Grade II RPG of Forbury Gardens, which forms an area of amenity space, within the centre of Reading. Other green spaces in the TCA are limited to those amenity spaces associated with historic buildings and landmarks, including the churchyard of St Mary’s and the burial ground of Reading Quaker Meeting House.
- 6.18

The TCA comprises a number of very highly graded heritage assets, and other designations including CAs and an RPG. Sensitive views within this TCA include those from the tower of St Mary’s Church to Greyfriars Church to the north along St Mary’s Butts, and West street and up Castle Hill to the west. As such, it is considered to have a **High** townscape value.
- 6.19

Associated viewpoint: 2, 3, 4a, 4b, 11, 13, 14
- 6.20

Townscape value: **High**



Figure 6.4

Historic buildings along London Street

TCA3: RESIDENTIAL

- 6.21

This TCA comprises two parts, TCA3a to the immediate south of the Site, and TCA3b to the northwest of the Site.
- 6.22

TCA3a incorporates some of the London Street CA and thus naturally includes a large number of historic buildings, predominantly Victorian terraces and detached houses. The street pattern of the area is reflective of its use, a series of linear, intersecting horizontal and vertical streets. Modern development has impinged in some locations, most notably on the northern edge of the TCA, facing the Inner Distribution Road (IDR). The IDR is the ring road that encircles the town centre and forms part of the A329 that runs from Surrey to Oxfordshire. The predominant materiality is red brick, which is a historically characteristic of Reading. Architectural features include the use of decorative brickwork and tiling, gable ends and round arched doorways. The residential character of this part of the TCA is further reinforced by the presence of front and rear gardens, as well as on street parking. Some of the Victorian terraces throughout the TCA are listed, however, there are also areas in which buildings are in poorer condition, or have had unsympathetic alteration.
- 6.23

TCA3b comprises a residential estate of houses and flats dating to the late 20th century. It has an enclosed character, defined by dense vegetative borders. Vegetation, street furniture and paved areas of public realm are a key characteristic of this area. The houses within the TCA are architecturally homogenous which aids in differentiating the area from its surroundings. Buildings are defined by red brick, dark timber framed windows and a mock Tudor architectural style. Designated areas of car parking are also prominent throughout the TCA. To the south, the border of this part of the TCA is more open, comprising the River Kennet which forms an area of amenity space and a key route towards the town centre.
- 6.24

The TCA is varied in terms of architectural style, form, streetscape, development quality, but is ultimately bound by the consistent residential use of the buildings.
- 6.25

Associated viewpoint: 5, 6, 7, 8
- 6.26

Townscape value: **Medium**



Figure 6.5 Combination of modern and historic houses along Church Street

TCA4: CIVIC CENTRE

- 6.27

Character area 4 comprises two areas of civic buildings to the northwest of the Site. The two parts of the TCA are separated by the historic thoroughfare of Castle Street, forming TCA 2b.
- 6.28

The most distinctive characteristic of the TCA is the inclusion of a number of buildings of institutional use. This includes Reading Magistrates Court, Reading Police Station, and Reading Borough Council offices. The Hexagon is also included within the TCA, comprising a multi-purpose theatre and arts venue in Reading. Whilst not solely institutional in use it remains operated by Reading Borough Council.
- 6.29

Building plots are large, which is a reflection of their use. The scale of the buildings predominantly remains at two to three storeys. They date to a range of eras, the Council offices 2014, Reading Police Station and Reading Magistrates Court appear to have been built in conjunction with one another, in the same architectural style and form which likely dates to the end of the 20th century.



Figure 6.6 Reading Magistrates Court and Police Station

- 6.30 Most architecturally interesting is the Hexagon, built in 1977 in the shape of an elongated hexagon. The TCA does not include any designated heritage assets.
- 6.31 A further reflection of the area's institutional use is the incorporation of areas of car parking and public realm around each of the buildings. Public realm is a key characteristic of the TCA. This includes the San Francisco Libre Walk, a paved pedestrian walkway which provides access into the town centre.
- 6.32 The TCA also incorporates the Lavender Place Community Gardens, which comprises an area of green open space, including allotments and mature vegetation. The gardens were formed on the former site of the old civic centre.
- 6.33 The TCA is partially located within an area identified as being appropriate for tall building by the development plan. This thus anticipates an increase in the number of tall buildings within and surrounding the character area. Its sensitivity to tall building development is thus reduced.
- 6.34 Associated viewpoint: None
- 6.35 Townscape value: **Medium**
- TCA5: TOWN CENTRE**
- 6.36 TCA5 comprises the primary shopping area within Reading town centre. It is located to the immediate north of the Site and borders TCA1 on its northern boundary.
- 6.37 Development is orientated around the linear east-west axis of Broad Street, as well as a series of horizontal intersecting streets. Some of the medieval, burgage style plots are retained along Broad Street, however, this is intersected with larger, modern infill development.
- 6.38 The development within the TCA is predominantly of retail and commercial use, a reflection of the character of this part of Reading. Owing to the various phases of redevelopment of this area, the building typology, era and architectural style comprise a mixture of historic and modern infill development.

- 6.39 The TCA also comprises one of the two main shopping centres within Reading, Broad Street Mall, which opened in 1971 and also incorporates a large multi storey car park and some office use. It comprises a large urban footprint, a reflection of its use and typical composition of associated car parking. The scale of the buildings increases to an 11 storey podium on Broad Street Mall.
- 6.40 Public realm is a key characteristic of the TCA, with Broad Street being completely pedestrianised as the main shopping street within Reading. This is a wide, paved, street lined walkway. Situated around the Oracle shopping centre is a considerable extent of public realm and a pedestrian bridge which provides access across the River Kennett to the Oracle Riverside.
- 6.41 The density of urban development within the area is high, and ranges from tight to coarse urban grain. Open spaces are uncommon, limited only to the wide tree line boulevard of Broad Street.
- 6.42 The TCA is also partially located within the tall buildings cluster zone, as identified by Reading Local Plan (Policy CR12d). It is thus expected that the number of tall buildings within the TCA will increase, reflecting the direction of change of this TCA. This is already evidenced by the consented redevelopment of Broad Street Mall Shopping Centre to provide three residential buildings of five to 20 storeys (planning ref: 182137). This has reduced the TCA's sensitivity to further tall building development.
- 6.43 Associated viewpoint: 12
- 6.44 Townscape value: **Medium**



Figure 6.7 Historic buildings within Reading town centre



Figure 6.8 Broad Street Mall within Reading town centre

TOWNSCAPE SUMMARY

- 6.45 **Table 6.1** presents a summary of the townscape receptor baseline information.
- 6.46 Owing to the location of the Proposed Development to the south of the IDR, and the localised impact it will have on the immediate townscape environs within this part of Reading, it is not considered that the Proposed Development has the ability to affect the townscape character of several areas including Townscape Character Area 4 (Civic Centre) and 5 (Town Centre). These townscape character areas will remain unaffected by the Proposed Development and have been scoped out of the wider assessment of this report.

REF.	TOWNSCAPE CHARACTER AREA	TOWNSCAPE VALUE	FULL ASSESSMENT REQUIRED?
1	Large scale commercial/retail	Low	Yes
2	Historic Core	High	Yes
3	Residential	Medium	Yes
4	Civic Centre	Medium	No
5	Town Centre	Medium	No

Table 6.1 Summary of Townscape Receptor Baseline.

7.0 BASELINE: VISUAL

FORMER JOHN LEWIS DEPOT, LETCOMBE STREET, READING (ALSO KNOWN AS JLP MILL LANE)

BASELINE: VISUAL

7.1 A ZTV has been produced to outline the potential areas where the Proposed Development may be visible, up to a 2km(2) from the Site. The ZTV (see **Figure 2.1**) was prepared by Montagu Evans using VuCity software and is a tool for a high-level understanding of the extent of visibility, which was further interrogated through review of individual viewpoints using field surveys and digital software.

REPRESENTATIVE VIEWS

7.2 To inform this BHTVIA, 16 Representative Views were selected to the support the assessment of the Proposed Development on surrounding heritage assets, townscape and visual receptors. The text below sets out the different groups of people who may experience views of the development, the places where they will be affected and the nature of the views and visual amenity at those points.

7.3 The View Location Plan at **Figure 7.1** identifies the location for the verified views.