



Figure 11.27 AVR View 4B (proposed). Source: Cityscape.



Figure 11.28 AVR View 4A (cumulative). Source: Cityscape.

GROUP 6: AMENITY USERS OF RIVER KENNET PATH

- 11.34 Receptors within this group are likely to be pedestrians travelling to and from the town centre from the surrounding residential areas, local residents and amenity users of the path. Given their focus on wayfinding, they are likely to be partially engaged with their surroundings with limited to no awareness of the Site. As such, receptors in this group are considered to have a Low susceptibility to the proposals. When calibrated with the Low to Medium value of the visual amenity area, this results in a sensitivity of Low.
- 11.35 The upper elements of the Proposed Development are seen in views looking eastwards along the River Kennet Path, appearing subservient to the residential development on the northern side of the river. The lower elements of the proposals remain obscured by existing development which aligns the IDR, including The Premier Inn and infrastructure of the IDR.
- 11.36 As articulated by AVR View 8, the Proposed Development appears to step up in scale from the seven storeyed Premier Inn but the overall perception of scale is mitigated by the use of a three-finger approach to the massing blocks, with a setback to the uppermost floor. This creates a staggered massing effect, which is appreciable in views from the River Kennet Path.
- 11.37 The placement of the building's tallest elements to the less sensitive, northern and western parts of the Site, simultaneously establish a height relationship with the Oracle Shopping Centre, located directly opposite.
- 11.38 The use of materials which are typical to the character and vernacular of Reading, including buff and red brick tones, aid in integrating and relating the existing residential estate to the northern side of the river.
- 11.39 Where visible, the Proposed Development remains largely peripheral to the visual experience of the receptor, given the extent of interposing development, as well as the three-lane dual-carriageway of the IDR.
- 11.40 As visual receptors travel further eastwards along the River Kennet path, their experience is a kinetic one in which the Proposed Development appears in and out of view, being obstructed by the development comprising the Oracle Shopping Centre and Vue Cinema, creating a sense of enclosure along the eastern element of the river path. Thus for the majority of the receptor's experience, the Proposed Development is occluded from view.
- 11.41 For the reasons outlined above, it is considered that the Proposed Development has a **Very Low** magnitude of impact on the visual amenity

area, resulting in a Negligible Beneficial effect. A beneficial nature of effect is identified given the provision of purposefully designed, high-quality and contextual architecture.



Figure 11.29 AVR View 8 (proposed). Source: Cityscape.



Figure 11.30 AVR View 8 (cumulative). Source: Cityscape.

GROUP 7: AMENITY USERS OF ST GILES CHURCH AND CHURCHYARD

- 11.42 Receptors within this group are likely to be visitors to the grade II listed church and churchyard. Given their focus and engagement on this contemplative space, they are likely to have a Low susceptibility to the Proposed Development, given their limited awareness of the surrounding built form, reinforced by the heavily vegetated churchyard. When calibrated with the Medium value of the area of visual amenity, this results in a sensitivity of Medium.
- 11.43 The Proposed Development will be predominantly occluded from view within the churchyard, given the extent of mature vegetation that aligns its boundary on the north and east. Some partial glimpses through gaps in the tree line may be afforded to the north and eastern part of the churchyard, which may become greater in winter when some of the younger trees in this area have shed their leaf.
- 11.44 Visibility is limited further from the south and west of the churchyard, where the built form of the church limits views of the Proposed Development. Particularly from the narrow footpath to the south, where the visual enclosure provided by consistently scaled development on both sides limits outward views.
- 11.45 The ZTV at **Figure 2.1** has, however, picked up on some potential visibility, which the maximum impact of which is demonstrated by AVR View 15. From here, the Proposed Development is seen in conjunction with the existing, surrounding residential development which comprises a variety of architectural, styles and eras; albeit bound by their shared materiality of a red brick which is historically characteristic to Reading.
- 11.46 There will be a noticeable increase in visual enclosure to the northeast of the churchyard, which is mitigated by a series of design features. The staggered, three-finger approach to massing is perceptible, as the western element of the building gradually decreasing in height towards the eastern end. The set back ranges between the finger blocks will reduce the apparent mass of the building further, reducing overall visual impact.

- 11.47 The proposals step down to the rear, and a change in materials together with a different architectural language will give the development a local scale, enabling its visual integration with the surrounding, existing residential development. This is achieved through the use of red and buff brick tones, as well as Flemish bond corbelling which forms part of the more detailed design language of the exterior elevation.
- 11.48 Overall intervisibility will be transient, and part of receptors' kinetic experience as they move around the heavily vegetated churchyard. The Proposed Development will also be seen in the context of evolving change, with the nearby presences of the IDR, A237 road and large-scale development to the west of the church and nearby roundabout/flyover.
- 11.49 Given the localised impact to the northeastern part of the churchyard, with views from the rest of the churchyard largely limited, the magnitude of impact on the visual amenity area is Low, resulting in a **Minor to Minor-Moderate Beneficial** effect. Professional judgement has subsequently been applied to identify a **Minor Beneficial** effect, given the extent of visibility of the Proposed Development from only a limited area of the churchyard. A beneficial nature of effect is identified given the provision of purposefully design, high-quality and contextual architecture.



Figure 11.31 AVR View 15 (proposed). Source: Cityscape.



Figure 11.32 AVR View 15 (cumulative). Source: Cityscape.

CUMULATIVE ASSESSMENT

- 11.50The cumulative scheme set out in **Section 2.0** has been considered in terms of potential effects on visual receptors within the study area. This scheme is illustrated in the diametric image at **Figure 2.2**.
- 11.51Across the local area, the Development would be visible in conjunction with the adjacent cumulative scheme. The cumulative scheme would be read and understood alongside the emerging development along the southern side of the IDR, as part of both emerging site allocations. The susceptibility of receptors to the Development in the study area would remain the same in the cumulative context, with the likely effects also remaining. the same in the cumulative scenario.

REF	VISUAL RECEPTORS	VALUE	SUSCEPTIBILITY	SENSITIVITY	MAGNITUDE	LIKELY EFFECT	LIKELY EFFECT (CUMULATIVE)
2,3,5,6,7	Local Residents	Medium	High	Medium	Medium	Moderate Beneficial	Moderate Beneficial
9	Road Users	Very Low	Low	Low	Low	Minor Beneficial	Minor Beneficial
1, 10, 11, 12, 13	Commerce/Amenity Users of Reading Town Centre	Low to Medium	Low	Low	Low	Minor Beneficial	Minor Beneficial
14	Amenity Users of Forbury Gardens	Medium	Low	Low	Nil	None	None
4a, 4b	Amenity Users of the Quaker Meeting House	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Moderate Beneficial	Moderate Beneficial
8	Amenity Users of River Kennet Path	Low to Medium	Low	Low	Very Low	Negligible Beneficial	Negligible Beneficial
15	Amenity Users of St Giles Churchyard	Medium	Low	Medium	Low	Minor Beneficial	Minor Beneficial

Table 11.1 Summary of likely effects on visual receptors.

12.0 CONCLUSION

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

CONCLUSION

12.1 This report has been prepared by Montagu Evans LLP on behalf of John Lewis Partners BTR Ltd, to accompany a detailed application for full planning permission to redevelop the Site at Mill Lane, Reading. The proposals comprise the replacement of the existing building on Site with a new building which ranges in heights of up to 11 storeys, to provide a total of 215 built to rent homes. The Proposed Development also comprises the provision of two rear courtyard gardens, one of which will be publicly accessible, providing much needed amenity space within the area.

12.2 In line with Paragraph 200 of the NPPF (2023), this document has identified and described the significance of heritage assets (listed buildings, conservation areas and non-designated heritage assets) within the identified study area. This includes heritage assets that are likely to experience a setting effect arising from the Proposed Development.

12.3 Equally, this report has set out the baseline townscape context which has played an important part in informing the Proposed Development, as well as the identification of representative viewpoints which provide an understanding of the visual amenity of receptors within the surrounding area. Strategic viewpoints have also been identified and assessed, including those identified within the Development Plan and Conservation Area Appraisals.

HERITAGE

12.4 The Proposed Development has been designed to respond positively to designated and non-designated heritage assets in the locality and the character of Reading more widely. The Site does not contain any heritage assets, nor is it within a conservation area. It is, however, in the setting of a number of heritage assets considered in detail in this assessment.

12.5 The Proposed Development mediates between the large-scale development to the north of the A329 and the low-scale historic development to the south and east. Through the stepped form of the building, its mass is concentrated along Mill Lane to the north, reducing in height to the east and south towards the Market Place and London Street CA.

12.6 The Site in its existing condition comprises light-industrial warehouses, hardstanding and palisade fencing. At present the Site makes a neutral contribution to, and in some instances is a detracting feature of the setting of heritage assets within the vicinity of the Site. In combination with other modern development and infrastructure, the Site is a detracting feature along the northern boundary of Sub Area 2 of the CA, in particular. The Proposed Development is a high-quality replacement building which incorporates contextual materiality and landscaping.

12.7 Owing to the scale and form of the Proposed Development, and urban context of the Site, visibility of the taller elements of the scheme are relatively limited. Visibility is concentrated to local street views and axial views on main roads. In places, the upper storeys of the Proposed Development will be visible as an incidental feature of the existing urban skyline of Reading, all the while experienced with buildings of similar scale and massing in that context.

12.8 It is concluded that the Proposed Development will have a neutral effect on the setting and significance of the majority of heritage assets within the identified study area. Heritage assets in close proximity to the Proposed Development will benefit from the introduction of landscaping and activated ground floor frontages, which will increase pedestrian movement and appreciation of heritage assets.

12.9 The Proposed Development has been identified to have a material effect on one designated heritage asset, the Grade II listed Quaker Meeting House. The proposals will result in an intensification of the urban character within the immediate setting of the Meeting House, resulting in a low level of less than substantial harm to the setting of the listed building.

12.10 This low level of less than substantial harm is given due weight in accordance with the NPPF balancing exercise, and must be weighed in the balance with the wider public benefits to be realised by the development proposals.

12.11 In the cumulative scenario, there will be an intensification of modern development within the boundary of the London Street CA, to the east of the Proposed Development. The two developments would be located at the edge of the CA, on the south side of the IDR, where the historic urban grain has been entirely eroded. There would be no greater impact arising from the Proposed Development as a result of the neighbouring scheme.

TOWNSCAPE

12.12 The Proposed Development has been designed to contribute positively to its immediate and surrounding townscape context, as well as introduce change consistent with the emerging townscape character of this part of Reading, which, driven by policy aspirations is evolving to become increasingly residential.

12.13 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 (see **Section 6.o**).

12.14 The existing building currently forms a detracting feature within the surrounding townscape, by virtue of its low-quality, utilitarian appearance; as well as its associated, vacant hard-standing, and hostile boundary formed by a metal railing fence.

12.15 Thus, the redevelopment of the Site and its replacement with a building of a high-quality, contextual design, will revitalise the Site and surrounding townscape.

12.16 The proposed number of up to 215 build to rent residential dwellings, will better align the Site to the emerging policy aspirations for the area, resulting in a finding of Moderate Beneficial to the townscape of Character Area 1.

12.17 Concerning neighbouring character areas, the increased scale of the Proposed Development will enable it to be visible from the northern elements of TCA2 and TCA3. A beneficial nature of effect is identified to these TCAs given the introduction of a high-quality building of scale, the architectural quality of which will be visible from within TCA2, as well as the upgrades to public realm and amenity space which will enhance permeability and wayfinding from within TCA2, contributing to a wider strategy for increased public realm amenity and activation. For TCA3, the building will mainly have wayfinding effects, with increased permeability to the Site and IDR as residents travel towards the town centre, as well as the provision of a building of high architectural quality with associated public realm and landscaping improvements, including a Neighbourhood Garden which will be publicly accessible.

- 12.18
- It is not considered that the likely effect of the Proposed Development would increase or decrease in the cumulative scenario, with both schemes being read and understood as part of the emerging development along the southern side of the IDR, as part of both emerging site allocations.
- 12.19
- In conclusion, the Proposed Development would give rise to townscape effects ranging from Moderate Beneficial to Minor Beneficial. The Proposed Development would provide demonstrable benefits to the existing building on the Site, which would in turn meet the policy aspirations of the Local Plan, including *Policy EN6 New Development in a Historic Context* which requires development to be sensitively designed having regard to the prevailing scale, height, character, building lines, materials and architecture.

VISUAL AMENITY

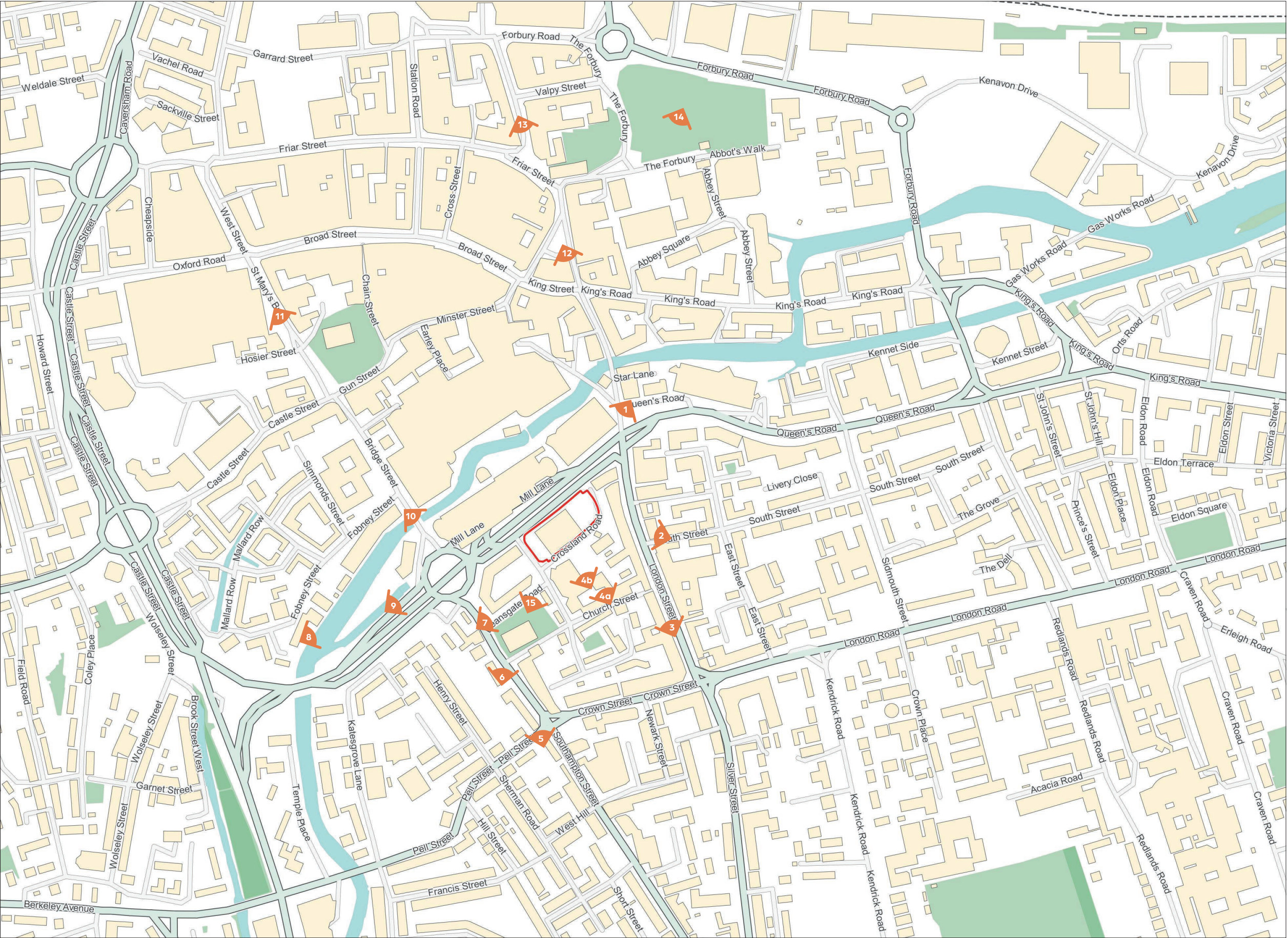
- 12.20
- The Proposed Development comprises the replacement of the existing poor quality and utilitarian building on Site, which has detracted from the visual amenity of the area. The new building comprises a contextual design approach in terms of massing, scale and materiality, as well as two rear courtyards and a number of active frontages at ground floor level.
- 12.21
- In the context of visual amenity, the impacts to visual receptors are considered to either maintain the quality of the existing visual amenity (in the context of Amenity Users of Forbury Gardens) or result in effects which are wholly positive, including a Moderate Beneficial effect on Amenity Users of the Quaker Meeting House.
- 12.22
- It is not considered that the likely effect of the Proposed Development would increase or decrease in the cumulative scenario, with both schemes being read and understood as part of the emerging development along the southern side of the IDR, as part of both emerging site allocations.
- 12.23
- In summary, the Proposed Development is considered to form a positive contribution to the overall visual amenity and enjoyment of this area of Reading, introducing high-quality, responsive architecture which is well-considered in relation to the surrounding visual sensitivities. Importantly, and in line with Policy EN5: Protection of Significant Views with Heritage Interest, the Proposed Development will not give rise to any adverse visual and amenity impacts, nor will it adversely affect strategic and local views.

SUMMARY

- 12.24
- In conclusion, 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.
- 12.25
- 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.
- 12.26
- In 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.
- 12.27
- 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.

APPENDIX 1: HERITAGE ASSETS, TOWNSCAPE AREAS AND VIEWPOINT LOCATION PLANS

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



VIEWS LOCATION PLAN

- Application Site
- Queen's Road / A329 looking west
- Junction with South Street / A327
- A327 looking north
- View north on Church Lane (Quaker Meeting House)
- View north from burial ground (Quaker Meeting House)
- Junction with Pell Street / A327
- St Giles Church
- Deansgate Road
- River Kennet (north bank) looking east
- Bridge Street / A329 looking east
- Bridge Street junction looking south
- The Minster (Grade I) looking south
- Market Place looking south
- Town Hall looking south
- Forbury Gardens looking south
- St Giles Churchyard

LOCATION:
Mill Lane, Reading

DATE:
May 2024

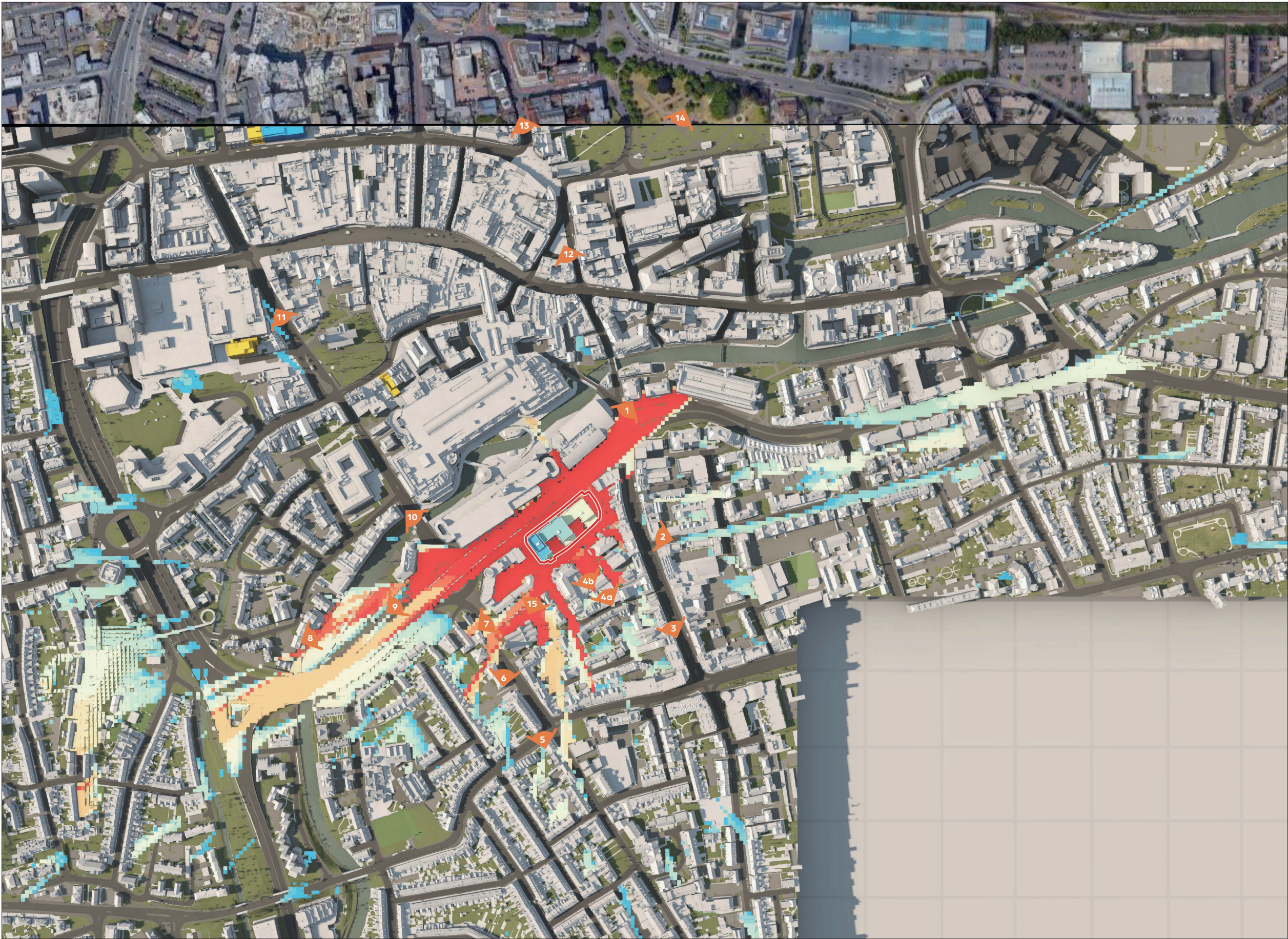
SCALE:
1:5,000 @ A3

FIGURE:

▲ NORTH



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VIEWS LOCATION PLAN

- Application Site
- 1. Queen's Road / A329 looking west
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- 3. A327 looking north
- 4a. View north on Church Lane (Quaker Meeting House)
- 4b. View north from burial ground (Quaker Meeting House)
- 5. Junction with Pell Street / A327
- 6. St Giles Church
- 7. Deansgate Road
- 8. River Kennet (north bank) looking east
- 9. Bridge Street / A329 looking east
- 10. Bridge Street junction looking south
- 11. The Minster (Grade I) looking south
- 12. Market Place looking south
- 13. Town Hall looking south
- 14. Forbury Gardens looking south
- 15. St Giles Churchyard

LOCATION:
Mill Lane, Reading

DATE:
May 2024

SCALE:
1:5,000 @ A3

FIGURE:

▲ NORTH



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