



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

HERITAGE, TOWNSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

AUGUST 2024



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1.0 INTRODUCTION

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

INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Montagu Evans have been instructed by John Lewis Partnership BTR Ltd (hereby referred to as the 'Applicant') to provide consultancy services and produce this Built Heritage, Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment (the 'BHTVIA') in support of proposals at Former John Lewis Depot, Letcombe Street, Reading (also known as JLP Mill Lane) (the 'Site').

THE SITE

- 1.2 The Site is located within the administrative boundary of Reading Borough Council (the 'Council'). It is located on the southern side of the Inner Distribution Road (IDR), a dual carriageway ring road that encircles the centre of Reading. It is also located to the south of the River Kennet, which runs parallel to the east-west orientated section of the IDR. To the immediate north, on the opposing side of the IDR, is the Oracle Shopping Centre and to the south is the mixed residential and commercial area comprising Townscape Character Area 20 'London Street' ("TCA20") as defined in Reading's Tall Building Study (2008) and subsequent update note (2018), in which the Site is located.
- 1.3 The Site is allocated under Adopted Local Plan Policy CR14g, together with land across the A329 occupied by the Oracle Shopping Centre. Specifically, the area at The Oracle between the River Kennet and Mill Lane is identified to accommodate the retail use, with the John Lewis Warehouse site identified for a public car park.
- 1.4 In March 2023, the Council agreed to undertake a partial review of its adopted Local Plan (2019), following the publication of the NPPF 2021 (now 2023) which superseded the 2019 development plan. The 2021 revision of the NPPF included updates in relation to local housing needs and updates to the standard methodology for calculating housing needs, pertinent to urban centres including Reading.

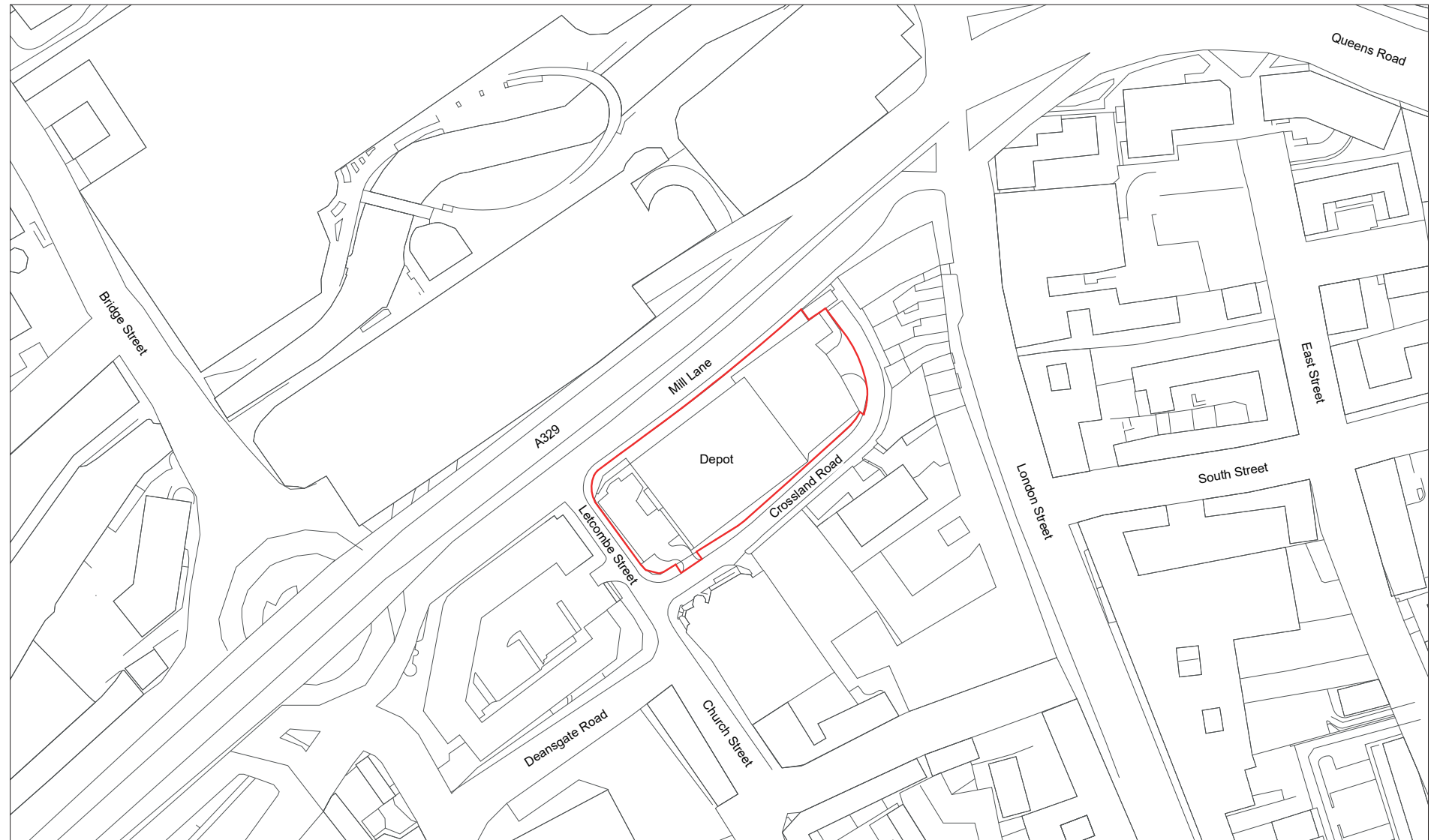


Figure 1.1 Site Plan

- 1.5 Consequently, the Council's findings identify that the Local Plan site allocation (Policy CR14g) relating to the Site is 'unlikely to be deliverable' and 'requires review'. The 'Review of the Reading Borough Local Plan' (dated March 2023) states: *"it is likely that landowner intentions have changed regarding CR14g, the Oracle extension, as evidenced by recent applications for the centre, and is no longer expected to entail a retail extension in this location. This allocation is therefore unlikely to be deliverable and requires review."*
- 1.6 The Local Plan Partial Update (November 2023) has since been published on Reading Borough Council's website for Reg 18 consultation stage. The LPPU (November 2023) includes additional sites nominated for development, which now includes the Site as a new draft allocation (*Site Cen3: John Lewis Depot, Mill Lane*) to the Oracle Shopping Centre. A series of options for the redevelopment of the Site are provided in the draft allocation.
- 1.7 The Site does not comprise any listed buildings, nor is it located within a conservation area. It is bound to the east by the Market Place/ London Street Conservation Area, and within the wider setting of several listed buildings.
- 1.8 The Site is described in further detail in the Design and Access Statement (the 'DAS'), prepared by CJCT Studios. **Figure 1.1** outlines the boundary of the Site, whilst an aerial view of the Site from Google Earth is provided at **Figure 1.2**.



Figure 1.2 Aerial View. Source: Google (base map)



Figure 1.3 Current building on Site. Source: Google Street View October 2020.

PLANNING HISTORY

- 1.9 Planning permission for the disused John Lewis Warehouse was granted in 1996 (PP ref: 960750). Since then, there have been no further planning applications at the Site.

PRE-APPLICATION AND ENGAGEMENT

- 1.10 The design of the Proposed Development has evolved and been informed by pre-application discussions held with RBC via a Planning Performance Agreement dated August 2023. In addition to this, further consultation has been undertaken with Design South East, The Mid Thames Quakers and St Giles Church group, as well as members of the public via a public exhibition. The details of these discussions are outlined in **Table 8.1** of this report.

THE PROPOSALS

- 1.11 A full description of the proposals and the supporting rationale/ design intent is provided within the design documentation prepared by Carey Jones Chapman Tolcher (CJCT).
- 1.12 The Proposed Development seeks to provide up to 215 build to rent residential dwellings (including affordable housing), in combination with flexible commercial/community space, residents facilities, landscaping, public realm, amenity space and associated cycle and disabled car parking.
- 1.13 This has been achieved through a proposed new building on Site, reaching a maximum of 11 storeys, which has been contextually designed in consideration to the surrounding heritage, townscape and visual sensitivities.
- 1.14 The redevelopment of the Site for the use proposed will contribute to the character and vitality of the area.
- 1.15 A full description of the Proposed Development, along with its potential impact on identified heritage, townscape, and visual sensitivities, is included at **Sections 8.0–10.0** of this report. The Description of Development is as follows:
“Demolition of the existing building and redevelopment of the site comprising erection of a new building for up to 215 build to rent residential dwellings (Use Class C3) together with flexible commercial/community space (Use Class E1/F1/F2), residents’ facilities, landscaping, public realm, amenity space, cycle parking and disabled car parking.”

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.16
- This BHTVIA considered the Proposed Development in relation to its heritage, townscape and visual context.
- 1.17
- The (built) heritage assessment will consider the significance of heritage assets and the impact of the Proposed Development upon that significance. The Site does not contain any heritage assets, although there are heritage assets in the wider area and the BHTVIA assesses the potential of the Proposed Development to impact their setting.
- 1.18
- The townscape assessment will consider the Proposed Development within its urban context, including the buildings, the relationships between them, the different types of urban open spaces, including green spaces and the relationship between buildings and open spaces.
- 1.19
- The visual assessment will consider the impact of the Proposed Development upon visual receptors. The assessment relates to how people will be affected by changes in views and visual amenity at different places, including publicly accessible locations. Visual receptors are always people (although usually visual receptors are defined according to use e.g. residential, business, road, footpath etc.), rather than landscape features.
- 1.20
- The assessment as a whole is informed by visual tools, including a zone of theoretical visibility (ZTV) accurate visual representations ('AVRs'). The tools inform the assessment of the impact of the Proposed Development on heritage, townscape and visual receptors e.g. they allow an understanding of the geographical extent and magnitude of visibility from representative locations. The tools are not receptors themselves, unless comprising strategic views designated in the development plan.
- 1.21
- The assessment is informed by 15 AVRs. The location of the viewpoints has been informed by architectural and historic accounts of the area, an appraisal of the existing Site and surroundings, relevant policy designations and through engagement with RBC Officers. The location of viewpoints has been agreed with officers. Viewpoint locations are identified at **Figure 7.1** within **Section 7.o**.

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

- 1.22
- This report has found that the Proposed Development would improve the appearance, character and function of the Site, introducing a new residential use which seeks to revitalise the streetscape and surrounding area, in line with the policy aspirations for this part of Reading.
- 1.23
- We find that the Proposed Development is in full compliance with the policies set out in the adopted Development plan concerning the historic building environment and townscape/visual considerations.
- 1.24
- n this report, we have set out the likely effects arising on the identified heritage assets, townscape receptors and visual receptors. In relation to heritage, a low level of less than substantial harm to the setting of the Meeting House (Grade II) has been identified. It is deemed that the public benefits deriving from the Proposed Development significantly outweigh the harm caused to the designated heritage asset and therefore paragraphs 208–9 NPPF are satisfied.
- 1.25
- The decision maker is therefore able to discharge their legal duties as set out in Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and, in doing so, consider the Proposed Development is consistent with the NPPF and Development Plan.

STRUCTURE OF THE BHTVIA

- 1.26
- The BHTVIA is structured as follows:
 - The methodology for undertaking the BHTVIA is provided at **Section 2.o**;
 - Legislation, planning policy and guidance relevant to the assessment of likely effects on heritage, townscape and visual receptors is set out at **Section 3.o**;
 - A description of the historical development of the Site and surrounding area is provided at **Section 4.o**;
 - An assessment of the significance of heritage assets which have been identified for assessment is provided at **Section 5.o**;
 - A description of the existing townscape character and visual amenity is provided at **Section 6.o**;
 - A description of the existing visual amenity is provided at **Section 7.o**:

- A summary of pre-application engagement and subsequent design changes is included at **Section 8.o**;
- **Section 9.o** provides an assessment of the impact of the Proposed Development on the significance of heritage assets;
- The impact of the Proposed Development on townscape receptors is assessed at **Section 10.o**;
- An assessment of the impact of the Proposed Development on visual receptors is provided at **Section 11.o**;
- An analysis of how the Proposed Development performs against relevant legislation and planning policy is provided at **Section 12.o**;
- The BHTVIA is concluded at **Section 13.o**.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

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METHODOLOGY

2.1 This section describes the assessment framework for the heritage, townscape and visual assessment. The method for each discipline is the product of legislation, policy and best practice guidance, set out in detail in **Section 3.0**.

STUDY AREA

2.2 Owing to the nature of the pre-application proposals, we have identified a study area which comprises:

- Designated Heritage Assets within a 500m radius of the Site, including:
 - Listed Buildings;
 - Conservation Areas;
 - Registered Parks and Gardens; and
 - Scheduled Monuments.
- Non-designated Heritage Assets within a 250m radius of the Site, including:
 - Locally Listed Buildings (as identified on the Councils Local List); and
 - Buildings of Townscape Merit (as identified within CA appraisals).

2.3 Site observations, a manual desk-based review of OS maps, characterisation studies and relevant heritage receptors were used to determine the study area. The study area has been informed by building locations and heights, topography and townscape features, and an understanding of the scale and nature of the development proposals.

2.4 Viewpoint locations are identified in **Section 7.0** of this. The location of viewpoints has been based on the following:

- An initial study undertaken by the architects, CJCT Studios;
- View locations identified in local planning guidance documents published by Reading Borough Council;
- The location of significant listed buildings (including the grade II Church of St Giles and the grade II Quaker Meeting House);
- General townscape considerations;
- Three separate site visits.

2.5 The locations of the identified viewpoints were subsequently agreed with the Council during pre-application discussions.

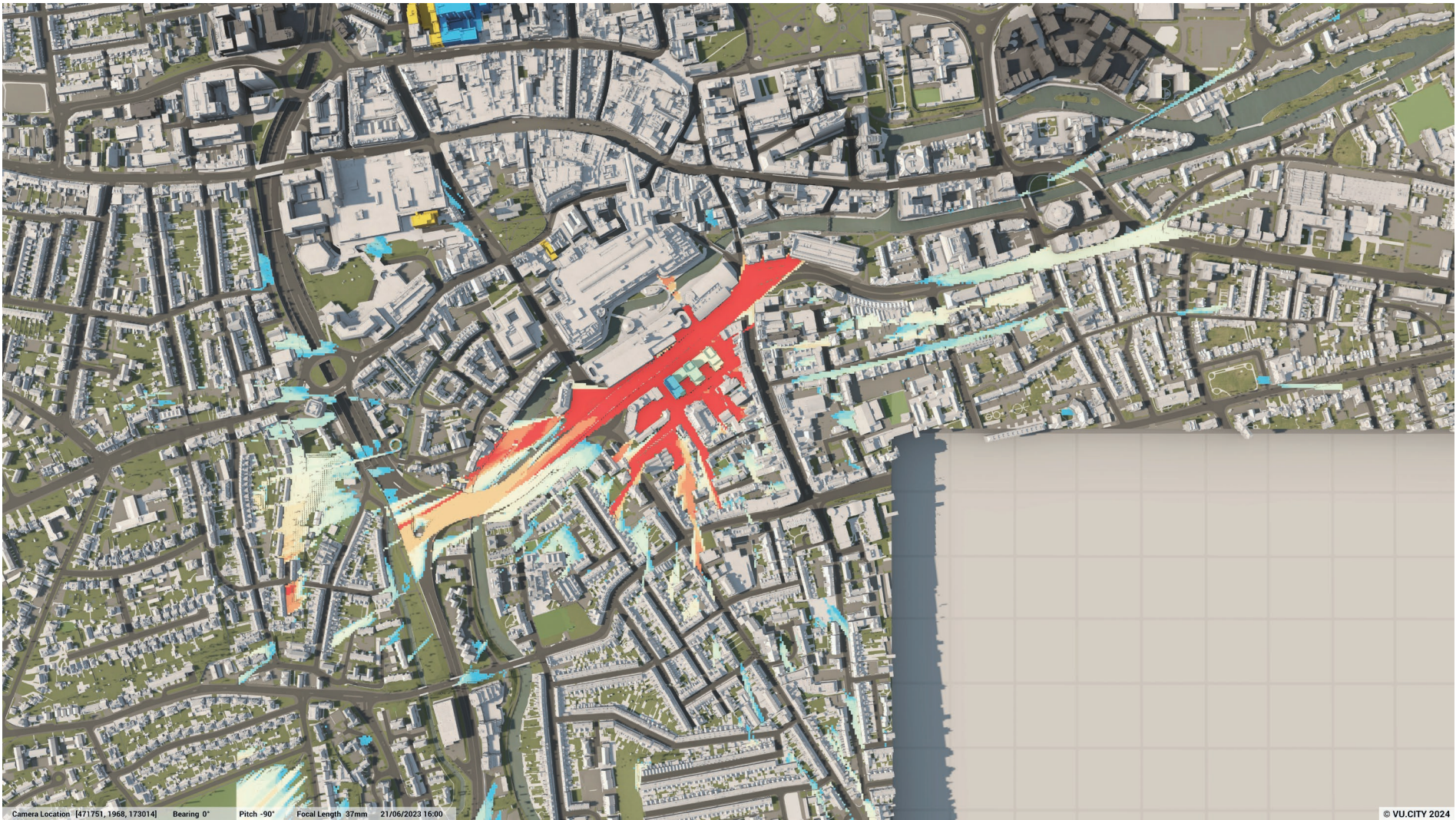


Figure 2.1 ZTV of the Proposed Development prepared by Montagu Evans.

SITE VISIT

2.6 Site surveys of the baseline situation were undertaken by Montagu Evans during October 2023, to understand the immediate context of the Site and to identify the heritage baseline, townscape character and viewpoint location.

ASSESSMENT PROCESS FRAMEWORK

HERITAGE

- 2.7
- The term ‘heritage asset’ is used within this assessment to describe both designated (e.g. Listed Buildings, Registered Park and Garden, Registered Battlefield or Conservation Area) or non–designated (identified by the local authority e.g. building of townscape merit etc) assets. For the purposes of this BHTVIA, built heritage receptors do not include archaeological remains.
- 2.8
- Paragraph 200 of the NPPF states:
In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets’ importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance.
- 2.9
- ‘Significance’ (for heritage policy) is defined in the NPPF (Annex 2) as:
the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset’s physical presence, but also from its setting.
- 2.10
- This is reaffirmed by Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 2: Managing Significance in Decision–Taking in the Historic Environment (2015).
- 2.11
- It is commonly agreed that Grade I and II* buildings are of “exceptional” and “particularly important” interest; therefore these are generally afforded a higher heritage value. This differentiation is best summarised by the drafting of paragraph 200 of the NPPF, which states that the “level of detail (to describe the significance of heritage assets) should be proportionate to the assets’ importance”; thus, a grading is appropriate. We have given due and proportionate regard to all heritage assets assessed.

- 2.12
- Where a proposal may have an effect on the surroundings in which the heritage asset is experienced, a qualitative assessment is made of whether, how and to what degree setting contributes to the significance of heritage assets. Setting is defined in the NPPF Annex 2: Glossary as:
the surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.
- 2.13
- The assessment of setting is informed by the check-list of potential attributes outlined by the Historic England guidance document Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets (2017) (hereafter “GPA3: Setting”).
- 2.14
- GPA3: Setting identifies five steps towards assessing the implications of development proposals which may affect the setting of heritage assets (it is consistent with other guidance):
a. Identify the assets affected
b. Assessing the contribution setting makes to significance
c. Assessing the effect of the proposed development
d. Maximising enhancement and minimising harm
e. Making and documenting the decision and monitoring outcomes
- 2.15
- Part e is incumbent on the decision maker, through the provision of conditions.

TOWNSCAPE AND VISUAL

- 2.16
- The framework for assessment of townscape and visual impact has been prepared using the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition (Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, 2013) (‘GLVIA3’). The two components of townscape and visual assessment are:
1. The assessment of townscape effects: assessing effects on the townscape as a resource in its own right; and
2. The assessment of visual effects: assessing effects on the general visual amenity experienced by people. Specific views are also assessed where they form strategic views designated in the development plan, or where agreed with the competent authority.

TOWNSCAPE AND VISUAL VALUE

TOWNSCAPE VALUE

- 2.17
- The townscape baseline assessment describes character areas/types and their characteristics. It defines the distinct and recognisable patterns of elements, or characteristics that make one area different from another, rather than better or worse. Areas are defined and mapped with boundaries that suggest a sharp change from one townscape area to another; however, on site, changes can be more subtle and practically, this often represents a zone of transition. Criteria to assess townscape character areas and apportion value is contained in **Table 2.8**.
- 2.18
- Assessment is informed by an understanding of how an area has evolved, the use of aerial photography and field survey, along with desk-based research as appropriate and to a level commensurate with the sensitivity of the receptor and its susceptibility to change. Important published sources will normally comprise formal character assessments prepared, for example, as part of local plan making or agencies or county authorities.

2.19 The objective of identifying the existing context is to provide an understanding of the townscape in the area that may be affected – its constituent elements, its character and the way this varies spatially, its geographic extent, its history, its condition, the way the townscape is experienced and the value attached to it. This assessment cannot practically and objectively capture what local people in an area feel about their area (unless of course this has been subject to a specific study which is produced in an objective or reflective manner). Thus, this value analysis reflects professional judgment.

TOWNSCAPE RECEPTOR VALUE			
Value	Importance	Typical Criteria	Typical Features / Characteristics
Very High	International / National	Unique or outstanding townscape with clearly distinctive characteristics, features and elements; Widespread use of quality materials; Very strong urban structure, characteristic patterns and balanced combination of built form and open space; Appropriate management for land use; No, or very limited, detracting features.	International or national designation, and/or designated heritage receptors of significant importance
High	National / Regional / Local	Distinctive or unusual townscape with notable features and elements; Evident use of quality materials; Strong urban structure, characteristic patterns and balanced combination of built form and open space; Appropriate management for land use with limited scope to improve; Limited detracting features.	National or regional designation, and/or designated heritage receptors
Medium	Regional / Local	Attractive townscape with occasional distinctive features; Recognisable urban structure, characteristic patterns and combinations of built form and open space; Scope to improve management for land use; Some detracting features.	Regional or local recognition, including local plan designations, with value possibly expressed through literature and cultural associations.
Low	Local	Commonplace or ordinary townscape with limited variety or distinctiveness; Distinguishable urban structure, characteristic patterns and combinations of built form and open space, although often fragmented; Scope to improve management or land use; Potentially some dominant detracting features and areas of very low value.	Some positive townscape features but largely degraded and may benefit from regeneration, restoration or enhancement.
Very Low	Local	Very common townscape, often in decline; Weak or degraded urban structure, characteristic patterns and combination of built form and open space; Lack of management has resulted in degradation; Frequent dominant detracting features; Disturbed or derelict land requires treatment.	Heavily degraded townscape and/or identified for change.

Table 2.1 Townscape Receptor Value Criteria

VISUAL AMENITY VALUE

- 2.20
- The visual baseline assessment established the area in which the development may be visible, 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.
- 2.21
- The baseline study identifies individuals and/or defined groups of people within the area who will be affected by changes in the views, ‘visual receptors’. The following visual receptors are identified by GLVIA3 as being likely to be the most susceptible to change:

- Residents and other frequent users of the area;
 - People, whether residents or visitors, who are engaged in outdoor recreation, including use of public rights of way, attractions or those whose attention or interest is likely to be focused on the landscape and on particular views; and
 - Communities where views contribute to the landscape setting enjoyed by residents in the area.
- 2.22
- Representative viewpoints are identified based on a comprehensive review of the surrounding area, including the following criteria:

- Heritage assets (designated and non-designated);
 - Townscape character;
 - Where the development may be prominent;
 - Be visible from concentrations of residential areas;
 - Open spaces (parkland, publicly accessible space);
 - Potentially sensitive receptors (e.g. schools);
 - Accessibility to the public;
 - The viewing direction, distance and elevation;
 - Townscape and transport nodes.
- 2.23
- The identification of viewpoints also considers any strategic or local viewpoints identified by the local planning authorities or other relevant bodies.
- 2.24
- Each viewpoint is reproduced at **Appendix 2** in the following formats:

- Existing** – baseline photography;
 - Proposed** – ‘existing’ plus wire line (AVR1) or render (AVR3) of the Proposed Development;
 - Cumulative** – ‘proposed’ plus material consents surrounding the Site.

- 2.25
- The methodology for the compilation of AVRs prepared by Cityscape is provided at **Appendix 3**. The objective of a photomontage is to simulate the likely visual changes that would result from a proposed development, and to produce printed images of a size and resolution sufficient to match the perspective in the same view in the field.
- 2.26
- Accurate visual representation is two-dimensional and cannot capture the complexity of the visual experience. It is an approximation of the three-dimensional visual experience the observer would receive on site. Neither do they capture transient significant effects arising from noise or traffic on perception, or that wider range of expectations and associations that anyone in an urban scene may have. A visit to the location from which the photographs were taken is strongly encouraged to appreciate and understand the visual impact.
- 2.27
- The visual amenity value of locations is assessed using the criteria contained in **Table 2.9**. Amenity is a broad concept in planning, and the Planning Portal [online] defines it as “A positive element or elements that contribute to the overall character or enjoyment of an area. For example, open land, trees, historic buildings and the inter-relationship between them, or less tangible factors such as tranquillity.” Changes in amenity are typically assessed through changes to what people see and perceive, and the shorthand for this are ‘views’ and ‘visual impact’.
- 2.28
- The places at which or in which these individuals will experience a change will always be a publicly accessible place, in line with best practice.

The visual assessment is therefore separate to a ‘residential amenity assessment’, which considers private viewpoints from residential properties (refer to GLVIA3, paragraph 6.17). In some instances, the visual impact assessment will address impacts from private land, but that is only where this topic has been scoped with the decision maker and a specific methodology agreed. Such private land amenity assessments often rely on other concepts in town planning/measures such as privacy and enclosure or overbearing.

VISUAL AMENITY VALUE	
Value	Criteria / Examples
Very High	Areas of national or international importance and/or identified strategic views of national or international importance. Very enjoyable area with multiple positive elements and/or Very High townscape value.
High	Areas of national or regional importance, or particular local importance and/or static view identified in the development plan. Enjoyable area with several positive elements and/or High townscape value.
Medium	Areas of regional or local importance and/or static view identified in planning guidance, including conservation area appraisals. Pleasant area with some positive elements and/or Medium townscape value.
Low	Commonplace areas with limited positive elements and/or Low townscape value, often with detracting elements.
Very Low	Area of Very Low townscape value (e.g. industrial areas/busy main roads) that has very few positive characteristics, usually with significant detracting elements.

Table 2.2 Visual Amenity Value Criteria

TOWNSCAPE AND VISUAL SUSCEPTIBILITY

- 2.29 The first stage in the assessment of the Proposed Development on a townscape or visual receptor is to identify its sensitivity to the Proposed Development. Sensitivity is identified by calibrating the baseline value of the receptor with its susceptibility, defined as the ability to accommodate the particular type and/or nature of development without undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline situation and/or the achievement of planning policies and strategies. The criteria for determining townscape susceptibility is described at **Table 2.10** and visual susceptibility at **Table 2.11**.
- TOWNSCAPE SUSCEPTIBILITY**
- 2.30 GLVIA3 explains landscape susceptibility at pages 88–89. There is no specific definition of townscape susceptibility. Professional judgement is applied based on the understanding of landscape susceptibility to reach judgements on townscape susceptibility.
- 2.31 GLVIA3 describes susceptibility to change of landscape receptors as “the ability of the landscape receptor (whether it be the overall character or quality/condition of a particular landscape type or area, or an individual element and/or feature, or a particular aesthetic and perceptual aspect) to accommodate the proposed development without undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline situation and/or the achievement of landscape planning policies and strategies.”
- 2.32 Susceptibility is relative to the general type of development proposed e.g. a receptor may be more or less susceptible to a proposal for an industrial facility as opposed to a residential building depending on the receiving environment. Equally, a receptor may be more or less susceptible to a tall building than a low-rise development depending on the receiving environment.
- 2.33 Effects are particular to the specific landscape / townscape in question, which includes reference to aspects such as the quality, nature and condition of the receptor, or, existing scale and grain e.g. if the existing townscape is of a similar scale and / or grain as the proposed development, it may have a greater ability to accommodate the proposed development and thus a lower susceptibility to change, subject to those existing characteristics not undermining or undue consequence arising from that baseline condition or anticipated achievement of relevant townscape / landscape planning policies, which includes site allocations or anticipated development identified in the statutory development plan.

TOWNSCAPE SUSCEPTIBILITY TO CHANGE CRITERIA	
High	The receptor has a low ability to accommodate the specific proposed change e.g. the existing townscape / landscape comprises very limited or no similar types of development to that proposed and/or the townscape / landscape policies do not anticipate this type of development.
Medium	The receptor has a moderate ability to accommodate the specific proposed change e.g. the existing townscape / landscape comprises some similar types of development to that proposed and/or the townscape / landscape policies anticipate some of this type of development.
Low	The receptor has a high ability to accommodate the specific proposed change e.g. the existing townscape / landscape comprises several similar types of development to that proposed and/or the townscape / landscape policies anticipate this type of development.

Table 2.3 Susceptibility of Townscape Receptor to Change Criteria

VISUAL SUSCEPTIBILITY

- 2.34 GLVIA3 explains visual susceptibility at pages 113–114. Page 113 sets out that susceptibility of different visual receptors to changes in views and visual amenity is mainly a function of:
- The occupation or activity of people experiencing the view at particular locations;
 - The extent to which their attention or interest may therefore be focused on the views and the visual amenity they experience at particular locations.
- 2.35 Visual receptors who are more likely to have a high susceptibility to change include residents at home, people who are engaged in activities that involve an appreciation of the surrounding landscape or townscape, and visitors to heritage assets or other attractions. This is the advice of GLVIA3; however, the guidance also makes it clear that this will not be true in all cases since susceptibility to change is to some extent, as noted, a function of context.
- 2.36 Again, and subject to that qualification, visual receptors who are more likely to have a low susceptibility to change include users of amenity space that does not depend on or involve an appreciation of the surrounding landscape / townscape such as people engaged in sports activities. GLVIA3 states that “each project needs to consider the nature of the

groups of people who will be affected and the extent to which their attention is likely to be focused on views and visual amenity.”

VISUAL SUSCEPTIBILITY TO CHANGE CRITERIA	
High	The receptor has a low ability to accommodate the specific proposed change e.g. the visual receptor is likely to be heavily engaged on the view/visual amenity and/or the type of development is incongruent to the baseline condition or would undermine the enjoyment of the visual receptor.
Medium	The receptor has a moderate ability to accommodate the specific proposed change e.g. the visual receptor is likely to be partially engaged on the view / visual amenity and/or the type of development is congruent to aspects of the baseline condition or would undermine some aspects of the enjoyment of the visual receptor.
Low	The receptor has a high ability to accommodate the specific proposed change e.g. the visual receptor is likely to be not engaged on the view / visual amenity and/or the type of development is congruent to the baseline condition or would not undermine the enjoyment of the visual receptor.

Table 2.4 Susceptibility of Visual Receptor to Change Criteria

TOWNSCAPE AND VISUAL SENSITIVITY

- 2.37 The baseline value of the receptor and its susceptibility are calibrated using the matrix at **Table 2.12**. Sensitivity is recorded in a verbal scale (high, medium or low), supported by the clear narrative linked to evidence from the baseline study and an assessment of susceptibility.

TOWNSCAPE AND VISUAL SENSITIVITY			
Receptor Value	Susceptibility of Receptor to Change		
	Low	Medium	High
Very Low	Low	Low	Low/Medium
Low	Low	Low/Medium	Medium
Medium	Low/Medium	Medium	Medium/High
High	Medium	Medium/High	High
Exceptional	Medium/High	High	High

Table 2.5 Townscape and Visual Sensitivity (Nature of Receptor Likely to be Affected)

TOWNSCAPE AND VISUAL MAGNITUDE

2.38 The magnitude of impact is a qualitative judgement supported by the narrative text within the assessment. The professional judgement is quantified using criteria at **Table 2.13**. The judgement of magnitude considers the size or scale, geographical extent or duration and reversibility of the impact.

TOWNSCAPE AND VISUAL MAGNITUDE OF IMPACT	
High	Major change to the value of the townscape receptor or visual amenity. The proposals would be very noticeable, comprising a notable change over an extensive area or an intensive change over a more limited area. May comprise major alteration to key elements/features/characteristics of the receptor. The duration of this impact may be permanent and non-reversible.
Medium	Moderate change to the value of the townscape receptor or visual amenity. The proposals would be noticeable, comprising a recognisable change over a large area or a moderate change over a more limited area. May comprise alteration to one or more key elements/features/characteristics of the receptor. The duration of this impact may be semi-permanent and partially reversible.
Low	Minor change to the value of the townscape receptor or visual amenity. The proposals would be noticeable, although comprising a small change over a limited area or similar to a main component of the receptor. May comprise minor alteration to one or more key elements/features/characteristics of the receptor. The duration of this impact may be temporary and reversible.
Very Low	Barely discernible change to the value of the townscape receptor or visual amenity. The proposals would not be noticeable, although comprising a very small change over a very limited area or very similar to the main components of the receptor. May comprise very minor alteration to one or more key elements/features/characteristics of the receptor. The duration of this impact may be temporary and reversible.
Nil	No change to the value of the townscape receptor or visual amenity.

Table 2.6 Magnitude of Impact Criteria

TOWNSCAPE AND VISUAL LIKELY EFFECTS

2.39 Likely effects are determined by combining the judgements of sensitivity and the magnitude of impact using a common matrix shared across all topic areas (**Table 2.14**). It is generally considered that moderate to major effects are considered ‘significant’. Criteria defining the scale of effect is provided at **Table 2.15**.

TOWNSCAPE AND VISUAL LIKELY EFFECT ON RECEPTOR			
Magnitude	Sensitivity		
	Low	Medium	High
Nil	None	None	None
Very Low	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible / Minor
Low	Minor	Minor / Moderate	Moderate
Medium	Minor / Moderate	Moderate	Moderate / Major
High	Moderate	Moderate / Major	Major

Table 2.7 Likely Effect on Receptor Matrix

2.40 Professional judgement is required to determine the nature of the likely effects. Criteria defining the nature of effect is provided at **Table 2.16**. For example, there will be cases where a high magnitude of impact produces a major scale of effect, on the basis that the component is prominent or noticeable, but notwithstanding that the quality of effect is beneficial as a consequence of design quality or other benefits. This approach arises most often as a consequence of major developments in areas positively identified for transformational change. Often, such impacts will have varied effects such that a hard and fast categorisation of an effects quality is finely balanced as between beneficial or harmful. In many instances, therefore, the final identification of impact and effect will turn on discursive analysis. This makes a necessary professional adjustment to the tabular analysis format which can produce inaccurate reporting.

TOWNSCAPE AND VISUAL SCALE OF AN EFFECT	
Major	The change resulting from the impact of the Proposed Development upon the receptor would give rise to a very significant effect.
Moderate	The change resulting from the impact of the Proposed Development upon the receptor would give rise to a significant effect.
Minor	The change resulting from the impact of the Proposed Development upon the receptor would give rise to an effect, but this would not be significant.
Negligible	The change resulting from the impact of the Proposed Development upon the receptor would give rise to a barely discernible effect. This would not be significant
None	The change resulting from the impact of the Proposed Development upon the receptor would have no effect.

Table 2.8 Scale of an Effect

2.41 The assessment of nature of effect also requires a qualitative discussion to describe and elucidate this judgement to the reader. This is necessary because townscape and visual assessment is not a strict quantitative process and some of these considerations will depend on expert judgements. Accordingly, there is an emphasis on qualitative text throughout the assessment to describe the receptors and the judgements in regard to the significance of the identified effects.

TOWNSCAPE AND VISUAL NATURE OF AN EFFECT	
Beneficial	An advantageous effect to a receptor
Neutral	An effect that on balance is neither beneficial nor adverse to a receptor.
Adverse	A detrimental effect to a receptor

Table 2.9 Nature of an Effect

CUMULATIVE EFFECTS

2.42 The map at **Figure 2.2.** shows the Cumulative Scheme assessed as part of this BHTVIA, which is also listed below. Consented schemes (those schemes with an extant consent as well as those applications yet to be determined) have been considered within the cumulative assessment.

- Central Club, 36-42 London Street, Reading, RG1 4SQ (planning application ref. 221364).

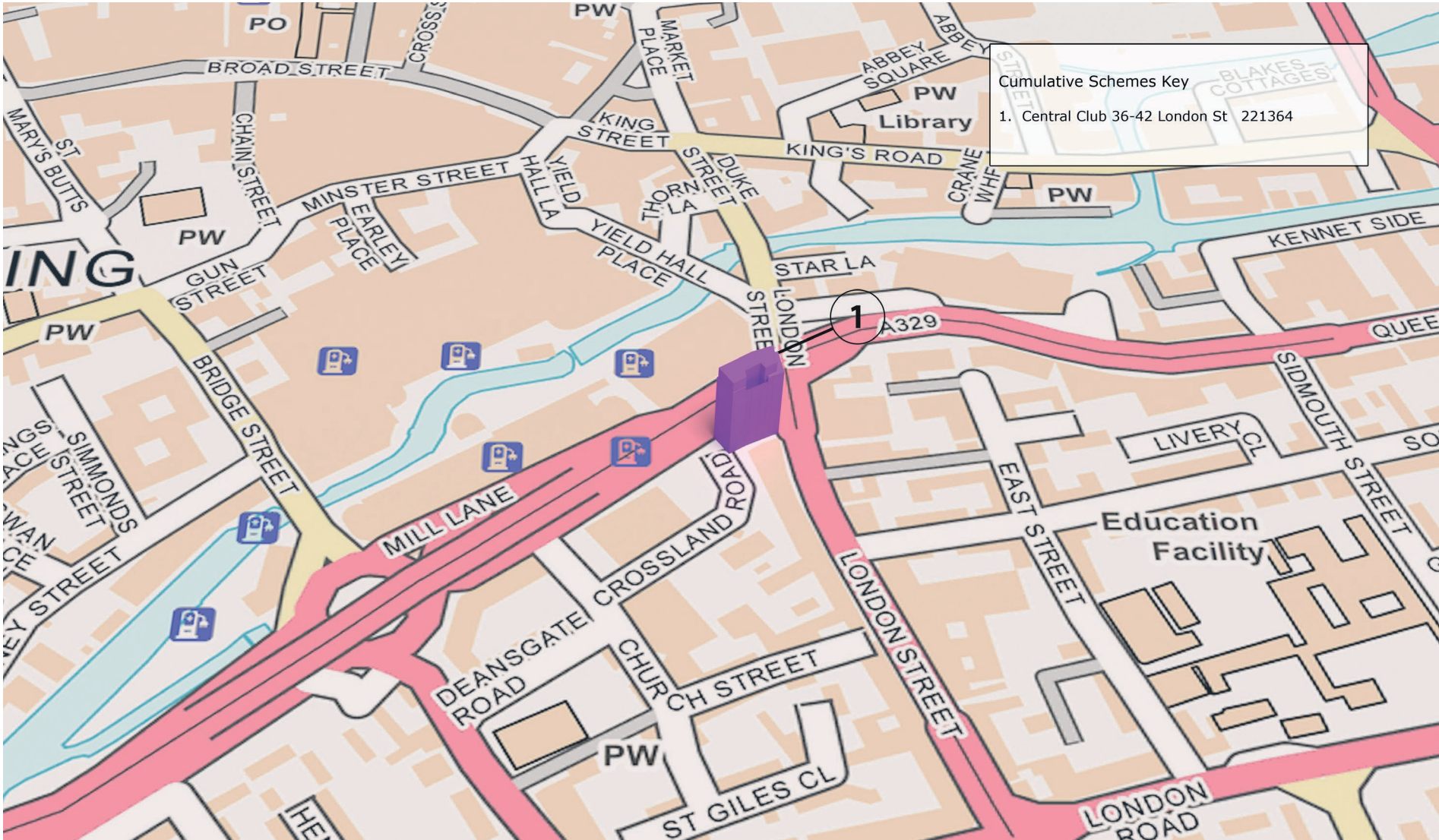


Figure 2.2 Map of Cumulative Schemes. Source: Cityscape

HERITAGE

- 2.43 Paragraph 36 of GPA3 states:
Cumulative assessment is required under the EU Directive on EIA. Its purpose is to identify impacts that are the result of introducing the development into the view in combination with other existing and proposed developments. The combined impact may not simply be the sum of the impacts of individual developments; it may be more, or less.
- 2.44 The word ‘cumulative’ in this context should be taken to mean incremental and the practical effect of this would generally be to increase the degree of harmful impact in specific cases, judged on a qualitative basis. Instances of incremental harm have as matters of practice normally come about when previous development is recognised to have created a harmful condition, to which a specific proposal adds, so potentially augmenting the pre-existing harm. In all cases, however, a freestanding assessment is required.
- 2.45 GPA3 states:
Where the significance of a heritage asset has been compromised in the past by unsympathetic development affecting its setting, to accord with NPPF policies consideration still needs to be given to whether additional change will further detract from, or can enhance, the significance of the asset. Negative change could include severing the last link between an asset and its original setting; positive change could include the restoration of a building’s original designed landscape or the removal of structures impairing key views of it.
- 2.46 Paragraph 40 of GPA3 states:
Where attributes of a development affecting setting may cause some harm to significance and cannot be adjusted, screening may have a part to play in reducing harm. As screening can only mitigate negative impacts, rather than removing impacts or providing enhancement, it ought never to be regarded as a substitute for well-designed developments within the setting of heritage assets.

- 2.47 GPA3 and other guidance (for example, the Greater London Authority’s guidance on World Heritage Sites) uses the word cumulative differently, and in relation to past impacts which have been negative. Thus, according to this approach (which is accepted in decision making), the assessor should consider whether past changes are positive or negative and, if the latter, whether the proposed new change adds to pre-existing harm, and so increases the overall harm caused by proposals. This form of assessment is fact specific and often relies on published documents confirming there has been past harm and why. There is no requirement, however, for such external validation and the matter can arise in individual assessments or through discussions with the competent authority and other stakeholders.

TOWNSCAPE AND VISUAL

- 2.48 GLVIA3 sets out two main approaches to inter-project effects between any given proposed development and cumulative schemes (See GLVIA, paragraph 7.18). The first approach is to focus:
primarily on the additional effects of the main project under consideration... on top of the cumulative baseline
- 2.49 The second approach is to focus:
on the combined effects of all the past, present and future proposals together with the new project
- 2.50 This assessment takes the first approach, which is to focus on the additional effects of the Proposed Development on top of the cumulative baseline. It is considered that this approach is best suited to an urban environment, in which the cumulative effects between the Proposed Development and other cumulative schemes may be complex (including situations in which the effect of the Proposed Development could be lessened or removed entirely by cumulative schemes) and because, as also acknowledged in the GLVIA3, it may not be considered reasonable to assess the effect of many complex schemes other than the Proposed Development in the manner required by the ‘combined effects’ approach.

3.0

LEGISLATION AND POLICY CONTEXT

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

LEGISLATION AND POLICY CONTEXT

3.1 This section sets out the planning policy context for the redevelopment of the Site, including national and local guidance.

LEGISLATION

PLANNING (LISTED BUILDINGS AND CONSERVATION AREAS ACT) 1990

3.2 The Site does not comprise any statutorily listed buildings and nor is it located in a conservation area.

3.3 The Site is, however, located adjacent to the Market Place and London Street Conservation Area.

3.4 There are statutorily listed buildings which have been identified in the study area which may experience a change to their heritage value as a result of the Proposed Development changing their setting. The relevant statutory provisions are set out below.

3.5 Section 66(1) of the 1990 Act which states that:
In considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural and historical interest which it possesses.

DEVELOPMENT PLAN

3.6 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 stipulates that where in making any determination under the Planning Acts, regard is to be had to the development plan, and the determination must be made in accordance with that plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

3.7 The statutory development plan and the policies relevant to the assessment of heritage, townscape and visual considerations are set out in **Table 3.1** below.

DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICY	KEY PROVISIONS
Reading Local Plan (2019)	Policy CC7: Design and the Public Realm Policy EN1: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment Policy EN3: Enhancement of Conservation Areas Policy EN4: Locally Important Heritage Assets Policy EN5: Protection of Significant Views with Heritage Interest Policy EN6: New Development in a Historic Context Policy CR10: Tall Buildings Policy CR14g: Other sites for development in Central Reading: The Oracle Extension, Bridge Street and Letcombe Street

Table 3.1 Development Plan Policy Relevant to BHTVIA

NATIONAL POLICY

3.8 The development plan is supported by the planning policies set out in the NPPF. The relevant provisions are set out at **Table 3.2**.

DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICY	KEY PROVISIONS
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2023	Chapter 12 (Achieving well-designed places) - Paragraph 144 - Paragraph 147 - Paragraph 148 - Paragraph 149 - Paragraph 150 Chapter 16 (Conserving and enhancing the historic environment) - Paragraph 200 - Paragraph 201 - Paragraph 203 - Paragraph 205–208 - Paragraph 209 - Paragraph 212

Table 3.2 National Planning Policy Relevant to BHTVIA

- 3.9 As it relates to decision making in the historic environment, the NPPF can be expressed as a series of principles:
- The significance of any designated heritage asset affected by a proposal should be identified and assessed (NPPF paragraph 200). Heritage interest – or significance – may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic (Glossary to the NPPF). The setting of a heritage asset may contribute to that significance or an appreciation thereof. Hence a change to setting can harm significance;
 - The impact of the proposed development on the significance of the identified asset is then to be considered;
 - If the proposed development is held to cause harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, such harm should be categorised as either less than substantial or substantial (NPPF paragraphs 208 and 207 respectively), and within each category the extent of harm should be clearly articulated (Planning Practice Guidance or ‘PPG’ paragraph 18). The nature and extent of harm is important to ascertain because that analysis informs the balancing out of any harm under the terms of paragraph 208.
 - Underpinning this approach is the principle of proportionality. Whilst any harm to a designated asset is ‘weighted harm’, it is important for the decision maker to assess the extent, nature or degree of harm in order to undertake a balancing exercise;
 - In either case, if a proposal would result in harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation (NPPF paragraph 205), meaning the avoidance of harm and the delivery of enhancement where appropriate. Notwithstanding the ‘great weight’ provision, it would be unreasonable for an impact that is minor in nature or limited to lead to a refusal of permission. What matters, then, is the nature and extent of any harmful impact. Benefits to heritage assets likewise attract great weight in the planning balance;
 - Any harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset should require ‘clear and convincing justification’, as per NPPF paragraph 206. A clear and convincing justification does not create a freestanding test requiring the demonstration of less damaging alternatives. To the extent that there is a test it is to be found in NPPF paragraphs 207 (in the case of substantial harm) and 208 (in the case of less than substantial harm); and

- In either case, and particularly looking at less than substantial harm, the clear and convincing justification the Framework requires is thus made out through no more than the countervailing public benefits delivered by a proposal. Public benefits can include heritage benefits and can also include benefits to the way an area appears or functions or land use planning benefits.

MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.10
- In addition to legislation and policy, the assessment will take into consideration relevant planning guidance and any material considerations, including:
- National Planning Practice Guidance (online);
 - Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third Edition (GLVIA) (2013);
 - An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment (2014);
 - TGN 06/19 Visual Representation of Development Proposals Technical Guidance Note (2019) prepared by Landscape Institute
 - Historic England, Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 2: Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment (2015)
 - Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets (2017);
 - Tall Buildings: Historic England Advice Note 4 (2022);
 - IEMA, ClfA and IHBC (2021) Principles for Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment
 - Market Place/London Street Conservation Area Appraisal (2007)
 - Reading Borough Council Proposals Map (Adopted 2019)
 - City Centre Framework SPD (2008)
 - Significant Views with Heritage Interest assessment (2018)
 - Tall Buildings Strategy (2008)
 - Reading Tall Buildings Strategy Update Note (2018)
 - Reading’s Historic Area Assessment (2023)
 - Reading Local Plan Partial Update (Regulation 18) (November 2023)

BUILT HERITAGE

- 3.11
- The Proposed Development comprises the redevelopment of the Site which lies adjacently to the west of the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area. The Proposed Development also has the potential to affect the contribution that setting makes to the significance of heritage assets located within close proximity to the Site, including St Giles Church, the Quaker Meeting House and a number of listing buildings along London Street. Consequently, a number of local plan policies pertinent to heritage are relevant to the Proposed Development.
- 3.12
- RBC Local Plan Policy EN1 states that:
“All proposals will be expected to protect and where possible enhance the significance of heritage assets and their settings, the historic character and local distinctiveness of the area in which they are located. Proposals should seek to avoid harm in the first instance. Any harm to or loss of a heritage asset should require clear and convincing justification, usually in the form of public benefits.”
- 3.13
- Policy EN4 of Reading’s Local Plan, in reference to non-designated heritage asset, states that:
“Development proposals that affect locally important heritage assets will demonstrate that development conserves architectural, archaeological or historical significance which may include the appearance, character and setting of the asset.”
- 3.14
- Policy EN6 of Reading’s Local Plan, in reference to new development within a historic context:
“In areas characterised by heritage assets, the historic environment will inform and shape new development. New development will make a contribution to the historic character of the area by respecting and enhancing its architectural and visual qualities and considering how heritage considerations can influence the design of new development. When determining planning applications for new development, the following factors will be taken into consideration:
- a.

The positive contribution of the development to the existing historic townscape (scale, height, mass, proportion, plot size, street form, materials, significant vistas and views, and open space);

b.

Sensitivity to historic context;

c.

Reflection of borough-wide major heritage themes that contribute to local distinctiveness (e.g. patterned brickwork or former worker terraced housing);

d.

Whether development promotes and/or improves access to previously undiscovered or neglected historic significance.”
- VIEWS
- 3.15

The Site is located within close proximity to a number of highly graded heritage assets including the Church of St Giles and the Quaker Meeting House. As such, the Proposed Development must have regard to Policy EN5 of Reading’s Local Plan which states:
“New development should not harm and where possible should make a positive contribution to views of acknowledged historical significance.
The following views merit special protection:

1.

View from Mclroy Park towards Chazey Barn Farm, the Thames Meadow and the Chilterns escarpment

2.

View northwards down Southampton St from Whitley St towards St Giles Church, St Mary’s Church and Greyfriars Church

3.

View upstream from Caversham Bridge

4.

View northwards down Russell St towards the Church of the Holy Trinity

5.

View over Alexandra Road Conservation Area toward the Chilterns escarpment

6.

View southwards down St Annes Rd towards Downshire Square

7.

View of St Annes Church Tower from the west

8.

View towards Caversham Park House from the A329(M), railway and surrounding streets

9.

View southwards along tree-lined Coley Avenue”
- (BUILT) HERITAGE, TOWNSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT REPORT | AUGUST 2024

OTHER SITE DESIGNATIONS

- 3.16 The Site is located outside of the three identified areas suitable for tall building clusters in the borough.
- 3.17 Local Plan Policy CR10 Tall Buildings defines tall buildings as those equivalent to 12 residential storeys or 36m AOD. The Proposed Development comprises the introduction of a three-fingered residential block of up to 11 storeys, and therefore, is not considered to be a tall building as per Local Plan Policy CR10.
- 3.18 The Site is currently allocated under Local Plan Policy CR14g, together with land across the A329 occupied by the Oracle Shopping Centre. Specifically, the area at The Oracle between the River Kennet and Mill Lane is identified to accommodate the retail use, with the John Lewis Warehouse site identified for a public car park.
- 3.19 The Site is identified for “the potential redevelopment of warehouse (which forms part of the existing CR14g allocation) for around 200 build-to-rent dwellings”.

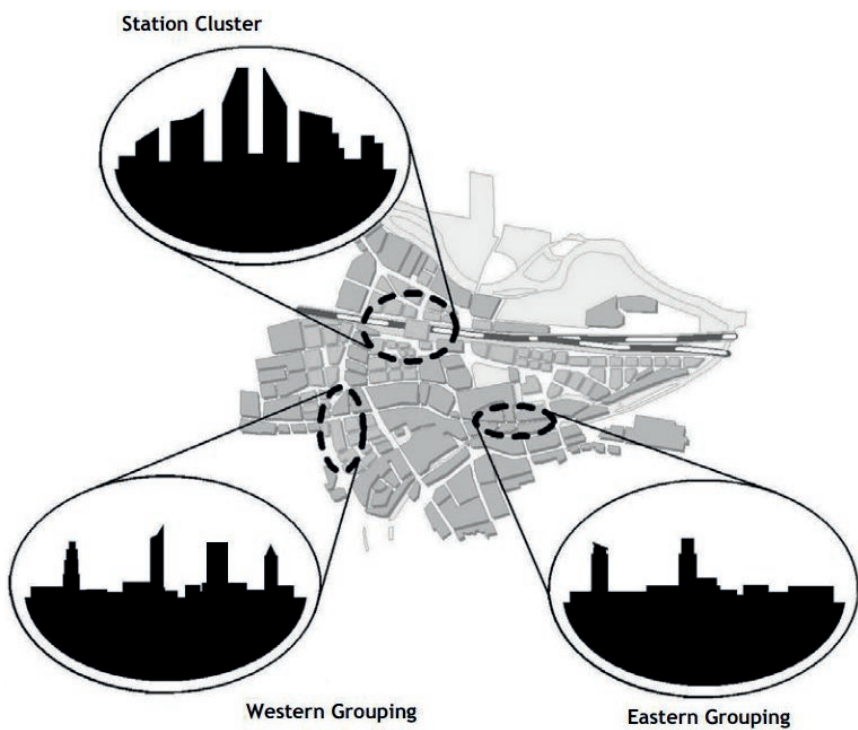


Figure 3.1 Preferred locations for tall buildings. Source: Reading Local Plan (2019).

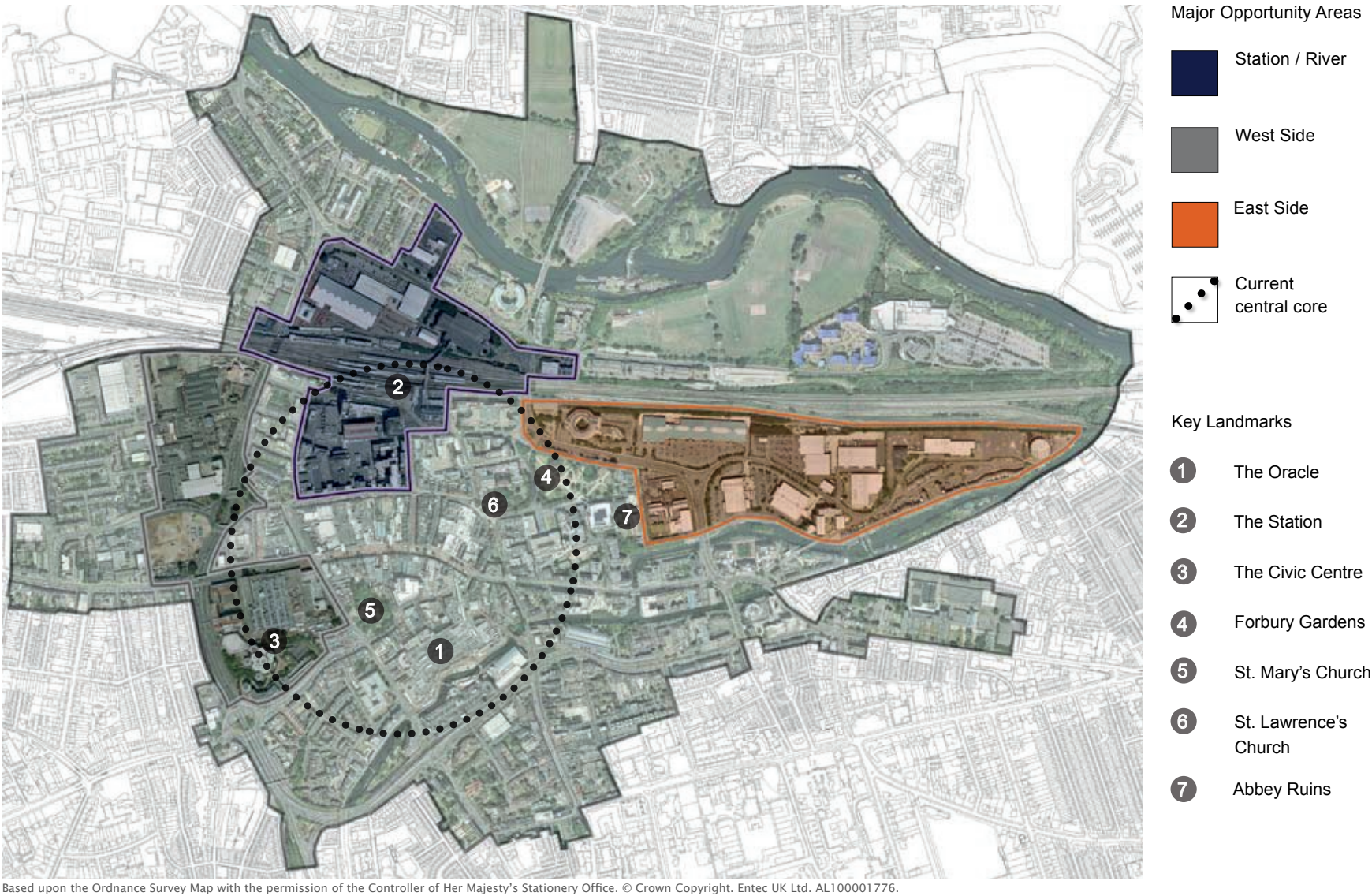


Figure 3.2 Map showing the Central Core, Wider Central Area (including the Site) and Major Opportunity Areas. Source: City Centre Framework SPD (2008).

- 3.20 However, notably Policy CR14g is proposed to be updated as part of the Local Plan Partial Review, as referred to further below.
- 3.21 The Site is not located within any of the major opportunity areas but is located within the wider central area of Reading (as per the plan at Figure 3.2). Reading Borough Council continue to promote residential housing development on suitable brownfield sites within the wider central area, which includes a balanced and integrated mix of size and tenure.

EMERGING LOCAL PLAN

- 3.22
- The Council agreed in March 2023 to undertake a partial review of its adopted Local Plan (2019), following the publication of the NPPF 2021 (now 2023).The 2021 revision of the NPPF included updates in relation to local housing needs and updates to the standard methodology for calculating housing needs, pertinent to urban centres including Reading.
- 3.23
- Consequently, the Council’s findings identify that the Local Plan site allocation (Policy CR14g) relating to the Site is ‘unlikely to be deliverable’ and ‘requires review’. The ‘Review of the Reading Borough Local Plan’ (dated March 2023) states: *“it is likely that landowner intentions have changed regarding CR14g, the Oracle extension, as evidenced by recent applications for the centre, and is no longer expected to entail a retail extension in this location. This allocation is therefore unlikely to be deliverable and requires review.”*
- 3.24
- Reading Borough Council’s Local Development Scheme (March 2023) sets out the anticipated programme and timescales for updates.*
- 3.25
- Reg 19 consultations is to occur between August –September 2024 for the Reading Borough Local Plan. The expected adoption date is summer 2025.*
- 3.26
- The Local Plan Partial Update was published for Regulation 18 Consultation in November 2023. The update includes additional sites nominated for development, which now includes the Site as a separate allocation (Site Cen3: John Lewis Depot, Mill Lane) to the Oracle Shopping Centre.*
- 3.27
- The draft allocation states provides three options for the Site:

▪ Alternative option 1: Do not allocate

▪ Alternative option 2: Retain as part of existing allocation CR14g (see below),

▪ Alternative option 3: Residential development at more general town centre or edge of centre densities (75–125 dwellings)

- 3.28
- The wording of the draft allocation also acknowledges:

“This site is part of the existing allocation CR14g, for an extension to the Oracle involving retail floorspace to the north of this site and relocation of the car park onto this site. This was a longstanding allocation that predated the 2019 Local Plan, but there are no indications that it will be implemented, and the context for new retail has changed substantially in recent years.”
- 3.29
- A response was submitted to the consultation on behalf of JLP in January 2024.

4.0

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

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

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1
- This section of the report provides a description of the historic development of the Site and that of the surrounding area.
- 4.2
- The following paragraphs, have been informed by secondary sources, including:
 - London Street/Market Place Conservation Area Appraisal (2007), Reading Borough Council
 - A History of the County of Berkshire (1923), British History Online
 - Berkshire History Online
 - The Buildings of England: Berkshire (2010), Bradley, Pevsner and Tyack

HISTORY OF MILL LANE, READING

- 4.3
- The map at **Figure 4.1** was produced in 1611 and illustrates how in the 17th century the settlement of Reading comprised a historic core, which developed between the Minster Church of St Mary the Virgin and the Abbey, and ribbon development to the south. By this time, development to the south was well established along ‘Schomakers Row’, ‘Ort Lane’, ‘Sivier Street’ and ‘St Giles Street’. The long existence of this development is exemplified by the presence of the 13th century Church of St Giles. These streets, known in modern times as London Street, Crown Street, Silver Street and Southampton Street, formed an extension to the historic core, separated by the River Kennet.
- 4.4
- The River Kennet has several natural and man-made tributaries running through the centre of the town. The first river crossing in Reading was at Bridge Street, which was known historically as Seven Bridges, owing to the series of seven bridges crossing different tributaries of the River Kennet on the road from the south.
- 4.5
- Before the founding of the Abbey to the north-east of the town, the settlement developed around the Minster Church of St Mary the Virgin. The market was held in front of the church on St Mary Butts and the road from London lead over the Seven Bridges. This road is now known as Southampton Street and Bridge Street. After the foundation of the Abbey in 1121, the town market was held in the north-east of the town and the development of the town gradually realigned with the new market.

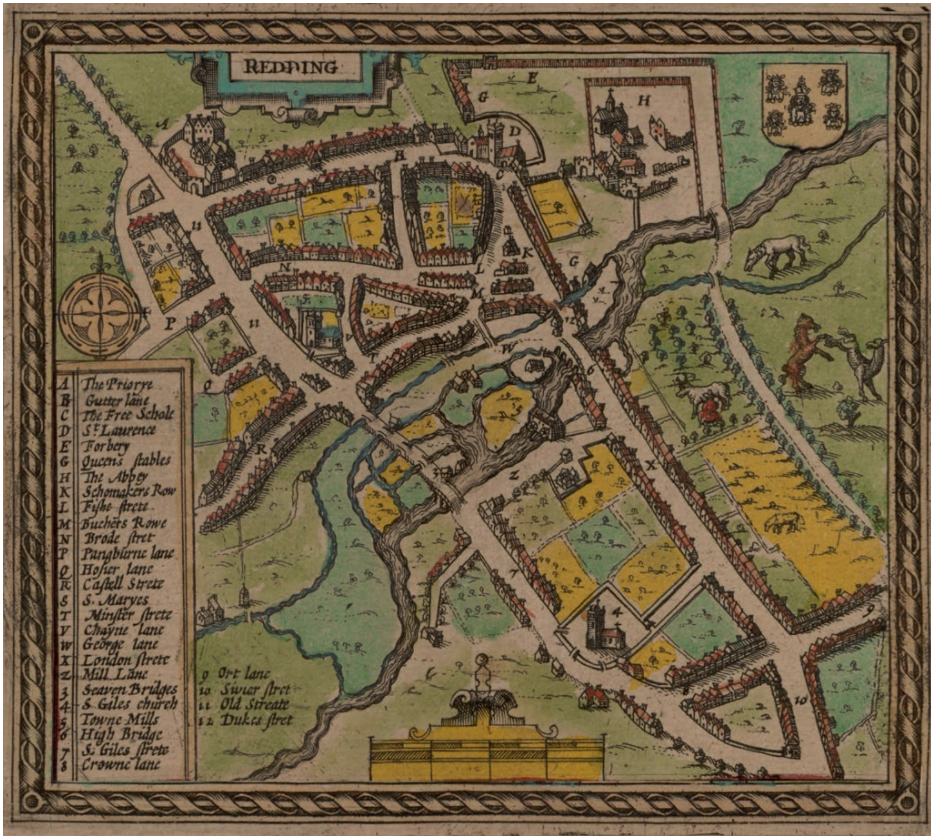


Figure 4.1 Map of Reading, 1611 (Berkshire History)

- 4.6
- Trade entering from the south thereafter used a river crossing at High Bridge to the north of Schomakers Row. This shift in development is illustrated by the 1611 map, which shows that after 1121, Schomaker Row (London Street) in the east became more densely developed than the older St Giles Street (Southampton Street) in the west. **Figure 4.1** illustrates that London Street has been densely developed since at least the 17th century. The nature of this ribbon development was continuous terraced townhouses with narrow street frontages and a fine urban grain. During the 18th and 19th centuries earlier, timber framed buildings were either rebuilt or refaced in line with new building fashions in a neo-classical Georgian style.
- 4.7
- The development of Mill Lane was shaped by the industrialisation of Reading. Water powered mills existed in Reading on the banks of the River Kennet from at least the 11th century. In the east of the town, the Abbey operated mills utilising hydropower from a channel of the Kennet known as the Holy Brook. Another collection of mills existed at the centre of town, these were identified in the Domesday Book and are illustrated in **Figure 4.1**. The “town mill”, known as St Giles Mill, was located on south bank of the Kennet, on Mill Lane. Both the town mill and Mill Lane are identified on the 1611 map.

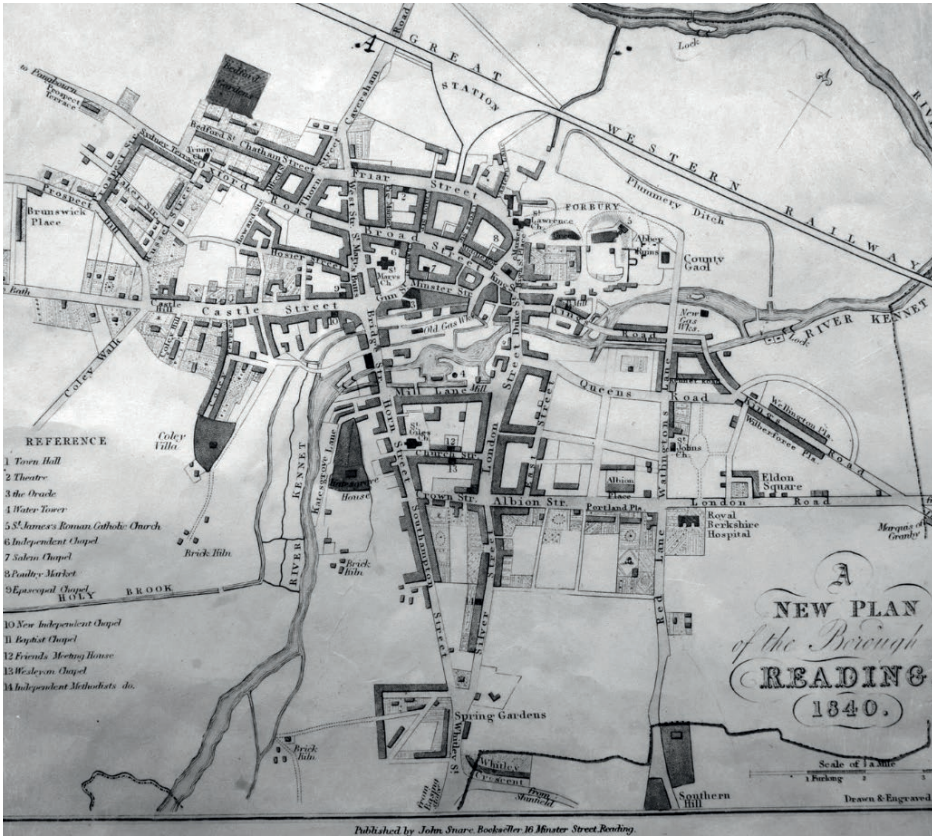


Figure 4.2 Map of Reading, 1840 (source: Berkshire Record Office)

- 4.8
- The industrial character of the waterways and the land to the north and south developed further in the 18th and 19th centuries, with industries such as brewing, gas manufacture, and foundries setting up on the banks of the Kennet. Though the development of these and other industries, the land to the south of Gun Street and Minster Street, and north of Mill Lane developed a distinct industrial character.
- 4.9
- The development of industry in this location was encouraged by the canalisation of the river between 1715 and 1723, which created the Kennet Navigation, and the opening of the 87-mile Kennet & Avon Canal in 1801. Industry and trade in Reading were encouraged more widely by the laying of turnpike roads in the 18th century and the opening of the Great Western Railway in 1841, followed by the South Eastern Railway and South Western Railway, in 1849 and 1856 respectively.
- 4.10
- The 1879 OS Map illustrates the industrial character of the waterways and surrounding area. As Reading developed in the 17th to 19th century, tributaries of the River Kennet, including the Holy Brook, were culverted throughout the centre and built on, reducing the open water and marshland character of the medieval settlement.



Figure 4.3 OS Map of Reading, 1879 (source: National Library of Scotland)

- 4.11 South Reading remained a rural agricultural settlement until the end of the 18th century, illustrated by the 1840 map at **Figure 4.2**. In the mid to late-19th century the population of town grew rapidly, and large suburbs of residential streets were laid particularly in the west and east of Reading. To the south of the River Kennet, development focused first on open land to the east of London Street and later to the west of Southampton Street.
- 4.12 In the 19th century, Mill Lane had a character of terraced dwellings, presumably workers cottages, and industrial buildings. The Goad Insurance Plan indicates that in 1895, the approximate location of the Site was predominantly occupied by the factory and warehouse of cloth manufacturers T. Cook Junior & Sons. To the east and west of the factory were brick terraced dwellings, and a corn store associated with the town mill to the north. During the 19th century, land to the south of Mill Lane appears to have been occupied by the local militia.
- 4.13 In the early 20th century, St Giles Mill and the water works were demolished on the north side of Mill Lane, and the mill stream covered to construct a large tram depot. **Figure 4.6** shows London Street in the foreground, the River Kennet to the right, the tram depot in the centre and the Site on the south side of Mill Lane to the left.

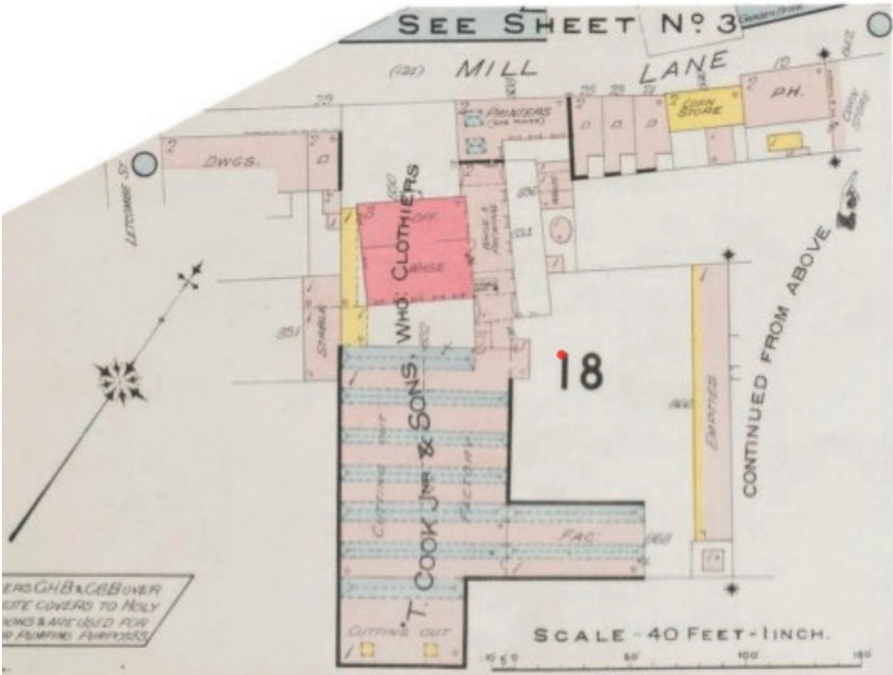


Figure 4.4 Goad Insurance Plan of Site, 1895 (source: British Library)



Figure 4.5 Mill Lane from the west, 1895 (source: Mills Archive)



Figure 4.6 Mill Lane from the east, 1932 (source: Historic England)

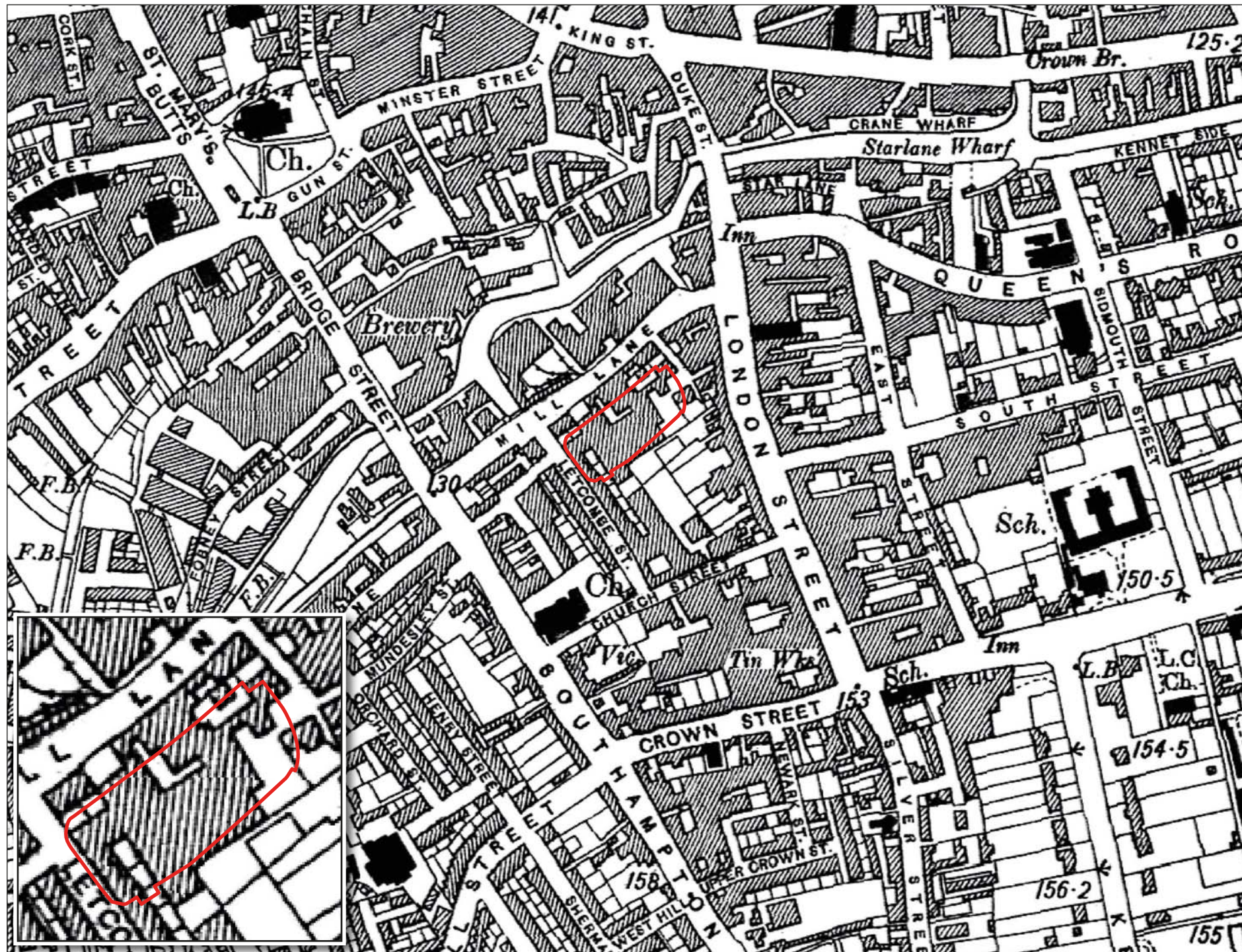


Figure 4.7 OS Map, 1933 (source: Pro Map)