



Figure 10.5 Neighbourhood Garden proposed on the southern element of the Site. Source: DAS prepared by CJCT.

CHARACTER AREA 2: HISTORIC CORE

- 10.15 TCA2: has a **Medium** susceptibility to the Proposed Development, given the largely localised impact on the northwestern part of the TCA. When calibrated with the High value of the area, this will result in a sensitivity of Medium to High. Applying professional judgement and considered the localised impact on only part of the TCA, the sensitivity is judged to be **Medium**.
- 10.16 The Proposed Development will have a localised effect on the north and northwest part of Townscape Character Area 2. The proposals include the integration of active frontages at the ground floor of the building, at both the northern frontage along the IDR, as well as to the south of the building. The introduction of active frontages at this level references the character of buildings within TCA2, particularly those that incorporate a residential use at the upper floors, with an active, commercial or retail use at ground floor. There will be an appreciation of this in views from the northern element of the TCA, looking westwards. The provision of these active frontages and upgrades to the public realm immediately surrounding the Site, including the removal of green railings, paved boundary treatment and planting will significantly revitalise the pedestrian experience and will increase wayfinding and permeability from receptors within TCA2, westwards along the southern frontage of the IDR.
- 10.17 The increased scale of the building, at 11 storeys, has been mitigated in scale, towards the low-scale character of the buildings comprising TCA2. The arrangement of storey heights has incorporated lower scale blocks of six and four storeys to the east of the Site, in closest proximity with TCA2. Further features including a distinguished base, middle and crown seek to mitigate the impact of scale, adding a human proportionality to the building. The top of the building will be particularly distinguishable through the use of vertical corbels and parapet detailing. The visibility of this element of the building from within TCA2, will have a wayfinding function and thus increased permeability in northerly pedestrian routes along London Street.



Figure 10.6 Cross section of eastern elevation to show the step down in height towards TCA2, as well as the use of architectural features that reference the TCA. Source: DAS prepared by CJCT

- 10.18 Given the increased height of the building, of up to 11 storeys, its upper elements will be visible from parts of the TCA, including its architectural treatment and materiality. The materiality of the building has been selected to reference the historic character of the surrounding townscape, particularly the buildings which are located along London Street, within TCA2. The use of Flemish bond brick, lighter brick tones and ceramic detailing, all of which are prevailing material characteristics of the TCA, seek to integrate the proposals within their surrounding townscape context.
- 10.19 Further architectural features and treatments including the application of white banding and white window surrounds, which references the stucco treatment seen on many of the historic buildings within TCA2. In addition to this, the horizontal banding and lighter brick tones which wrap the exterior elevations of the new building, further respond to the linear architectural articulation of TCA2. Other details including the incorporation of rational ordering and the proportionality of the fenestration, respond to the classical ratios seen on the buildings throughout TCA2. Finally, more detailed architectural elements including the Flemish bond corbelling replicate the historic decorative brickwork seen throughout the TCA.
- 10.20 The integration of two areas of amenity space, including a Neighbourhood Garden and a Wellness Garden, on the southern part of the Site, provide some environmental relief and greenery, including trees, shrubbery and planting, in an otherwise densely urban environment.
- 10.21 For the reasons outline above, the Proposed Development is considered to have a **Low** magnitude of impact eon TCA2: Historic Core, resulting in an effect of **Minor Beneficial**. A beneficial nature of effect is identified 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 the TCA and contribute to a wider strategy for increased public realm amenity and activation.



Figure 10.7 Bay study showing the Flemish bond corbelling using brown and buff bricks which weaves through the façade. Source: DAS prepared by CJCT.



Figure 10.8 Bay study showing the use of white banding and window surrounds which reference the buildings within TCA2. Source: DAS prepared by CJCT.



Figure 10.9 Wellness Garden proposed on the southern element of the Site. Source: DAS prepared by CJCT.

CHARACTER AREA 3: RESIDENTIAL

- 10.22 TCA3 has a **Medium** susceptibility to the Proposed Development, given that the Proposed Development will have a localised impact on the northern element of the TCA. When calibrated with the Medium value of the TCA, the subsequent sensitivity is **Medium**.
- 10.23 The introduction of a new building comprising 215 build to rent flats, is more aligned with the wider residential character of the surrounding townscape, including TCA3, than the existing commercial use of the current building on Site.
- 10.24 In views looking north from within the TCA, towards the Site and the IDR, the taller scaled building of up to eleven storeys will be perceptible, but will appear as a transitional building, whilst in line with the scale of the retail and commercial buildings located along the IDR, the application of building materials which reference the local vernacular, including Flemish bond red brick, white horizontal banding, classically proportioned fenestration will reference the character of the surrounding residential areas.
- 10.25 Whilst of an increased scale, the building height steps down to five and four storeys on the southern boundary, mitigating the scale in response to the small heights of residential buildings within the TCA. A setback to the uppermost storey has further mitigated this scale, as well as the breaking up of massing blocks through a three-fingered approach has further contextualised the proposal to the surrounding residential sensitivities.
- 10.26 The southwestern block remains a taller scale at 10 storeys, with a partial step down to eight storeys; however, this corner block located at the junction of Church Street and Crossland Road has a wayfinding function from wider parts of the TCA, forming a prominent townscape feature visible from Southampton Street, St Giles Close and Deansgate Road.
- 10.27 The massing on this corner is further mitigated through the setback of the uppermost storeys and use of a lighter brick tonality at upper levels, allowing these taller components to appear as more subtle additions on the skyline. The use of vernacular buff brick at lower levels, as well as architectural features of classical proportion further relate the Proposed Development with the residential character of development to the south of Church Street and along Deansgate Road.
- 10.28 Permeability and wayfinding from within this Character Area to the Site will be reinforced by the introduction of active frontages at ground floor on the southern elevation, along with the provision of a garden courtyard. These changes will be visible from within the northern part of the area.



Figure 10.10 CGI showing the step down in height on the southern part of the Site. Source: DAS prepared by CJCT architects.

- 10.29 Other public realm and landscape improvements will include the removal of green railings from around the Site, which formed a detracting element within the wider townscape trees and planting on the southern boundary, as well as a low boundary buff brick wall, which provides a less hostile, harsh boundary to the Site; encouraging wayfinding and permeability south along Church Street from TCA3, towards the Site.
- 10.30 The integration of two areas of amenity space, including a Neighbourhood Garden (which will be publicly accessible) and a Wellness Garden, on the southern part of the Site, provide some environmental relief and greenery, as well as responding to the more typical areas of amenity space which are characteristic of TCA3.
- 10.31 For the reasons outlined above, the Proposed Development is considered to have a **Low** magnitude of impact on TCA3: Residential, given the localised impact on the northern part of the TCA which is within closest proximity to the Site. The building will mainly have wayfinding effects on the wider TCA, with increased permeability to the Site and IDR as residents travel towards the town centre. This will result in a **Minor Beneficial** effect, given the proposed use of the building is more aligned to the prevailing character of TCA3, 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.



Figure 10.11 Illustration of the southern elevation of the Site, showing the active frontages and entrance ways at ground floor as well as the planting of trees on the Southern boundary of the Site. Source: DAS prepared by CJCT.



Figure 10.12 CGI showing the publicly accessible Neighbourhood Garden, which is visible from Church Street in views looking north from within the TCA. Source: DAS prepared by CJCT Architects.

CUMULATIVE ASSESSMENT

- 10.32

The cumulative scheme set out in **Section 2.0** has been considered in terms of potential effects on townscape receptors within the study area. This scheme is illustrated in the diametric image at **Figure 2.2**.
- 10.33

Across 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.

SUMMARY

- 10.34

Table 9.1 provides an overview of the townscape receptor considerations and summarises the assessment set out above.

REF	TOWNSCAPE RECEPTOR	VALUE	SUSCEPTIBILITY	SENSITIVITY	MAGNITUDE	LIKELY EFFECT	LIKELY EFFECT (CUMULATIVE)
1	Large scale commercial/retail	Low	Medium	Medium	Medium	Moderate Beneficial	Moderate Beneficial
2	Historic Core	Medium	Medium	Medium	Low	Minor Beneficial	Minor Beneficial
3	Residential	Medium	Medium	Medium	Low	Minor Beneficial	Minor Beneficial

Table 10.1 Summary of likely effects on townscape receptors

11.0 ASSESSMENT: VISUAL

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

ASSESSMENT: VISUAL

EXTENT OF VISIBILITY

- 11.1
- The ZTV at **Figure 2.1** demonstrates the visibility of the Proposed Development in the immediate area. The ZTV applies a colour gradient which represents degree of visibility. Areas of red and orange indicate where the lower levels of the building will be visible, and therefore a greater extent of the proposed development is visible. The lighter colours indicate where the upper elements of the building will be visible from, and therefore where the building is seen to a lesser extent.
- 11.2
- The building will be most visible from the immediate surrounding streets, demonstrated by the areas in red, where the majority of the Proposed Development will be perceptible. This comprises the wide, laterally orientated dual carriageway of the IDR, visibility from here a result of the Site's location on this main route through the town. To the south of this, large parts of the Proposed Development will be visible from Crossland Road, Church Street and Deansgate Road. Within the wider area, visibly extends further east and west along the IDR, as well as the residential area to the north of the River Kennet. To the south, pockets of visibility are demonstrated along South Street and Southampton Street.

REPRESENTATIVE VIEWS: GROUP 1: LOCAL RESIDENTS

- 11.3
- Receptors within this group are likely to be residents of the surrounding areas, including that of the development along Church Street, Deansgate and Letcombe Close, as well as the wider residential environs; who will be highly engaged with their surroundings and the introduction of new built form. As such, the susceptibility of receptors to the Proposed Development will be High. When calibrated with the Medium value of this area of visual amenity, the sensitivity is Medium to High. Professional judgement has been applied to identify a sensitivity of Medium.

- 11.4
- The tight knit urban grain and density of development, (albeit predominantly lower scale) and alignment of streets within this part of Reading has afforded a sense of visual enclosure which has reduced visibility of the Proposed Development in longer views. This, combined with the extent of separation distance has meant that visibility from large parts of the visual amenity area is limited, as demonstrated by the ZTV at **Figure 2.1**. This is further demonstrated by AVR Views 2, 3 and 5 which indicate with the Proposed Development shown in a blue wireline, is wholly occluded from view.
- 11.5
- The Proposed Development will thus be noticeable in close up views, from the residential roads immediately surrounding the Site. This is demonstrated by AVR View 7, located from the east on Church Street. The staggered, three-finger approach to massing is perceptible, as the western element of the building gradually decreases in height towards the eastern end, towards the lower scale residential development on this side. The set back ranges between the finger blocks seek to reduce the apparent mass of the building further.
- 11.6
- The use of a contextual materiality which references the historic vernacular of Reading, through the use of red and buff brick tones and architectural features of interest including a Flemish bond corbelling, which weaves through the principal elevation. This architectural treatment allows the new building to visually integrate with its surroundings, appearing as a welcome addition to the existing visual amenity area. In addition to this, the horizontal banding and lighter brick tones which wrap the exterior elevations of the new building, further responding to the existing architectural language seen throughout the area of visual amenity.
- 11.7
- In close up views from the ground floor, the introduction of two rear courtyards will provide activation to the visual amenity area at street level, unlocking the visual interest of this previously hostile Site. The integration of two areas of amenity space, including a Neighbourhood Garden (which will be publicly accessible) and a Wellness Garden, on the southern part of the Site, provide some environmental relief and greenery in an otherwise densely urban environment; providing further visual interest to the area.
- 11.8
- Given the extent of visibility from the immediate surrounding streets, as well as the considerable visual changes at ground floor level, the Proposed Development is considered to have a **Medium** magnitude of impact on the visual amenity area, resulting in a **Moderate Beneficial** effect. A

beneficial nature of effect is identified given the introduction of contextual, purposefully designed architecture which integrates comfortably within the existing visual amenity area, and provides particular enhancement to the visual interest at ground floor level.



Figure 11.1 AVR View 2 (proposed). Source: Cityscape.



Figure 11.2 AVR View 2 (cumulative). Source: Cityscape