

Waterfront Square, Reading Heritage Impact Assessment

Packaged Living Ltd

16 July 2024

Lichfields is the pre-eminent planning and development consultancy in the UK

**We've been helping create great places
for over 60 years.**

lichfields.uk

Contents

1.0	Introduction	1
2.0	Methodology and scope	3
	Methodology	3
	Scope	4
	Consultation	4
3.0	Heritage statute and policy	5
	Statute and policy context	5
	Application of statute and policy	5
4.0	Baseline conditions	6
	Site and surroundings	6
	Historic development	7
5.0	Significance of heritage assets	11
	Kings Meadow Swimming Pool (Grade II)	11
	Main Building of Reading Station (Grade II)	12
	Reading Abbey Scheduled Monument and Forbury Garden (Grade II Registered Park and Garden) (and other listed building within it)	13
	Reading Bridge (locally listed)	16
	Entrance building, part of Scottish and Southern Energy (SSE), 55 Vastern Road, Reading, RG1 8BU (locally listed)	17
6.0	Proposal's effect on significance	19
	Description of proposal	19
	Assessment of effects	19
7.0	Conclusion	22

Figures

Figure 1.1 Aerial view of the site and surrounding context. Approximate site location outlined in red.	1
Figure 4.1 The existing site as seen from Reading Station	6
Figure 4.2 Top: Oxfordshire Sheet LVI (Surveyed: 1877 to 1878, Published: 1882) Bottom: Berkshire Sheet XXXVII (Surveyed: 1872 to 1877, Published: 1883) Indicative site location shown in red.	9
Figure 4.3 Berkshire Sheet XXXVII.NE (Revised: 1898, Published: 1900) Indicative site location shown in red.	9
Figure 4.4 Top: Berkshire Sheet XXIX.SE (Revised: 1932, Published: ca. 1935), Bottom: Berkshire Sheet XXXVII.NE (Revised: 1931 to 1933, Published: ca. 1936) Indicative site location shown in red.	10
Figure 5.1 King's Meadow Swimming Pool Building, viewed from the south looking towards the site	11
Figure 5.2 Main Building of Reading Station seen looking north towards the River Thames	12
Figure 5.3 Abbey Gate, viewed from Abbot's Walk	15
Figure 5.4 Maiwand Memorial	15
Figure 5.5 Reading Bridge from the north	16
Figure 5.6 55 Vastern Road, view from Vastern Road	17

Appendices

Appendix 1 Zone of Theoretical Visibility

Appendix 2 Classification of Importance of Heritage Assets, Lichfields

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) has been prepared by Lichfields on behalf of our client, Packaged Living Ltd. It assesses the effect of the proposal at Waterfront Square, Reading ('the site') on surrounding above-ground heritage assets.
- 1.2 The application site is located approximately 200m to the north of Reading Station, between Vastern Road, the footpath along the River Thames, Clearwater House and Norman Place (Figure 1.1). The site is not located within a conservation area or an area of archaeological potential; the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area is located approximately 300m south of the site, to the south of Reading Station and an area of archaeological potential is located to the east. There are two locally listed buildings in the vicinity of the site. There are a number of designated heritage assets in the surroundings of the site that may be affected by the proposal.
- 1.3 In accordance with paragraph 200 of the National Planning Policy Framework, this HIA establishes the significance of the heritage assets to be affected, including an understanding of their setting and how it contributes to significance. It then considers the effects of the proposal on setting and significance.
- 1.4 A separate Townscape and Visual Assessment has been completed by Lichfields. This includes accurate visual representations (AVRs). This should be read alongside the HIA. The AVRs will not be reproduced within this Heritage Statement.

Figure 1.1 Aerial view of the site and surrounding context. Approximate site location outlined in red.



Source: Design and Access Statement prepared by Assael

About the Author

- 1.5 This HIA has been produced by a team at Lichfields including Full Members of the Institute of Historic Building Conservation (IHBC) that has extensive experience in preparing reports which assess the effects of new development on the historic environment:
- Heather Marshall BA (Hons) MSc MRTPI IHBC
 - Felix Charteris BA (Hons) MA MA IHBC
 - George Fennell BA (Hons) MA AssocIHBC PCIfA
- 1.6 There is no formal industry-wide definition of a competent expert for the production of Heritage Statements/Heritage Impact Assessments. Full IHBC membership is a benchmark and IHBC accreditation has been identified as compliant with the international standard on cultural heritage conservation practice – the ICOMOS Guidelines of 1993.

2.0 Methodology and scope

Methodology

- 2.1 This section sets out the approach to assessing the significance of heritage assets as well as the approach to assessing the proposal's effect on their significance, including consideration of how changes to setting will affect significance. The methodology accords with IEMA/IHBC/CIfA's guidance the 'Principles of Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment in the UK' (July 2021) which sets out a broad methodology for understanding heritage assets and evaluating the consequences of change.¹
- 2.2 The NPPF defines significance as the 'value' of an asset based on its 'heritage interest', and it defines that interest as archaeological, architectural, artistic and historic. This broadly aligns with the heritage values outlined in Historic England's Conservation Principles, 2008, which are evidential value, aesthetic value, historical value and communal value.
- 2.3 The overview of the significance of the heritage assets has been undertaken using a combination of desk-based study and fieldwork undertaken in January 2024. Relevant desk-based sources consulted include the National Heritage List for England, the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area Appraisal and historic mapping.
- 2.4 As leaves were not yet present on the trees on the date of the fieldwork, this enabled the greatest visibility of heritage assets and the site. Fieldwork was initially informed by Zone of Theoretical Visibility mapping (included at Appendix 1) which was prepared to cover a 4km and 750m radius.² This only reflects screening from buildings and no other screening such as vegetation. Based on an understanding of the nature and extent of visibility across Reading, which is influenced by topography and built development, and that buildings of a similar scale are a general feature of the settings of heritage assets in the city and that the proposal is a building characteristic of its surroundings, a study area of 750m was established for fieldwork to identify those heritage assets where the proposal could affect their significance.
- 2.5 Fieldwork was focused on heritage assets in the local area as well as those where the proposed development has the potential to affect their prominence and/or landmark role, i.e. buildings which feature spires and towers. It was also informed by conservation area appraisals and any key views identified in them. Annex 1 shows the ZTV with designated heritage assets and locally listed buildings identified within the 750m study area.
- 2.6 'Principles of Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment in the UK' sets out at paragraph A.16-A19 that the relative importance of an asset should be identified and scaled. A Classification of Importance of Heritage Assets table prepared by Lichfields is included at Appendix 2. This assigns levels of importance to the various types of designated and non-designated heritage assets, drawing from relevant national and international guidance. It should be

¹ Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA), Institute of Historic Building Conservation (IHBC) and Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA).

² It is important to note that the actual visibility can be overrepresented in the ZTV. The plots may, for example, show visibility through vegetation cover where a theoretical line of sight is present but where in reality the cover would be so dense that it would be difficult to discern a building through the vegetation. Nor do the plots confirm whether the whole development would be visible or a very small part of it.

seen as a starting point as there may be instances where the particular characteristics of a specific asset merit a different category.

- 2.7 The approach to considering the effect of changes to setting upon significance has been carried out in accordance with Historic England's The Setting of Heritage Assets: Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3 (Second Edition), 2017.

Scope

- 2.8 The following heritage assets were considered to be potentially affected by the proposal:

- 1 Kings Meadow Swimming Pool (Grade II)
- 2 Main Building of Reading Station (Grade II)
- 3 Reading Abbey Scheduled Monument and Forbury Garden (Grade II Registered Park and Garden) (and other listed building within it)
- 4 Reading Bridge (locally listed)
- 5 Entrance building, part of Scottish and Southern Energy (SSE), 55 Vastern Road, Reading, RG1 8BU (locally listed)

- 2.9 The ZTV shows visibility of the proposed development and has been used to scope out a number of heritage assets. Aside from within the city centre to the south of the site, the surrounding area is not densely covered with heritage assets. The visual and sensory buffer of the railway line limits visibility and experience of the site from south of it. For this reason, the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area and the listed buildings within and surrounding it have been scoped out. Where there is visibility over the railway line within Forbury Garden, these assets have been scoped in. Caversham Bridge (potential non-designated heritage asset) has been scoped out due to distance from the site, and the existing backdrop of taller buildings in views towards the site.

- 2.10 The proposed development would appear in 'View 1. From McIlroy Park, towards Chazey Barn Farm, the Thames meadows and the Chiltern Escarpment' which is identified in the Reading Assessment of Significant Views with Heritage interest (2018) document. Assessed against the described heritage characteristics of this view, the proposed development would comprise a small change which would be characteristic of the town-centre townscape within this part of the view and would not have an adverse effect on the view. Therefore, whilst this view has been considered in the process of preparing the scope of this assessment, this has not resulted in any additional heritage assets being included within the scope.

Consultation

- 2.11 The proposed scope of this Heritage Impact Assessment was submitted to Reading Borough Council in February 2024. Feedback was not received from RBC on the acceptability of the scope. However, it is considered robust and in line with NPPF requirements based on our professional judgement.

3.0 Heritage statute and policy

Statute and policy context

- 3.1 The relevant statutory development plan for the site comprises Reading Borough Local Plan ('RBLP') and Proposals Map (both November 2019). The heritage statutory consideration for the proposal is s.66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 ("the 1990 Act"), which requires special regard to be given to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting.
- 3.2 Material considerations include:
- 1 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (December 2023);
 - 2 National Planning Practice Guidance: Historic Environment (July 2019);
 - 3 National Design Guidance (January 2021);
 - 4 Reading Tall Building Strategy (Reading Borough Council, January 2008)
 - 5 Assessment of Significant Views of Heritage Interest (Reading Borough Council, January 2018);
 - 6 National Model Design Code (July 2021); and
 - 7 Relevant Historic England guidance, including The Setting of Heritage Assets: Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3 (Second Edition), 2017.

Application of statute and policy

- 3.3 The following are the key heritage policies and statutory consideration the proposal will be assessed against:
- 1 Does the proposal protect and, where possible, enhance the setting, significance and special architectural or historic interest of the affected listed buildings? (s.66(1) of the 1990 Act; Paragraphs 203 and 205, NPPF; Policy EN1; RBLP).
 - 2 Does the proposal preserve and, where appropriate, enhance the setting and significance of the other affected designated heritage assets (in this case a Registered Park and Garden and Scheduled Monument)? (Paragraphs 203 and 205, NPPF; Policies EN1 and EN2; RBLP).
 - 3 Does the proposal comprise high-quality design which relates positively to the surrounding historic environment, conserving the appearance, character and setting of locally important heritage assets, and which reflects local design policies and government guidance on design? (Paragraphs 139 and 209, NPPF; Policies EN1, EN4 and CR2).
 - 4 Does the design of the proposal preserve significant views with heritage interest? (Policy EN5).

4.0 **Baseline conditions**

Site and surroundings

Figure 4.1 The existing site as seen from Reading Station



- 4.1 There is an existing building on the site, with a carpark to the south, fronting Vastern Road and a walled courtyard area to the north fronting the Thames Path. The building dates from the 1990s and is four storeys tall, but with this relating to a commercial building where floor to floor heights are generally greater. AS such, the building reads as a 5-6 storey construct with a significant pitched roof.
- 4.2 The existing building is constructed in buff brick (with stone sills and lintels) with a grey slate hipped roof. On the northern and southern elevation, the building has three protruding bays with hipped dormers above, the central bays being larger. The entrance on the southern side is set within the central bay, with a relatively large pentagonal foyer. These principal facades are symmetrical. The building is currently vacant.
- 4.3 The site is bound by Vastern Road to its south and the River Thames to its north, with the Thames Path running between the site and river. Norman Place - a cul-de-sac – defines the site's western edge. Beyond Norman Place to the west of the site, on the Vastern Road frontage is Sovereign House which is a detached hipped-roof office building of three commercial storeys in height. This is of similar design to the site in terms of materiality, detailing and form; both were built at the same time. To the east is Clearwater Court; a five to six storey office building which has a distinctive broken circular form with central space overlooking the river. To the northwest of the site is a four-storey residential block in buff brick, Thames Court, which has a cranked form, projecting bays to the river and a hipped roof. The design of Thames Court incorporates some similar features to that of Sovereign House and the building on site, such as the roof form, but is of different materials and

façade composition. It was constructed at the same time as the latter two buildings. Outside Thames Court on the river frontage is a ramp up to Christchurch Bridge.

- 4.4 To the south, on the other side of Vastern Road is the multi-storey car park for Reading Station, a five storey brick and stone structure with a taller glazed element located centrally. Beyond is the Station Retail Park which extends to the west along Vastern Road. On the opposite side is 55 Vastern Road, which comprises a two-storey building, along the Vastern Road frontage. The building includes a small fragment of a historic building, which is locally listed. Both sites have planning permission for redevelopment (as set out in Section 5). West of 55 Vastern Road is a mixed area of terraced houses, apartments and a four-storey office building (Great Brighams Mead) facing the junction with Caversham Road. The apartment buildings have a series of private amenity spaces fronting the river.
- 4.5 The existing site context has limited heritage designations or historic character with much of the surroundings (which historically was predominantly railway sidings and industrial buildings) having been comprehensively cleared during the 20th-century. The surrounding context is now characterised by large mid-late 20th-century detached buildings of various scale and character with a loose grain. In the immediate context, there is symmetry between the matching design of Sovereign House and the building on site, with some limited coherency with Thames Court. There is varied height within the surrounding context such as the 12 and 22 storeys of the Thames Quarter scheme, and the 9 storeys of Reading Bridge House. Some historic fragments survive: a small (locally listed) two-storey red-brick building west of the site, likely built in the early 1900s; the original main station building south-west of the site (1865-67, Grade II), and the Kings Meadow Swimming Pool (Reading Lido) (Grade II) to the east of the site. Whilst these two listed buildings are in close proximity to the site, neither are directly adjacent, and their historic settings have been significantly altered by 20th-century development. The locally listed Reading Bridge is also close to the site although views of/ from the bridge are already characterised by the large-scale 20th-century buildings.
- 4.6 Further to the southeast, across the railway line, is Reading Abbey and Forbury Garden and numerous listed structures within (Scheduled Monument, Registered Park and Garden and Grade I, II* and II listed buildings).

Historic development

- 4.7 The first mention of Reading is in the Anglo-Saxon chronicle under the date 871; the town is believed to be named after the “Reading”, Saxon followers of Read, ‘the Red’, who settled in the 6th century.³ In 871, the Danes invaded Wessex, took Reading and fortified a strip of land between the Kennet and the Thames. After the battle of Englefield King Ethelwulf and his brother Alfred attacked them there unsuccessfully.⁴ The Reading Tall Building Strategy notes that:

³ Reading Tall Buildings Strategy, Reading Borough Council, January 2008, Appendix 2 p. 6.

⁴ The Borough of Reading, British History Online, pp. 342-364 [accessed: 01/07/2024 at <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/berks/vol3/pp342-364>]

“The town was originally part of the Royal estate of the Saxon kings of Wessex and is particularly notable for the part it played in the conflicts with Viking invaders that formed the context in which King Alfred the Great established a strengthened Saxon kingdom in the 9th/10th century.”⁵

- 4.8 A key point in Reading’s history was the establishment of Reading Abbey by Henry I in 1121; later to become one of the richest religious houses in England.⁶ This established the historic core of Reading which largely survived until the mid-19th century. Reading developed rapidly during the medieval period due to the growing industries and manufacture of woollen cloth, leather goods and silk weaving, made possible by its location on the crossing of two historic land routes and its proximity to the Kennet and Thames.⁷ The Abbey was destroyed in the Dissolution of the Monasteries in the 16th century, but Reading remained a prominent town over the proceeding centuries.
- 4.9 The economy took a hit during the English Civil War in the mid-17th century, but signs of recovery began in the 18th century. During this period iron-making and brewing became important industries; and inns and public coach stops flourished as Reading became an important stopping off point between Bath and London.⁸
- 4.10 The introduction of commerce through the construction of the Great Western Railway led to a dramatic reverse of the previous stagnation with the opening of Reading Station (entrance constructed in the 1840s, now a public house) and expansion of the town. Due to flooding from the Thames (see Figure 4.2), the land to the north of the station remained largely undeveloped until the late 19th century. No development is shown on the site during the 1870s (see Figure 4.2). By the end of 19th century, the land to the south of Vastern Road was occupied by the GWR works with Thames Bank Ironworks Shown on the site (see Figure 4.3).
- 4.11 In the mid-20th century, the centre of Reading was redeveloped by demolishing parts of the historic core to provide land for office buildings and shopping precincts.
- 4.12 Reading Bridge (locally listed) was built in 1923 to connect with Lower Caversham, with the current Caversham Bridge following in 1926. These are both shown on mapping from the 1930’s as is the Thames Lido (King’s Meadow Swimming Pool, Grade II) which had been built in 1902 (Figure 4.4). Christchurch playing fields can also be seen. Caversham Mill is marked as disused. A paint works is shown on the site in more detailed mapping from this time.
- 4.13 By the mid to late 20th century Reading Bridge House had been built together with the multi-storey station car park and a retail warehousing development, Station Shopping Park. The current office buildings, which includes Sovereign Court and the building on site were constructed on the site of former industrial buildings in the 1990s. Clearwater Court was built as a headquarters for Thames Water and opened in 2001. Christchurch Bridge was opened in 2015.

⁵ Reading Tall Buildings Strategy, Reading Borough Council, January 2008, p. 18

⁶ Market Place/London Street Conservation Area Appraisal, Reading Borough Council, p. 6.

⁷ Market Place/London Street Conservation Area Appraisal, Reading Borough Council, p. 7.

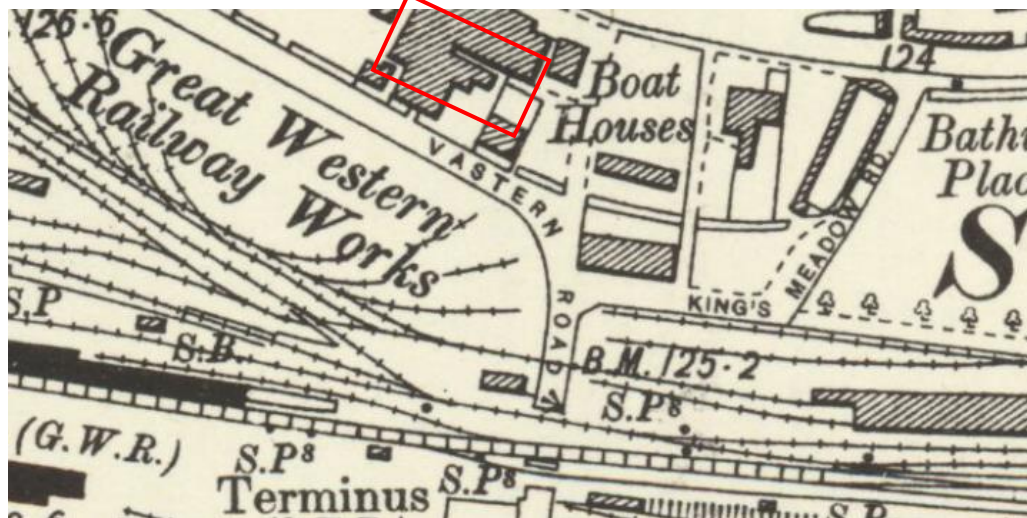
⁸ Reading Tall Buildings Strategy, Reading Borough Council, January 2008, Appendix 2 p. 12.

Figure 4.2 Top: Oxfordshire Sheet LVI (Surveyed: 1877 to 1878, Published: 1882) Bottom: Berkshire Sheet XXXVII (Surveyed: 1872 to 1877, Published: 1883) Indicative site location shown in red.



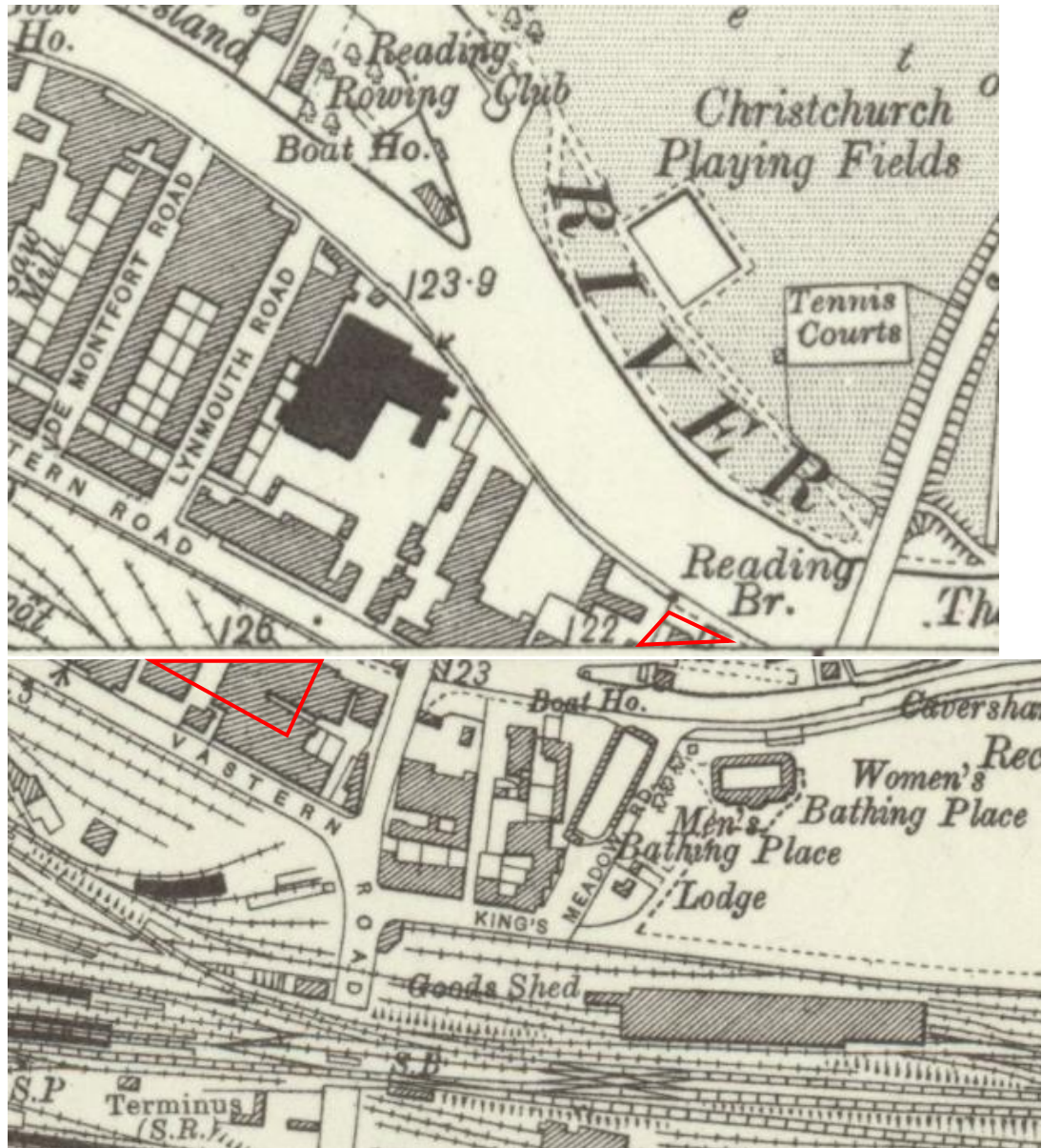
Source: National Library of Scotland

Figure 4.3 Berkshire Sheet XXXVII.NE (Revised: 1898, Published: 1900) Indicative site location shown in red.



Source: National Library of Scotland

Figure 4.4 Top: Berkshire Sheet XXIX.SE (Revised: 1932, Published: ca. 1935), Bottom: Berkshire Sheet XXXVII.NE (Revised: 1931 to 1933, Published: ca. 1936) Indicative site location shown in red.



Source: National Library of Scotland

5.0

Significance of heritage assets

Kings Meadow Swimming Pool (Grade II)

Figure 5.1 King's Meadow Swimming Pool Building, viewed from the south looking towards the site



5.1

The King's Meadow Swimming Pool was constructed in 1902 by John Bown, Borough Engineer and Surveyor, with late 20th century alterations. The pool building surrounds the outdoor swimming pool on all sides and is of red and white brick with ashlar dressings and plain tile roofs. The canopy roofs were replaced with corrugated iron in the 20th century. The swimming pool is white tiled and rectangular, surrounded by a covered loggia with a timber roof.⁹ The entrance is located in an octagonal building projecting from the centre of the south side, with three small dormers and a clay tiled roof (Figure 5.1).

5.2

The pool originally opened as a ladies swimming bath, with no windows onto the pool itself, allowing Edwardian women to bathe in privacy. It was originally fed from the Thames and then was converted to mains supply in the 1950s. The pool was closed to the public in 1974 and was disused for several decades. It was listed in 2004. In 2017, the site was reopened to the public following a programme of renovation.¹⁰

5.3

The building is of historic and architectural interest; it is an extremely rare and high-quality example of a complete Edwardian lido. The detailing and form of the entrance are attractive, as is the detailing of the interior. The architectural interest is slightly eroded by some of the less sensitive 20th century and 21st century alterations, such as the roofs and extension on the west side. The interior alterations are of a high-quality, however, which retain and complement the Edwardian detailing in an appropriate manner.

⁹ National Heritage List for England [accessed: 01/07/2024 at: <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1391153?section=official-list-entry>]

¹⁰ History of the Thames Lido [accessed: 01/07/2024 at: <https://www.thameslido.com/history-of-thames-lido/>]

5.4 There is also some communal value, as the heritage asset is used by the public; it is appreciated as a rare and historic building, as demonstrated by the public campaign to have it added to the list in 2004.

5.5 As a Grade II listed building, it is of Medium Importance (Appendix 2).

Setting

5.6 The pool derives most of its positive setting from the tree backdrop and from the surrounding open space of the park. The immediate setting contributes to the significance of the pool as a serene green space. The wider setting is characterised by a series of taller buildings which create an established urban backdrop to the trees within the immediate setting. The wider setting does not contribute to the significance of the listed building.

5.7 Due to intervening trees and Reading Bridge House, the existing building on the site is not visible from the pool and does not contribute to its setting.

Main Building of Reading Station (Grade II)

Figure 5.2 Main Building of Reading Station seen looking north towards the River Thames



5.8 The Main Building of Reading Station was constructed 1865-1867 to designs by Michael Lane.¹¹ The primary façade is symmetrical with Italianate detailing, and a large cupola located centrally on the roof with a clock. The building is two storeys, constructed in sandstone, with Bath stone quoins and dressings. The building has moulded cornices and a blocking course. It has a hipped roof and a canopy extending over the ground floor (Figure 5.2). The building is currently in use as a public house.

¹¹ There is some dispute in the literature about whether the station building was an enlargement and remodelling of Brunel's original station of 1940 or an original design. See: <https://thebeautyoftransport.com/2020/01/29/unblocking-the-bottleneck-reading-station-reading-uk/>

- 5.9 The building is adjoined to the east to the modern and poorly detailed 1980s shopping and station building, and to the west by the attractive and vast new station bridge with a sweeping roof structure.
- 5.10 The building has a degree of architectural and historic interest. The building has illustrative value as it illustrates the historic siting of Reading Station, juxtaposed visually with the modern-styled station buildings to the east and west, providing a clear visual link to the past. The architectural interest is derived from its aesthetic value – the building retains some local dominance within the streetscene, sitting between the two later railway buildings within a square. The building is attractive with extensive detailing, which provides a positive contrast to with these later, more modestly detailed buildings.
- 5.11 As a Grade II listed building, it is of Medium Importance (Appendix 2).

Setting

- 5.12 The setting of the building is comprised of the modern station buildings which are neutral aspects of its setting and the open and largely pedestrianised forecourt in front which is also situated adjacent to the recent tall-building, Thames House, on the southern side. This open space makes a positive contribution to significance as it preserves the local prominence of the former railway building.
- 5.13 The setting contributes to the significance to a small degree, owing to the positive relationship with the square, but there are some neutral and detracting elements which form part of the immediate setting. The historic setting has largely been eroded by modern development.
- 5.14 The application site in its existing condition has no material relationship with the listed building and is a neutral part of the much wider urban setting. A taller building at the site may affect the wider setting of the asset.

Reading Abbey Scheduled Monument and Forbury Garden (Grade II Registered Park and Garden) (and other listed building within it)

- 5.15 The Reading Abbey Scheduled Monument includes a number of related listed structures, such as the remains of the Abbey ruins and the Abbey Gate (both Grade I), and newer buildings and structures such as Reading Gaol and 10, 11 and 12 Abbot's Walk (all Grade II). The boundary of Forbury Garden (Registered Park and Garden) overlaps partially with the boundary of the Scheduled Monument.
- 5.16 The Scheduled Monument has a varied character – having a significant built element of Reading Gaol and the Church of St James, archaeological remains of the ruins and Abbey Gate, and the formal layout of the Forbury Garden with areas of hardstanding paths, trees and memorials. There would be some intervisibility between the site and the Forbury Garden, part of the Scheduled Monument, and the Maiwand Memorial. There would be negligible visibility from the Abbey Gate. These assets are the focus of this assessment.
- 5.17 The Scheduled Monument and Forbury Garden have a high degree of evidential value, being associated with Reading Abbey dating from 1121, and the area being occupied since at

least 870AD.¹² The above-ground ruins form an important part of this evidential value, and have architectural interest in themselves, but there is also a high potential for below-ground remains. These may have been disturbed by the establishing of Forbury Garden with hard and soft landscaping.

- 5.18 The Abbey Gate (Grade I Listed) has a high degree of architectural and historic interest. The historic interest is derived from its age, dating from the 12th to 14th century originally and its association with the Abbey. The nature of its significance has been altered, as the Gate was entirely remodelled in 1861 which, presumably, would have seen the loss of historic fabric. The redesign of Sir George Gilbert Scott is of a high quality.¹³ This gives it additional architectural interest and aesthetic value (Figure 5.3).
- 5.19 The Mainwand Memorial (Grade II Listed) comprises a rectangular plinth with tablet with a large cast iron statue of a lion atop. The Memorial was erected in 1886 in recognition of a Berkshire regiment who fought and died at Girisk, Maiwand and Kandahar during the Second Anglo-Afghan War (Figure 5.4).¹⁴ The Memorial has a degree of historic and architectural interest as an eye-catching monument located centrally in a public park, linked to the history of a Berkshire regiment associated with the area.
- 5.20 As this group of heritage assets includes a Grade I listed building and a Scheduled Monument, the group is of High Importance (Appendix 2).

Setting

- 5.21 The setting of these heritage assets contributes variably to their significance. In terms of the designated assets located within the park, the park forms a pleasant and well-maintained immediate setting from which the assets are experienced. The wider setting is characterised by a backdrop of modern office and residential development, with some historic buildings on the south side of the Park. The setting to the Park contributes minimally to its significance. The site does not form part of the setting.

¹² National Heritage List for England [accessed: 01/07/2024 at: <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1000586?section=official-list-entry>]

¹³ National Heritage List for England [accessed: 01/07/2024 at: <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1155691?section=official-list-entry>]

¹⁴ National Heritage List for England [accessed: 01/07/2024 at: <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1000586?section=official-list-entry>]

Figure 5.3 Abbey Gate, viewed from Abbot's Walk



Source: Google Maps (October 2020)

Figure 5.4 Maiwand Memorial



Source: Jim Linwood - The Maiwand Lion, Forbury Gardens, Reading - Berkshire., CC BY 2.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=12711912>

Reading Bridge (locally listed)

Figure 5.5 Reading Bridge from the north



- 5.22 Reading Bridge is a vehicular and pedestrian crossing bridge spanning the width of the River Thames. It was constructed and opened in 1923. The Bridge was constructed in reinforced concrete using the Hennebique system, which was also used for Caversham Bridge (the only other vehicle bridge over the Thames in Reading). At the time of its construction, it was the longest main span of reinforced concrete bridge in the UK, at a span of 180 feet.¹⁵
- 5.23 The building has a degree of local architectural and historic interest, as it used an innovative reinforced concrete system. It also appears to have much of its historic street furniture and stone detailing surviving on the bridge's surface (Figure 5.5).
- 5.24 As a locally listed building, the Bridge is of relatively Low Importance (Appendix 2).

Setting

- 5.25 The setting of the Bridge is characterised by the natural feature of the River Thames, affording views to the east and west, and large 20th century buildings which have been constructed either side of the Bridge on the southern side, such as the existing building on

¹⁵ Reading Borough Council Local List [accessed: 02/07/2024 at: <https://www.reading.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/heritage-and-conservation/conservation-areas-listed-buildings/locally-listed-buildings/#LL25>]

the site. The river and its banks, as well as the nearby open green space, contribute to its significance, but the surrounding 20th-century buildings do not.

Entrance building, part of Scottish and Southern Energy (SSE), 55 Vastern Road, Reading, RG1 8BU (locally listed)

Figure 5.6 55 Vastern Road, view from Vastern Road



Source: Google Maps (April 2023)

- 5.26 55 Vastern Road is a two storey building dating from 1900 or 1903, constructed in orange brick in Flemish Bond with some blue brick and stone dressings. The local list description states that the building is of a mix of architectural styles, appearing as a Victorian building in a Classical/Georgian revival style.¹⁶ The building is a fragment of a much larger building and has been incorporated into a later office and industrial depot for SSE of a consistent height. The depot has little architectural detailing and simple materiality.
- 5.27 The building has a degree of local architectural interest, as the detailing and mix of architectural styles are visually interesting in contrast to the plain complex of which it now forms a part of (Figure 5.6).
- 5.28 The heritage asset is proposed to be demolished as part of an approved scheme at 55 Vastern Road (ref. 200188). If this permission is carried out, then the heritage asset would be entirely removed, and its significance lost.
- 5.29 As a locally listed building, it is of relatively Low Importance (Appendix 2).

¹⁶ Reading Borough Council Local List [accessed: 02/07/2024 at: <https://www.reading.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/heritage-and-conservation/conservation-areas-listed-buildings/locally-listed-buildings/#LL8>]

Setting

- 5.30 The existing setting of the asset is characterised by the large multi-lane road, and a series of disparate 20th-century buildings with very little townscape cohesion. Some of these are of low architectural quality, including the retail park on the southern side of Vastern Road, opposite the building. The site forms a neutral element of the setting and is largely screened by the similarly designed Sovereign House. The setting and the site do not contribute to the significance.

6.0 **Proposal's effect on significance**

Description of proposal

- 6.1 The full details of the proposal are described in the Design and Access Statement and shown on the application drawings. A combination of photographs, application drawings and Accurate Visual Representations has been used to predict and evaluate the change. The following features are key aspects of the proposal relevant to this assessment:
- 1 Demolition of the existing building on site;
 - 2 Erection of a part 5, 8, 9 and 11 storey mixed-use building with changing levels reflecting the emerging and existing townscape and to break up massing, with top floors grouped to crown the building; ,
 - 3 Addition of a podium garden, amenity space and green roofs to complement the existing green space and river banks;
 - 4 External materials to include green and grey finishes, and detailing, including scalloped panels, curved pre-cast concrete and grey brick, in reference to the green space and undulating form and hues of the river in the immediate context; and
 - 5 External hard and soft landscape works, creating public realm.

Assessment of effects

King's Meadow Swimming Pool (Grade II)

- 6.2 Trees and intervening development would largely screen the proposed development in views of and from King's Meadow Swimming Pool. The proposal would only be possibly visible from small areas to the north and west of the building (as shown on the ZTV). In these views, it is highly likely that only a small part of the proposal would be visible, in glimpsed views only. When considering this, the change would be minor and characteristic of the existing wider setting, which is characterised by taller buildings which create an urban backdrop to the trees in the immediate setting. Only the immediate setting contributes materially to the significance of the pool, which would be unaffected by the proposal.
- 6.3 The setting and significance of the King's Meadow Swimming Pool would be preserved.

Main Building of Reading Station (Grade II)

- 6.4 The proposal may be seen from small areas within the southern-most extent of the pedestrianised area fronting the Main Building. The vast majority of views towards the building from this space would be unaffected.
- 6.5 The visibility of tall buildings behind the frontage of the Main Building may affect the existing appearance of the listed building. However, the taller elements of the proposal would be seen to the side of the station building and would not materially extend above the main form of the frontage. The existing setting is characterised by many modern buildings, including the other station buildings and the nearby Thames House. Whilst this would constitute a minor change to the existing setting, the proposed development would be

perceived as part of an urban townscape backdrop and would not distinctly affect the experience of the heritage asset.

- 6.6 The setting and significance of the Main Building of Reading Station would be preserved.

Reading Abbey Scheduled Monument and Forbury Garden (Grade II Registered Park and Garden) (and other listed building within it)

- 6.7 From the western part of the Reading Abbey Scheduled Monument and Forbury Garden, filtered winter views of the tops storeys of the proposal would be visible beyond the railway line, but would represent a small, distant change to the existing setting, and would be characteristic of the significant 20th-century development surrounding the railway line. There would be no material change to the setting of these assets. Further, no aspect of the setting which contributes to the significance (such as the park itself, and historic buildings to the south of the park) would be affected.

- 6.8 The setting and significance would be preserved.

Reading Bridge (locally listed)

- 6.9 Reading Bridge is close to the application site and the proposed development would represent a large change to the setting of the bridge. It would be visible from the bridge itself and the southern and northern banks. However, the setting of the bridge is already characterised by large 20th-century buildings, including the existing building on site and Clearwater Court. The proposed development would be adjacent to these existing large buildings.
- 6.10 The proposal would change the character of the setting by removing the existing building on site, which complements the design of Sovereign House. This would be an improvement, however, as it would introduce high quality contemporary architecture, which whilst larger than the existing building, would remain comfortable within the context of the surrounding townscape and references and complements the surrounding natural environment. The key elements which contribute to the significance, the open green space, river and its banks would be unaffected by the proposal.
- 6.11 The setting and significance of Reading Bridge would be preserved.

Entrance building, part of Scottish and Southern Energy (SSE), 55 Vastern Road, Reading, RG1 8BU (locally listed)

- 6.12 The building is in close proximity to the application site. The existing setting does not contribute to the significance of the building, as it is characterised by a busy road and several 20th century buildings with little cohesion. As discussed above, the building may be demolished as part of a consented application.
- 6.13 Due to the intervening building on Vastern Road, the increased height and massing of the proposed development would sit comfortably within the setting of the building. The design effectively breaks-up the massing into distinct but coherent elements. The improved architectural design and materiality of the proposals would comprise an improvement to the visual appearance of the surrounding townscape and this would have no material change on how the existing setting contributes to the significance of the locally listed

building. The change to the setting through altering the relationship of the existing building on site with Sovereign House is addressed through high quality design and would comprise an improvement in architectural terms. Given the site and Sovereign house are of no particular architectural or historical interest there is no reason to maintain the relationship between the two. The architectural presence of Sovereign House is not reliant on the relationship between it and the site; it is capable of being a stand-alone building. The replacement building would be a high quality new building within the late 20th century group.

- 6.14 The setting and significance of 55 Vastern Road would be preserved.

Summary

- 6.15 In all cases, the setting and significance of the surrounding heritage assets would be preserved.

7.0 Conclusion

7.1 This assessment has established the significance of the surrounding heritage assets with the potential to be affected by the proposal and has assessed the potential effects on their setting and significance.

7.2 It has been identified that the proposal would meet the heritage policy tests outlined in Section 3, and the legal requirement can be carried out, as follows:

- 1 Does the proposal protect and, where possible, enhance the setting, significance and special architectural or historic interest of the affected listed buildings? (s.66(1) of the 1990 Act; Paragraphs 203 and 205, NPPF; Policy EN1; RBLP).

Yes, the proposal would protect the setting, significance and special architectural and historic interest of the affected listed buildings. For some of the listed buildings, the proposal would have no material impact on the setting due to screening from trees and intervening development. Where the proposal would be more visible, it would comprise a minor visual improvement to the setting as it is of a high-quality design and materiality and would not impact upon the aspects of setting which contribute to significance.

- 2 Does the proposal preserve and, where appropriate, enhance the setting and significance of the other affected designated heritage assets (Registered Park & Garden and Scheduled Monument? Paragraphs 203 and 205, NPPF; Policies EN1 and EN2; RBLP).

Yes, the proposal would preserve the setting of the Registered Park and Garden and Scheduled Monument. The proposal would represent a small, distant change to the existing setting, and would be characteristic of the significant 20th-century development surrounding the railway line. There would be no material change to the setting of these assets.

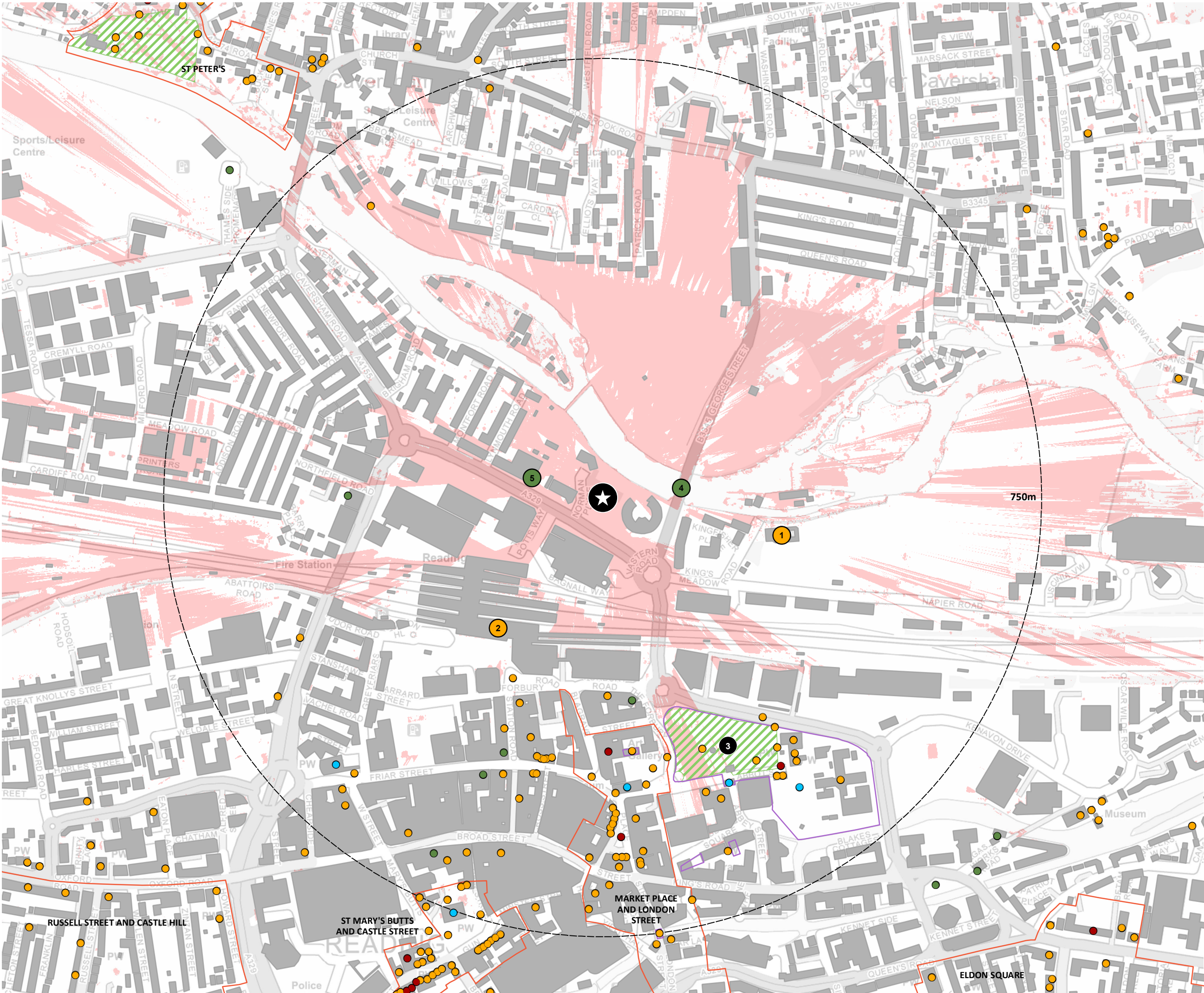
- 3 Does the proposal comprise high-quality design which relates positively to the surrounding historic environment, conserving the appearance, character and setting of locally important heritage assets, and which reflects local design policies and government guidance on design? (Paragraphs 139 and 209, NPPF; Policies EN1, EN4 and CR2).

Yes, the proposal is of a high-quality design and materiality. The proposal would conserve the setting of the locally listed buildings and would introduce an example of high-quality contemporary architecture which references the surrounding natural environment of the river, riverbanks, and green space. This would be an improvement on the existing building.

- 4 Does the design of the proposal preserve significant views with heritage interest? (Policy EN5).

Yes. As discussed in paragraph 2.10, the proposal would be characteristic of the town-centre townscape within this part of the view and would not have an adverse effect on the view. It would not impact on the heritage characteristics of the view and would preserve the view.

Appendix 1 Zone of Theoretical Visibility



Key

Site

Existing Building

Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV):
ZTV represents the area over which a development could theoretically be seen and is based on a Digital Surface Model (DSM) with full surface screening. The DSM is produced from the last return LIDAR signal and includes heights of all surface objects, such as vehicles, buildings and vegetation, as well as the terrain surface. LIDAR is usually flown during winter months meaning that vegetation is at its barest.

Proposed development heights (AOD): 48.3m, 56.4m, 59.1m, 61.8m & 67.1m
Viewer height: 1.6m

Proposed development visible

Heritage Assets:

Conservation Area

Registered Park & Garden

Scheduled Ancient Monument

Statutorily Listed Building: Grade I

Statutorily Listed Building: Grade II*

Statutorily Listed Building: Grade II

Locally Listed Building

1. Kings Meadow Swimming Pool (Grade II)
2. Main Building of Reading Station (Grade II)
3. Group: Reading Abbey Scheduled Monument and Forbury Garden (Grade II Registered Park and Garden) (and other listed buildings within it)
4. Reading Bridge (Locally listed)
5. Entrance building, part of Scottish and Southern Energy (SSE), 55 Vastern Road, Reading RG1 8BU (Locally listed)

0 100 200m

Topography Data: National LIDAR Programme (2019) (1m). The Environment Agency © Environment Agency copyright and/or database right 2023. All rights reserved. Temporal coverage: 2019

Building Footprint Source: OS Open Map Local (2023)
Software: ESRI ArcGIS 10.8.2 - 'Viewshed'

© Historic England 2023. Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2023. The Historic England GIS Data contained in this material was obtained on 07/09/2023. The most publicly available up to date Historic England GIS Data can be obtained from <http://www.HistoricEngland.org.uk>

Based upon Ordnance Survey mapping with the permission of His Majesty's Stationary Office. © Crown Copyright reserved. Licence number 100017707

LICHFIELDS

Project	Norman Place, Reading
Title	Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) 05 - with Heritage Assets
Client	Packaged Living
Date	01.02.2024
Scale	1 : 6,000 @ A3
Drawn by	MAR
Drg. No	GIS\LF\67133\02-13

GIS Reference: S:\LF Jobs\LF67000 - LF67999\LF67133 - Norman Place, Reading\LF67133-02 - Norman Place, Reading - ZTV (05) - 750m - with Heritage Assets - 01.02.2024.mxd

Appendix 2 Classification of Importance of Heritage Assets, Lichfields

Importance	Designation types
Very High	World Heritage Sites
High	Listed Buildings (Grade I and II*) Registered Gardens and Designed Landscapes (Grade I and II*) Registered Historic Battlefields Scheduled Monuments
Medium	Conservation Areas Listed buildings (Grade II) Registered Gardens and Designed Landscapes (Grade II)
Low	Locally Listed heritage assets Non-designated heritage assets
Negligible or nil	Heritage assets with little or no surviving heritage significance