

2.6 Existing Site Photos



View 01 - Looking South West on Mill Lane. Existing site provides no activation to street.



View 02 - Looking South on Crossland Road towards existing site entrance. Building line stepped back from boundary for service yards weakening frontage.



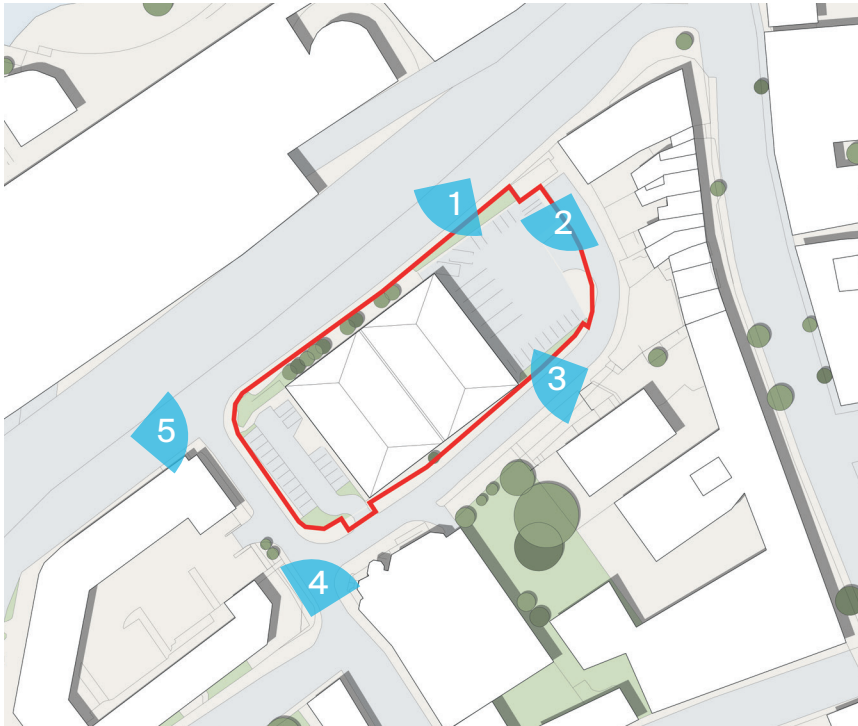
View 03 - Looking South West on Crossland Road. Metal fence provides hard boundary fronting residential uses to the south.



View 04 - Looking North from junction of Letcombe Street and Crossland Road. Building line stepped back from boundary for service yards weakening frontage.



View 05 - Looking East on Mill Lane. The existing site provides no activation to street weakening a prominent corner.



View plan

2.7 Site Allocation

The site is currently part of a Local Plan (2019) allocation (Policy CR14g) – together with land across the A329 occupied by The Oracle Shopping Centre – for 1,600-2,000sqm of retail or town centre uses and public car parking. Specifically the area at The Oracle between the River Kennet and Mill Lane is identified to accommodate the retail use, with the former John Lewis depot site identified for a public car park. Hammerson (owners of The Oracle) have confirmed that they do not require use of the former John Lewis Depot site.

As part of the initial preparation of the Local Plan Review, a Call for Sites was undertaken in May 2023. A response was submitted on behalf of the John Lewis Partnership providing an update on development proposals at Mill Lane and supporting the need for review of Local Plan Policy CR14g.

A formal consultation on the ‘Scope and Content’ of the Local Plan Partial Update (Regulation 18) was published in November 2023. The consultation document (November 2023) acknowledged that there have been changes to sites allocated under Local Plan (2019) Policy CR14 and new sites have now been identified as possible additions for allocation under Policy CR14, including: “John Lewis depot, Mill Lane (Cen3): potential redevelopment of warehouse (which forms part of the existing CR14g allocation) for around 200 build-to-rent dwellings”. The Council’s Local Development Scheme (dated March 2023) sets out the timetable for the partial review of the Local Plan, including submission to the Secretary of State in November 2024 and adoption in June/July 2025.

In addition, the site is located within the boundary of the Reading Central Area, although it is outside of three identified Tall Buildings Clusters within the Borough. The Market Place / London Street Conservation Area borders the site to the south and east and includes several Grade II listed buildings. The site is located within Flood Zone 1, indicating a low risk of flooding. It is also located within an Area of Archaeological Potential and an Air Quality Management Zone which covers the entirety of central Reading

Key

- Reading Borough boundary

Conservation area* (see policies EN1, EN3)

Boundary of Article 4 Direction* (see policies EN1, H7)

Scheduled Ancient Monument* (see policy EN1)

Historic Park or Garden* (see policy EN1)

Area of archaeological potential (policy EN2)

Local Green Space and Public Open Space (policy EN7)

Area of identified biodiversity interest* 1 (see policy EN12)

Existing or proposed Green Link (policy EN12)

Major Landscape Feature (policy EN13)

Boundary of Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty* (see policy EN13)

Ancient Woodland* (see policy EN14)

Air Quality Management Area* (see policy EN15)

Core Employment Area (policy EM2)

Major Transport Project* (policy TR2)

Area safeguarded for Crossrail* (see policy TR2)

M4 Smart Motorway project* (see policy TR2)

Classified Highway Network* (see policy TR3)

Cycle Routes* (see policy TR4)

Boundary of identified centre² (policy RL1) (also shows boundaries of inset maps)

Key frontage in district and local centres (policy RL3)

Major Hazard Sites* (see policy OU2)

Primary Shopping Area (policy CR1)

Office Core (policy CR1)

Central Core (policy CR1)

Designated primary frontage in Central Reading (existing) (policy CR7)

Designated primary frontage in Central Reading (proposed) (policy CR7)

Terraced housing in Central Reading (policy CR9)

Tall buildings cluster (policy CR10)

Major Opportunity Area boundary (policies CR11-13 and SR1-3)

Site identified for development or change (policies CR11-14, SR1-4, WR1-3, CA1, ER1)

Abbey Quarter (policy CR15)

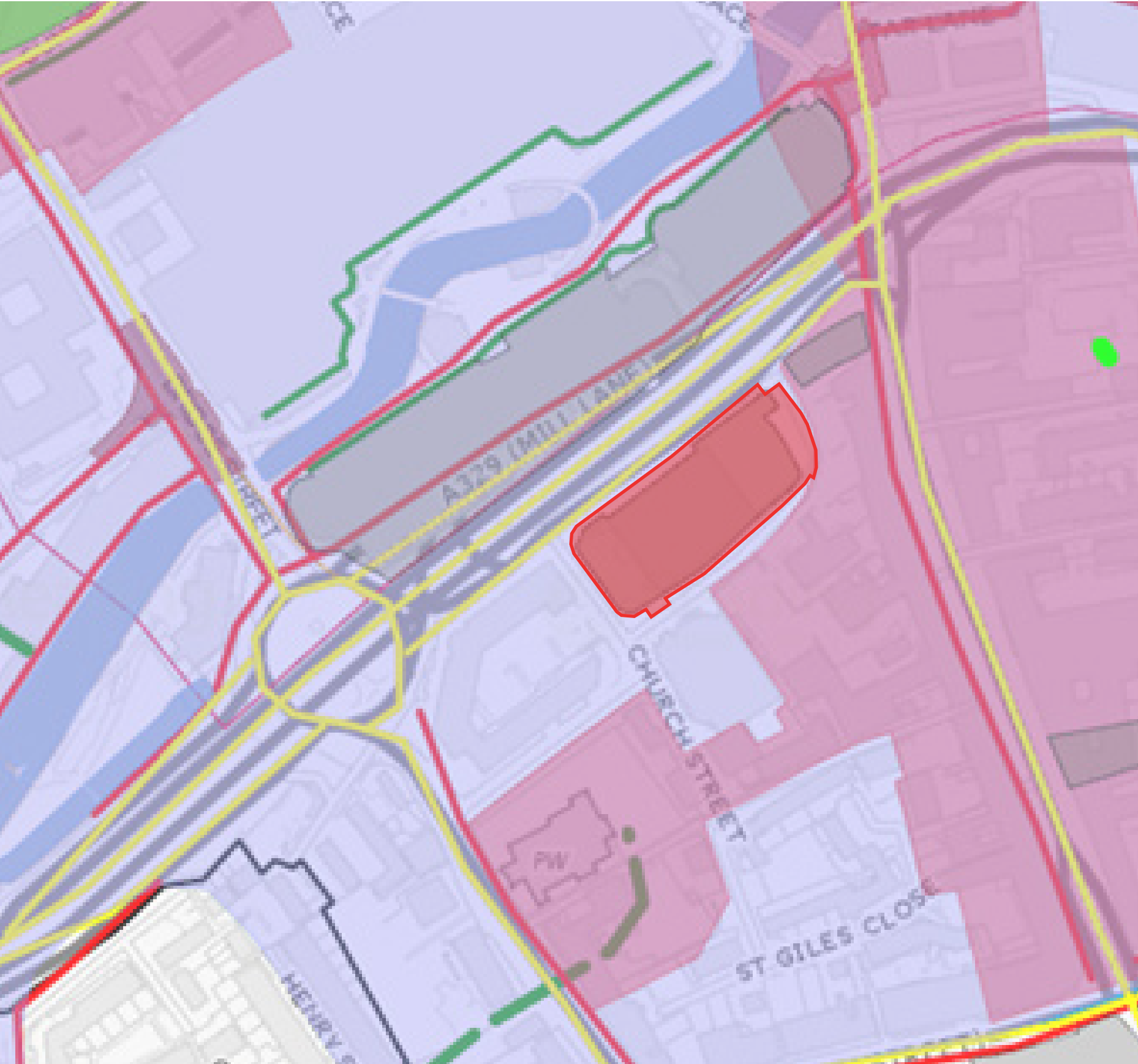
North of Friar Street and East of Station Road (policy CR16)

Leisure and recreation use of the Kennet-side areas (policy SR5)

Caversham Park (policy CA2)

Whiteknights Campus, University of Reading (policy ER2)

Royal Berkshire Hospital (policy ER3)



Extract of Reading Local Plan Proposals Map (2019)

2.8 Planning Context

Adopted Local Plan (2019): Key Policies

In addition to Policy CR14g (referred to above), the Local Plan emphasises the ‘pressing need’ for housing (paragraph 4.4.1) and identifies that around half of the borough’s housing provision will be developed in Central Reading (paragraph 3.2.4). As part of this Local Plan Policy H4 specifically supports Build to Rent schemes which meet specified criteria. Owing to the sustainable location of the site in Central Reading, close to local services and sustainable transport provision, the site is well-placed to accommodate a new residential Build to Rent development.

Local Plan Policies H2, H3, H5 and CR6 provide further guidance regarding affordable housing provision, housing mix and standards for new housing which are particularly relevant and have been reviewed to inform the current development proposals. Owing to the site location, Local Plan Policies CR2, CR10, EN1, TR5, EN15 relating to design, heritage assets, tall buildings, car parking and air quality are also key considerations. Detailed consideration has been given to relevant local planning policies to inform the evolving development proposals at the site as explained within the Planning Statement.

Other key adopted Local Plan policies relevant to this application are listed below:

- Policy CC1 (Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development);
- Policy CC2 (Sustainable Design and Construction);
- Policy CC3 (Adaptation to Climate Change);
- Policy CC4 (Decentralised Energy);
- Policy CC5 (Waste Minimisation and Storage);
- Policy CC6 (Accessibility and the Intensity of Development);
- Policy CC7 (Design and the Public Realm);
- Policy CC8 (Safeguarding Amenities);
- Policy CC9 (Securing Infrastructure);
- Policy EN1 (Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment);
- Policy EN2 (Areas of Archaeological Significance);
- Policy EN4 (Locally Important Heritage Assets);
- Policy EN5 (Protection of Significant Views with Heritage Interest);
- Policy EN6 (New Development in a Historic Context);
- Policy EN9 (Provision of Open Space);
- Policy EN10 (Access to Open Space);
- Policy EN12 (Biodiversity and the Green Network);
- Policy EN14 (Trees, Hedges and Woodland);
- Policy EN15 (Air Quality);
- Policy EN16 (Pollution and Water Resources);
- Policy EN18 (Flooding and Sustainable Drainage Systems);
- Policy EM1 (Provision of Employment Land);
- Policy EM3 (Loss of Employment Land);
- Policy H1 (Provision of Housing);
- Policy H2 (Density and Mix);
- Policy H3 (Affordable Housing);
- Policy H4 (Built to Rent Schemes);

- Policy H5 (Standards for New Housing);
- Policy H10 (Private and Communal Outdoor Space);
- Policy TR1 (Achieving the Transport Strategy);
- Policy TR3 (Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters);
- Policy TR4 (Cycle Routes and Facilities);
- Policy TR5 (Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging);
- Policy OU1 (New and Existing Community Facilities);
- Policy CR1 (Definition of Central Reading);
- Policy CR2 (Design in Central Reading);
- Policy CR3 (Public Realm in Central Reading);
- Policy CR6 (Living in Central Reading);
- Policy CR10 (Tall Buildings).

Emerging Local Plan Partial Update

The Council agreed in March 2023 to undertake a partial update of its adopted Local Plan (2019).

Following an assessment of current adopted Local Plan policies, the Council concluded that a partial update is required, based on changes in local circumstances, changes to national planning policy and recent appeal decisions. This included updates in relation to local housing needs (based on the NPPF 2021 (published since the adoption of the Local Plan in 2019)) and updates to the standard methodology for calculating housing needs, which identifies an uplift required for the largest urban centres including Reading.

Specifically, the Council’s findings identify that the Local Plan site allocation (Policy CR14g) relating to the Mill Lane 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.’

As part of the initial preparation of the Local Plan Review, a Call for Sites was undertaken in May 2023. A response was submitted on behalf of the John Lewis Partnership providing an update on development proposals at Mill Lane and supporting the need for review of Local Plan Policy CR14g.

A formal consultation on the ‘Scope and Content’ of the Local Plan Partial Update (Regulation 18) was published in November 2023. The consultation document (November 2023) acknowledged that there have been changes to sites allocated under Local Plan (2019) Policy CR14 and new sites have now been identified as possible additions for allocation under Policy CR14, including:

“John Lewis depot, Mill Lane (Cen3): potential redevelopment of warehouse (which forms part of the existing CR14g allocation) for around 200 build-to-rent dwellings”.

The Council’s Local Development Scheme (dated March 2023) sets out the timetable for the partial review of the Local Plan, including submission to the Secretary of State in November 2024 and adoption in June/July 2025.

Planning History

Planning permission for the existing John Lewis Warehouse was granted in 1996 (ref. 960750). There have been no further planning applications at the site. There are also a number of nearby sites which have been subject to more recent redevelopment and are relevant to the current proposals:

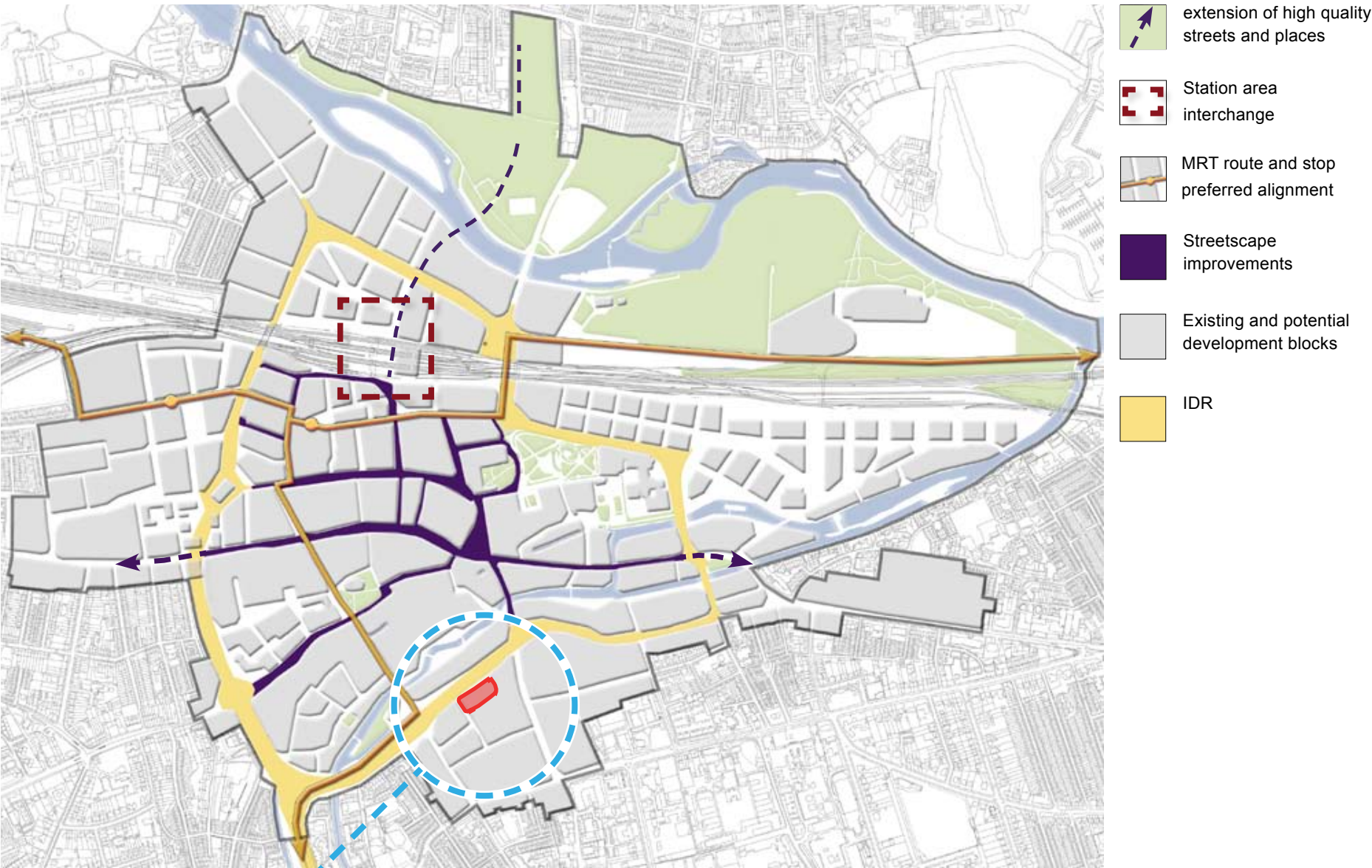
- The Oracle Shopping Centre was originally granted planning permission in 1997 and was subsequently developed (ref. 970419), with a number of further minor applications.
- The Premier Inn site, adjacent to the west, was granted full planning permission in 2006 for a 6-storey hotel which has subsequently been developed (ref. 060395).
- The Thames Quarter redevelopment, the first Build-to-Rent scheme in Reading comprising 315 units over 12-23 storeys, was granted in November 2017 and has now been constructed (ref. 162166).
- Yield Hall Place 1 - Mixed use development comprising part demolition of former department store and erection of new building comprising up to 202no. Build to rent residential dwellings (Class C3) and 1,209 sqm commercial uses within Uses Class E and / or bar. Reconfiguration and change of use of up to 5,866 sqm remaining department store floorspace (Class E) to uses with within Use Class E and / or bar and / or experiential leisure use. Associated public realm, infrastructure works and external alterations to shopping centre, including creation of new shopping centre entrance. (ref. 221916- submitted December 2022, with revisions submitted in March 2024 which are awaiting determination).
- Yield Hall Place 2 - Mixed use development comprising demolition of existing buildings and erection of new building comprising up to 247no. build-to-rent residential dwellings (Class C3) and up to 3,046 sqm commercial floorspace comprising cinema and ground floor commercial uses within Use Class E and /or Bar. Associated public realm and infrastructure works (ref. 221916- submitted December 2022, with revisions submitted in March 2024 which are awaiting determination).
- The Reading Central Club, adjacent to the east, has recently been granted permission for a 4-storey residential-led development including retention of the Black History Mural. (ref. 221364)

Addressing the Inner Distribution Road (IDR) A329

Aims for bridging the IDR set out in the city centre framework:

- ‘Develop an architecture that has a positive contribution to the setting of the IDR’
- ‘Scale and proportion of facade that read well in medium-range views as perceived on the east and west approach’
- ‘Street level greening to improve the environmental and pedestrian experience’

FIGURE 2.7 STRATEGIC ACCESS



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Bridging the barrier of the Inner Distribution Road (IDR) A329

Aims for bridging the IDR set out in the city centre framework:

- ‘Develop an architecture that has a positive contribution to the setting of the IDR’
- ‘Scale and proportion of facade that reads well in medium-range views as perceived on the east and west approach’
- ‘Street level greening to improve the environmental and pedestrian experience’

Supporting strategic corridors for connection to Central Core

- Re-establish a pleasant pedestrian connection between London Street (North) and Southampton Street
- Create a place that is easy to get to and easy to move through
- Improve the pedestrian route along Mill Lane

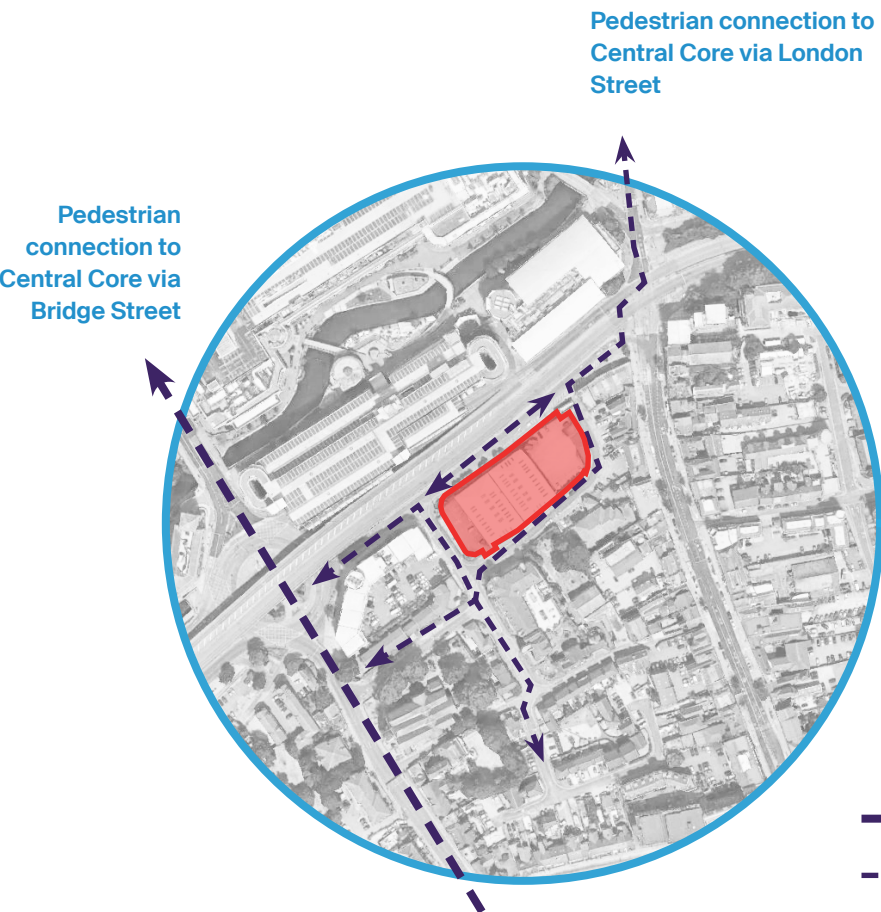
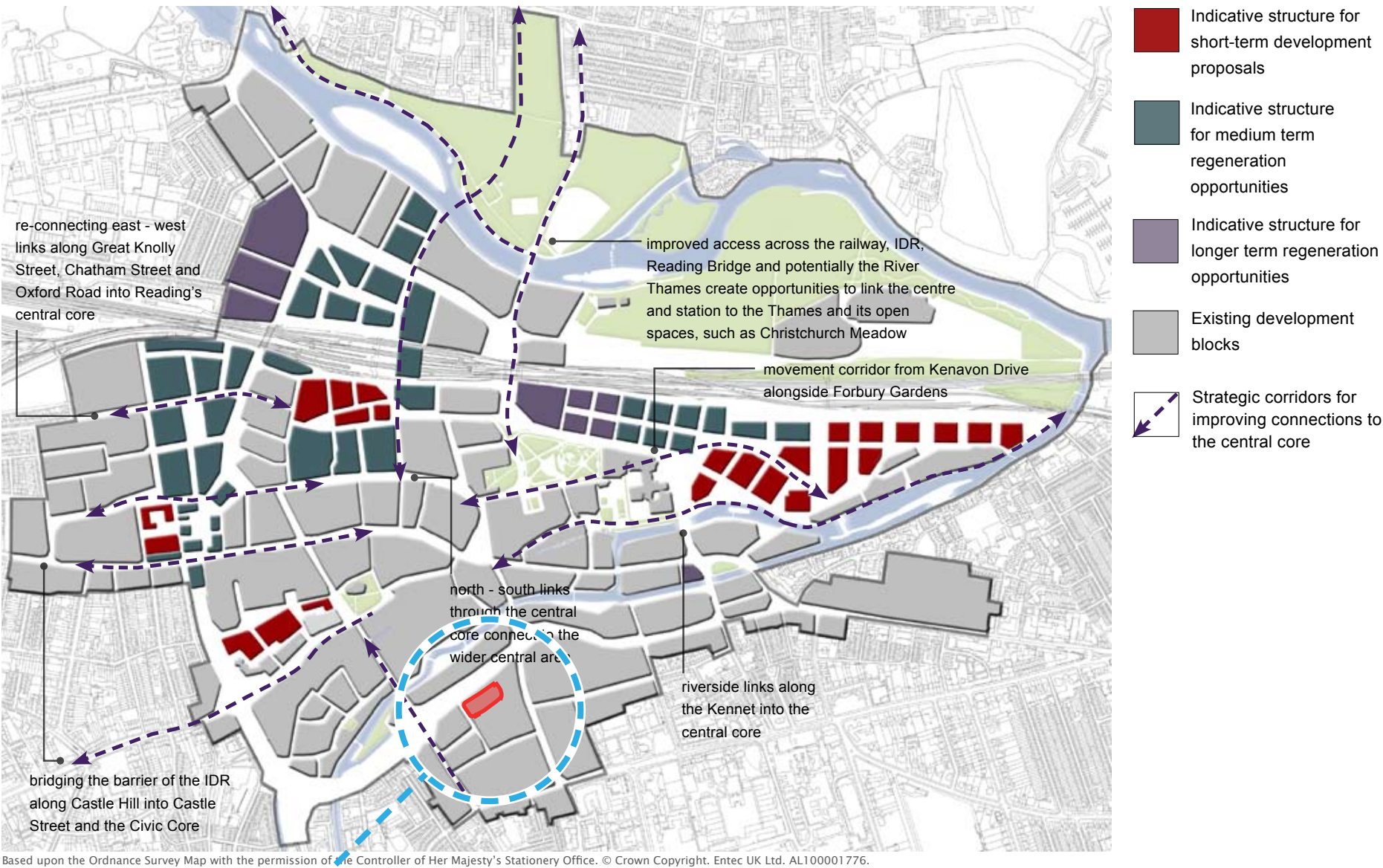


FIGURE 2.1 THE DESIGN FRAMEWORK



Bridging the barrier of the IDR

Aims for bridging the IDR set out in the city centre framework

- ‘Develop an architecture that has a positive contribution to the setting of the IDR’
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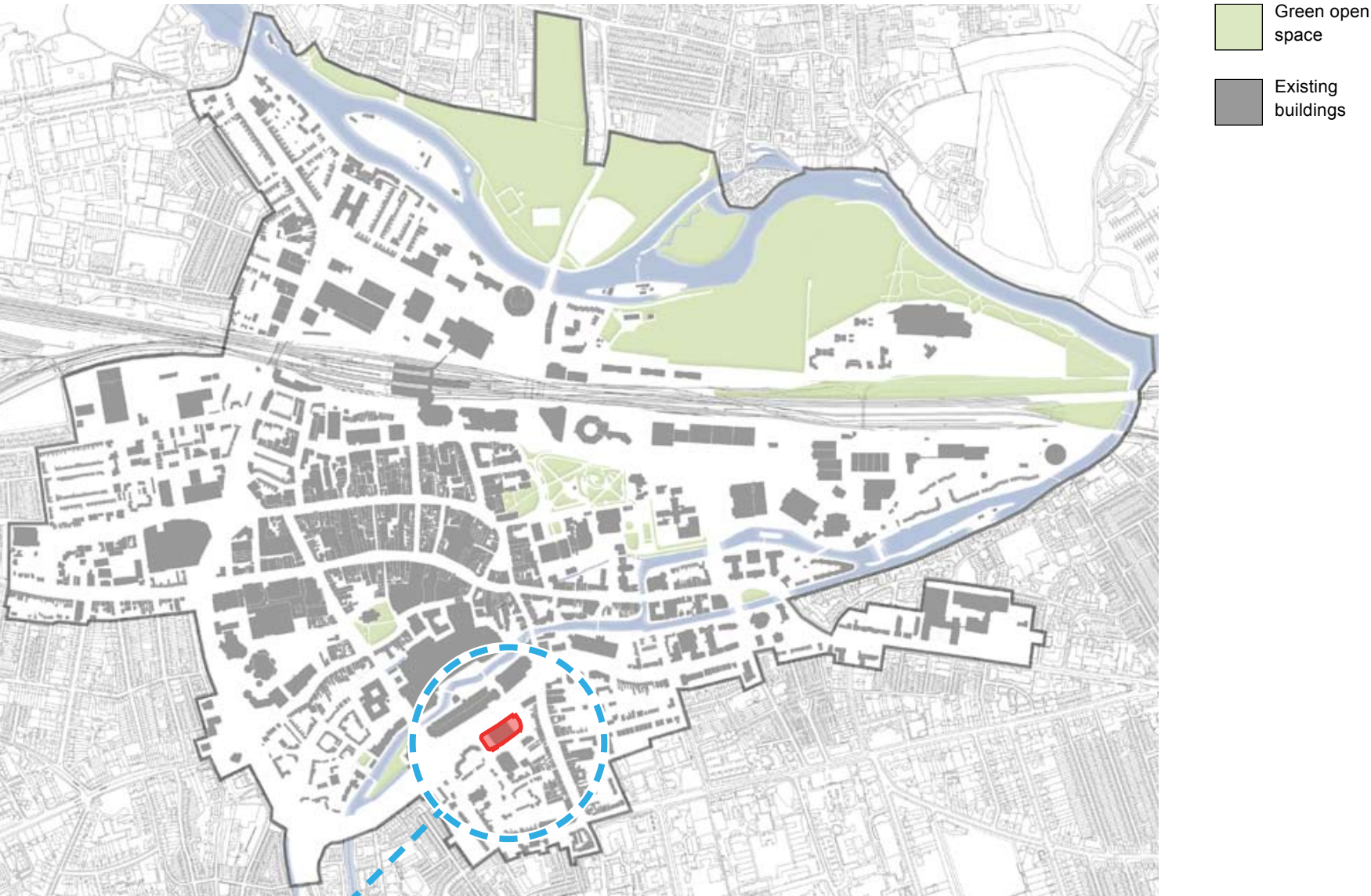
Supporting strategic corridors for connection to Central Core

- Re-establish a pleasant pedestrian connection between London Street (North) and Southampton Street
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- Improve the pedestrian route along Mill Lane

Adding green open space

- Introduce a publicly accessible green open space to the site which compliments the local spaces including the church ground and St. Giles Close Park

FIGURE 2.2 EXISTING URBAN STRUCTURE



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2.10 Site Access and Open Space

Key



Existing site vehicular entrances



Existing pedestrian entrance



Local public open spaces



Bus Stops



Market Place and London Street and Listed Buildings

The heritage context in which the site is located is fully assessed within the (Built) Heritage, Townscape and Visual Impact Report which accompanies this application.

The site is located outside but adjacent to the lower part of the Market Place and London Street Conservation Area. The Market Place and London Street Conservation Area contains several listed buildings. The majority of these buildings line London Street to the East of the site.

There are two key listed buildings to the south of the site which comprise:

- Reading Quaker Meeting House
- Church of St Giles

Key

-  Site Boundary
-  Conservation Area Boundary
-  Listed Building
-  Listed Landmark Building



Source: Market Place/London Street Conservation Area Appraisal