

View 12: Proposed (June '24)



View 12: Cumulative (June '24)



View 12b: Christchurch Meadow, north of Playground - Existing



View 12b: Christchurch Meadow, north of Playground -Proposed (illustrative - non verified)



View 12b: Christchurch Meadow, north of Playground -Cumulative (illustrative - non verified)



View 12c: Christchurch Meadow, north - Existing



View 12c: Christchurch Meadow, north - Proposed (illustrative - non verified)



View 12c: Christchurch Meadow, north - Cumulative (illustrative - non verified)



View 13: Caversham War Memorial

Role of site in view / baseline description

Visibility of site

The Site is not seen from this location in summer or winter.

Key elements in view

From this part of Christchurch Meadows there is a view along the south side of the River of trees within the open space, along the river to Fry Island and moored boats with residential development of three to four storeys along the opposite bank. Beyond the pitched roofs and gabled forms of the apartments and townhouses there are taller more rectilinear building forms on the skyline including Thames Quarter, Reading Bridge House, 3 Forbury Place and The Blade together with Thames Tower and One Station Hill on the skyline. The lantern of the historic station is also seen.

Sensitivity

Receptors

Pedestrians/users of Christchurch Meadows.

Value of view

Medium – This is a pleasant view of the River from Christchurch Meadows, adjacent to a listed war memorial. Views from this general location are identified in the RSAF. The vegetation, trees and open space integrate with views of a modern townscape of 20th and 21st storey residential and office buildings of varying forms and appearance.

Susceptibility

Pedestrians and users of Christchurch Meadows for informal recreation are likely to be focussed on visual amenity. Their susceptibility to visual change is High.

Sensitivity

The sensitivity of pedestrians and people using Christchurch Meadows for informal recreation to change is High.

Nature of change

Filtered views of the stepping form of the proposed development would be seen in winter above the housing in the middle ground. The 11 storey element would be seen on the skyline between Thames Quarter and 3 Forbury Place. During the summer part of the 11 storey element would be seen with limited glimpses of part of the top of the eight storey frontage to Norman Place.

The degree of change within the view would be Low in winter and Very Low in summer.

Visual effect

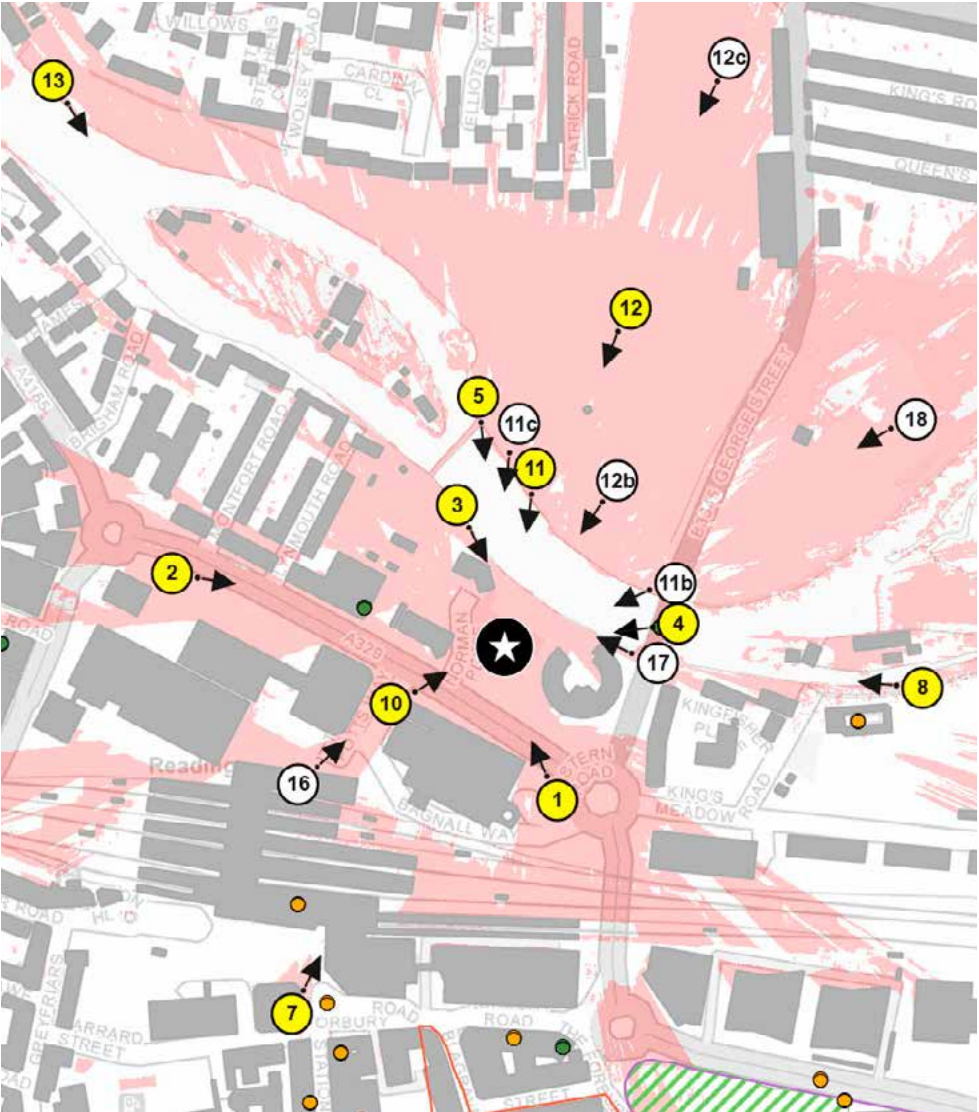
The proposed development would introduce a new building in the background of the view. The 11 storey element would be seen on the skyline in the context of modern office and residential buildings of similar rectilinear form and scale. The vertical massing of the Thames Quarter tower would remain the most prominent element in this part of the skyline.

The proposed light coloured palette of the brickwork would complement the colours seen in the view. Although a relatively minor element on the skyline the green cladding of the 11 storey element would be distinctive, reinforcing legibility. The proposed development would be a characteristic and appropriate addition to the skyline.

There would be a **Negligible (summer)** to **Minor Beneficial (winter)** visual effect.

Cumulative effect

The proposed development would be partly screened by development on 55 Vastern Road (yellow). A cluster of larger building forms would be seen on the skyline in the vicinity of Thames Tower and One Station Hill marking the station and town centre including Vastern Court (red), Station Hill (green) and Reading Metropolitan (orange). The additional change associated with the proposed development would be limited. It would be a minor, compatible element.



Extract from Viewpoint Location Plan

Image details	
Visualisation type	Type 4/ AVR1
Camera/ Sensor/ Lens	Canon 5D MarkII (FFS)/24mm TS
Date and Time	24/04/14 14:58
Grid Co-ordinates	E471284.3920 N 174513.6270
Direction of View	South-east
Camera height	37.2740
Enlargement	Approx 100% @A1

View 13: Existing



View 13: Proposed



View 13: Cumulative



View 14: McIlroy Park

Role of site in view / baseline description

Visibility of site

The top of the roof of the proposed development is visible but would be difficult to make out with the naked eye over this distance.

Key elements in view

From this elevated area of open space on the edge of Tilehurst, there is across the rooftops of houses on the edge of the open space to lower lying land within the Thames valley. On the far (north) side of the valley the land rises and has a generally wooded character with occasional buildings. The urban area of Reading can be seen along the south side of the valley with a variety of forms, types and scales of building. There are a number of vertical elements on the skyline including Thames Quarter, The Blade and One Station Hill. Historic elements within the view include Chazey Court Barn and Farmhouse.

Sensitivity

Receptors

Users of MacIllroy Park.

Value of view

High – This is an attractive elevated view that has some cultural interest and is protected by a policy in the Local Plan.

Susceptibility

People using MacIllroy Park for informal recreation are likely to be focussed on visual amenity. Their susceptibility to visual change is High.

Sensitivity

The sensitivity of people using MacIllroy Park for informal recreation to change is High.

Nature of change

The upper floors of the proposed development would be seen beyond the roofs of intervening buildings with the 11 storey element of comparable height to Reading Bridge House. It would be a very small addition in the context of the wider view.

The degree of change within the view would be Very Low.

Visual effect

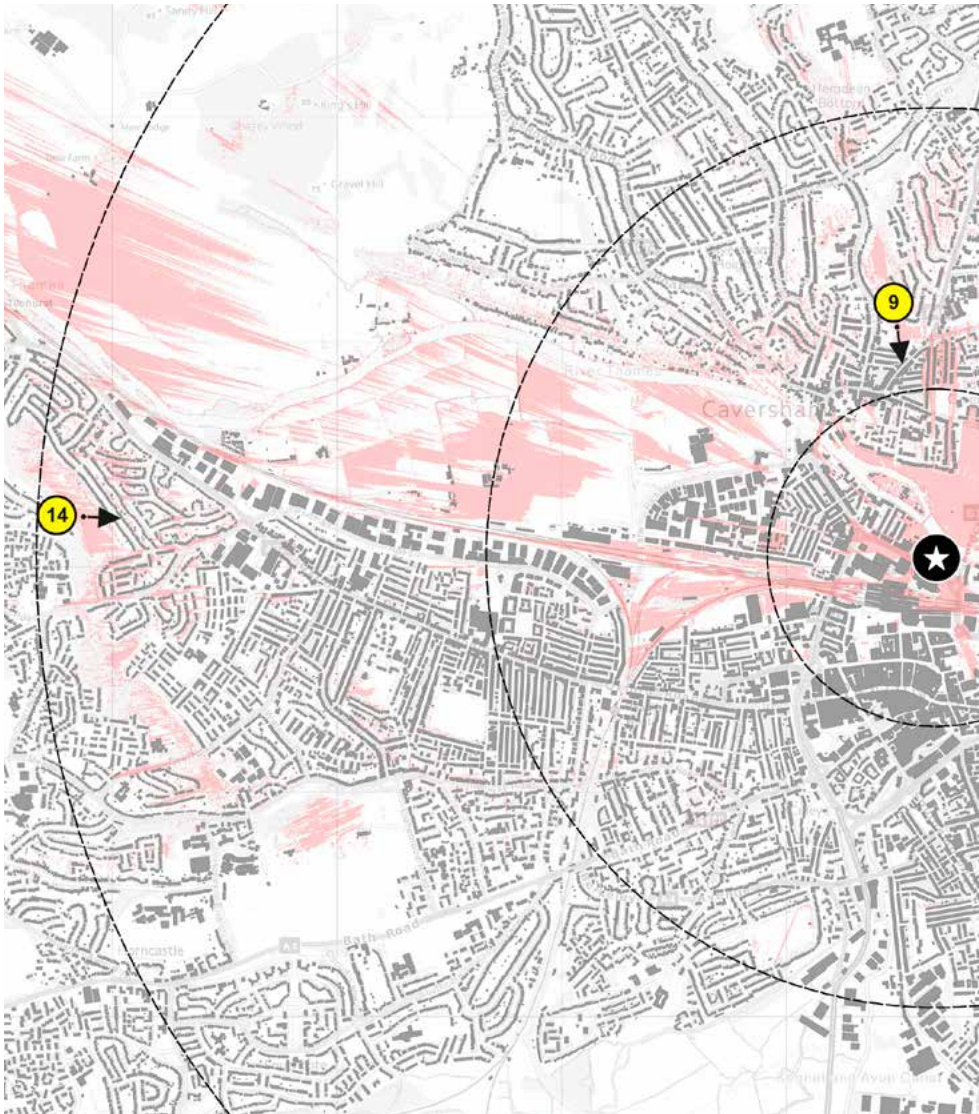
The proposed development would introduce a new building in the background of the view that would sit below the skyline and be seen in place of Clearwater Court and Reading Bridge House. It would be of comparable scale, form and materials to other buildings within that part of Reading. The proposed light coloured palette of the brickwork would complement the colours seen in the view.

The proposed development would be well separated from historic elements in the view and would not screen or distract from any valued or positive aspects. It would be a characteristic and appropriate addition.

There would be a **Negligible** visual effect.

Cumulative effect

A number of cumulative schemes would be seen from this location including 55 Vastern Road (yellow), Vastern Court (red), Reading Metropolitan (orange) and the Station Hill Masterplan (green) introducing taller built forms within the urban area of Reading. The proposed development would be screened by Vastern Court and Reading Metropolitan and would not be seen. It would not contribute to the cumulative visual effect.



Extract from Viewpoint Location Plan



Image details	
Visualisation type	Type 4/ AVR1
Camera/ Sensor/ Lens	Canon 5D MarkII (FFS)/24mm TS
Date and Time	24/04/14 16:03
Grid Co-ordinates	E467875.2540 N 174241.5610
Direction of View	East
Camera height	83.7250
Enlargement	Approx 100% @A1

View 14: Existing



View 14: Proposed



View 14: Cumulative



View 15: Forbury Gardens

Role of site in view / baseline description

Visibility of site

The Site is not seen from this location in summer or winter.

Key elements in view

From Forbury Gardens there is a view across the maintained gardens with lawns, planting beds and paths to mature trees on the perimeter. In summer, the trees largely contain the view whereas in winter there are filtered views through the trees to the varied and relatively large mass of the 20th and 21st century office buildings along Forbury Road.

Sensitivity

Receptors

Pedestrians/ users of Forbury Gardens.

Value of view

Medium – The gardens - a registered park and garden - have some cultural value associated with the former abbey. It is a well-used public space and used both for informal recreation and as a cut through.

Susceptibility

Pedestrians and users of Forbury Gardens for informal recreation are likely to be focussed on visual amenity. Their susceptibility to visual change is High.

Sensitivity

The sensitivity of pedestrians and people using Forbury Gardens for informal recreation to change is High.

Nature of change

Filtered views of the stepping form of the proposed development would be seen in winter between Apex Plaza and 3 Forbury Place. The 11 storey element would be seen on the skyline. During the summer, the proposed development would be almost entirely screened by trees.

The degree of change within the view would be Low in winter and Very Low in summer.

Visual effect

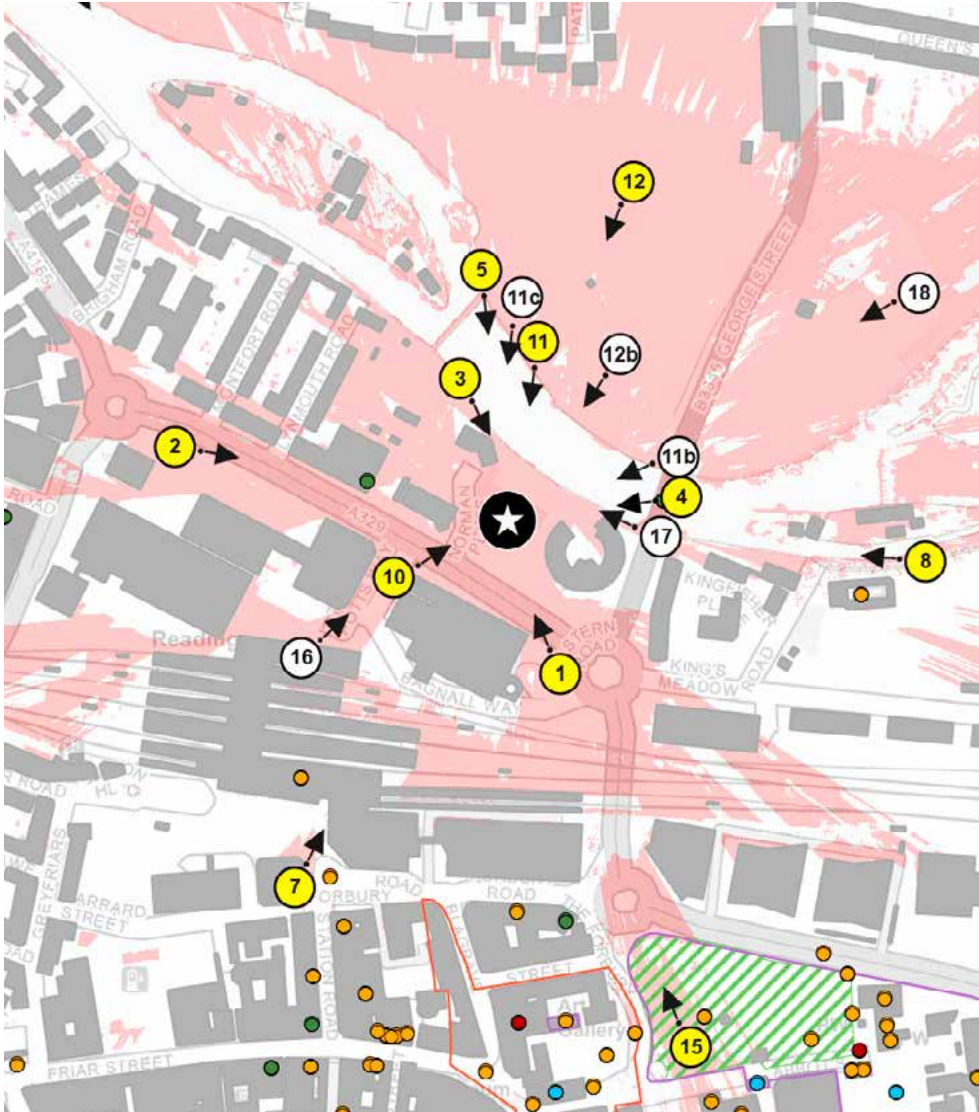
The proposed development would be seen in the context of existing large scale modern office buildings. Due to the separation provided by the railway it would appear a relatively distant element and would not be prominent.

The variation in the colour of the bricks and cladding would help the building to break down and would complement the colours seen in the view. It would be a characteristic and appropriate addition to the skyline.

There would be a **Negligible (summer)** to **Minor Neutral (winter)** visual effect.

Cumulative effect

There would be no cumulative visual effects from this location.



Extract from Viewpoint Location Plan



Image details	
Visualisation type	Type 4/ AVR1
Camera/ Sensor/ Lens	Canon 5D MarkII (FFS)/24mm TS
Date and Time	24/04/14 11:36
Grid Co-ordinates	E 471824.5920 N 173603.9740
Direction of View	North-west
Camera height	43.441
Enlargement	Approx 100% @A1

View 15: Existing



View 15: Proposed



View 16: Reading Railway Station, north entrance

Role of site in view / baseline description

Visibility of site

Part of the existing building is seen.

Key elements in view

The forecourt at the northern entrance to Reading Station together with Trooper Potts Way enclosed on one side by the multi-storey station car park and on the other by the blank façade of a retail warehouse building. Enclosing the view across Vastern Road is Sovereign House and the existing building on the site.

Sensitivity

Receptors

Pedestrians leaving the station.

Value of view

Low – Extensive area of hardstanding and large utilitarian buildings in the foreground and 20th century office buildings of not particular architectural interest.

Susceptibility

Pedestrians leaving the station are focussed on their journey rather than visual amenity. Their susceptibility to visual change is Low.

Sensitivity

The sensitivity of pedestrians is Low.

Nature of change

The 11 storey element and part of the frontage to Norman Place would be seen between the multi-storey car park and Sovereign House.

The degree of change within the view would be Medium.

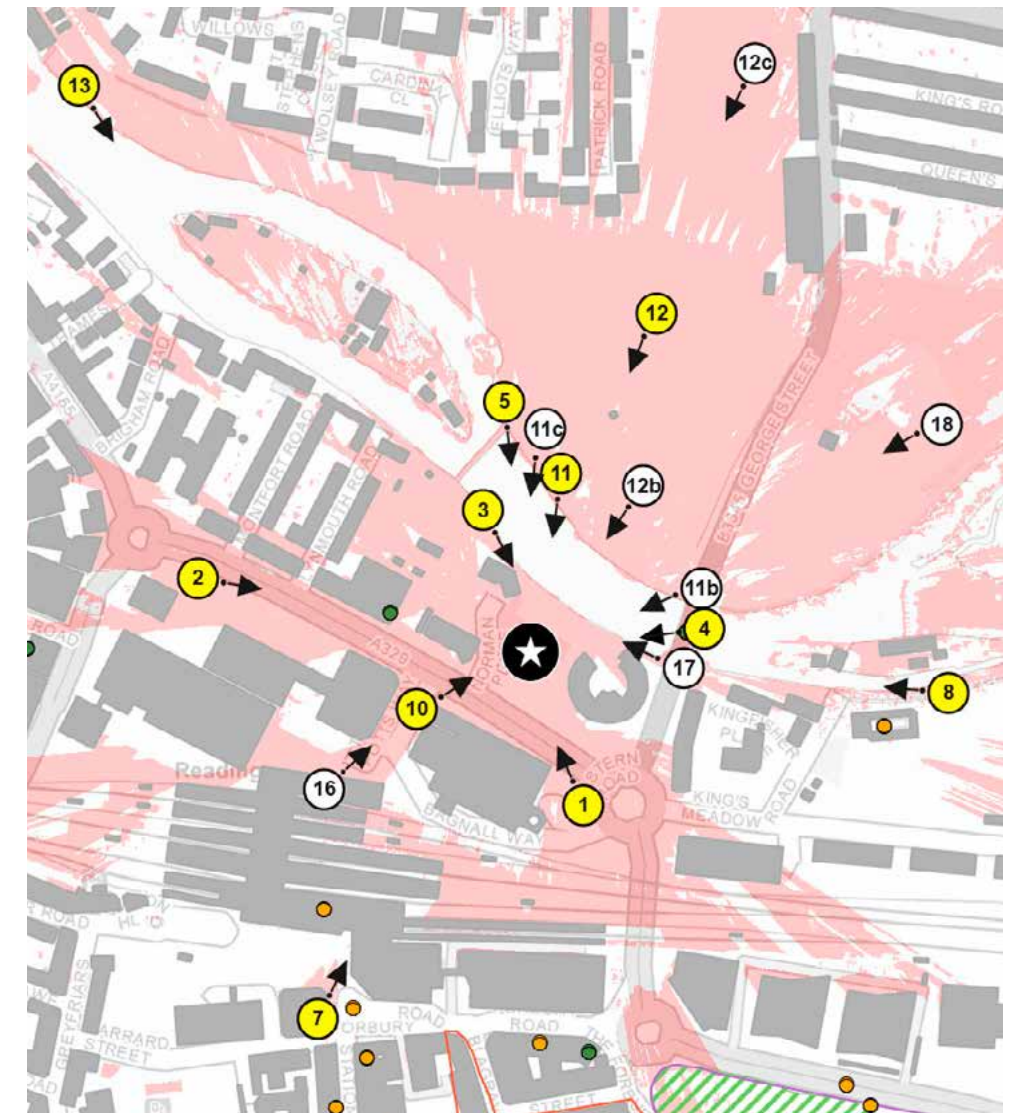
Visual effect

The proposed development would introduce a more vertically proportioned building form along the Vastern Road frontage. Its orientation, defining the frontage to Norman Place, better signals the route through to the river and its scale and rectangular profile can be readily accommodated in the varied streetscene. The design and materials would add to visual interest and the green coloured façade would be distinctive aiding legibility and wayfinding.

There would be a **Minor Beneficial** visual effect.

Cumulative effect

The Vastern Court development (red) would be a large prominent element in the foreground of the view. It would not affect the legibility of the scheme, which would remain a minor element in the view.



Extract from Viewpoint Location Plan



View 16: Existing



View 16: Proposed (illustrative - non verified)



View 16: Cumulative (illustrative - non verified)



View 17: Thames Path near Reading Bridge

Role of site in view / baseline description

Visibility of site

Filtered views of the frontage of the existing building are seen through the trees on the boundary with Clearwater Court.

Key elements in view

Attractive riverside view towards Christchurch Bridge and Fry Island with the Thames Path and Clearwater House in the foreground.

Sensitivity

Receptors

Walkers and cyclists travelling along the Thames Path.

Value of view

Medium – A general townscape view along the River towards Christchurch Bridge and Fry Island. The River and Clearwater House provide the main focus. There are filtered views of buildings through the trees along the frontage.

Susceptibility

Pedestrians and cyclists using the Thames Path are focussed on visual amenity in this location. Their susceptibility to visual change is High.

Sensitivity

The sensitivity of visual receptors to change is High.

Nature of change

There would be very limited glimpsed and filtered views of the five storey frontage elements above retained trees on the boundary with Clearwater Court.

The degree of change within the view would be Low in summer and Medium in winter.

Visual effect

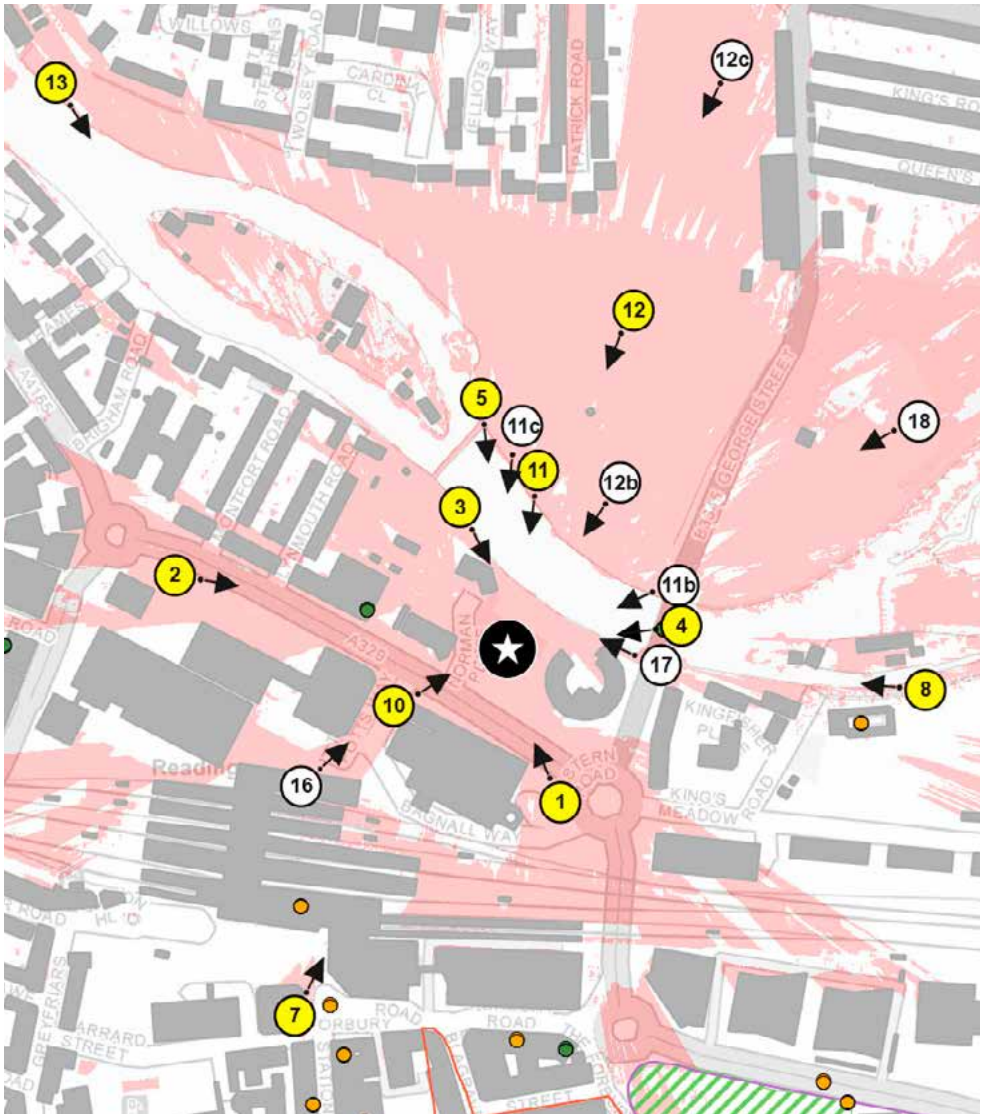
The proposed development would be seen in the context of Clearwater Court and would appear a lower element set further back from the river. The new area of public open space would be glimpsed during the winter months. The light brick materials and banding would tie in well the existing buildings along the frontage.

It would be a characteristic and appropriate addition to the skyline.

There would be a **Minor Beneficial (summer)** to **Moderate Beneficial (winter)** visual effect.

Cumulative effect

55 Vastern Road (yellow) would be seen beyond Thames House on the skyline and would introduce new development on the river frontage that would draw the eye due to its height and location along the path. The proposed development would be a compatible element within the context.



Extract from Viewpoint Location Plan



View 17: Existing



View 17: Proposed (illustrative - non verified)



View 17: Cumulative (illustrative - non verified)



View 18: Hills Meadow

Role of site in view / baseline description

Visibility of site

Part of the roof of the existing building is seen.

Key elements in view

Elevated view across car park and skate park enclosed by mature trees along the River and George Street with views of buildings of varying height and forms above the trees.

Sensitivity

Receptors

Pedestrians

Value of view

Low – View across surface car park and skate park facility which have a utilitarian appearance with some graffiti in evidence.

Susceptibility

Pedestrians approaching the town centre may have some secondary awareness of visual amenity. Their susceptibility to visual change is Medium.

Sensitivity

The sensitivity of pedestrians is limited by the low quality of the foreground and is Low.

Nature of change

The proposed development would replace the view of the existing roof with a view of taller building forms above the trees.

The degree of change within the view would be Low.

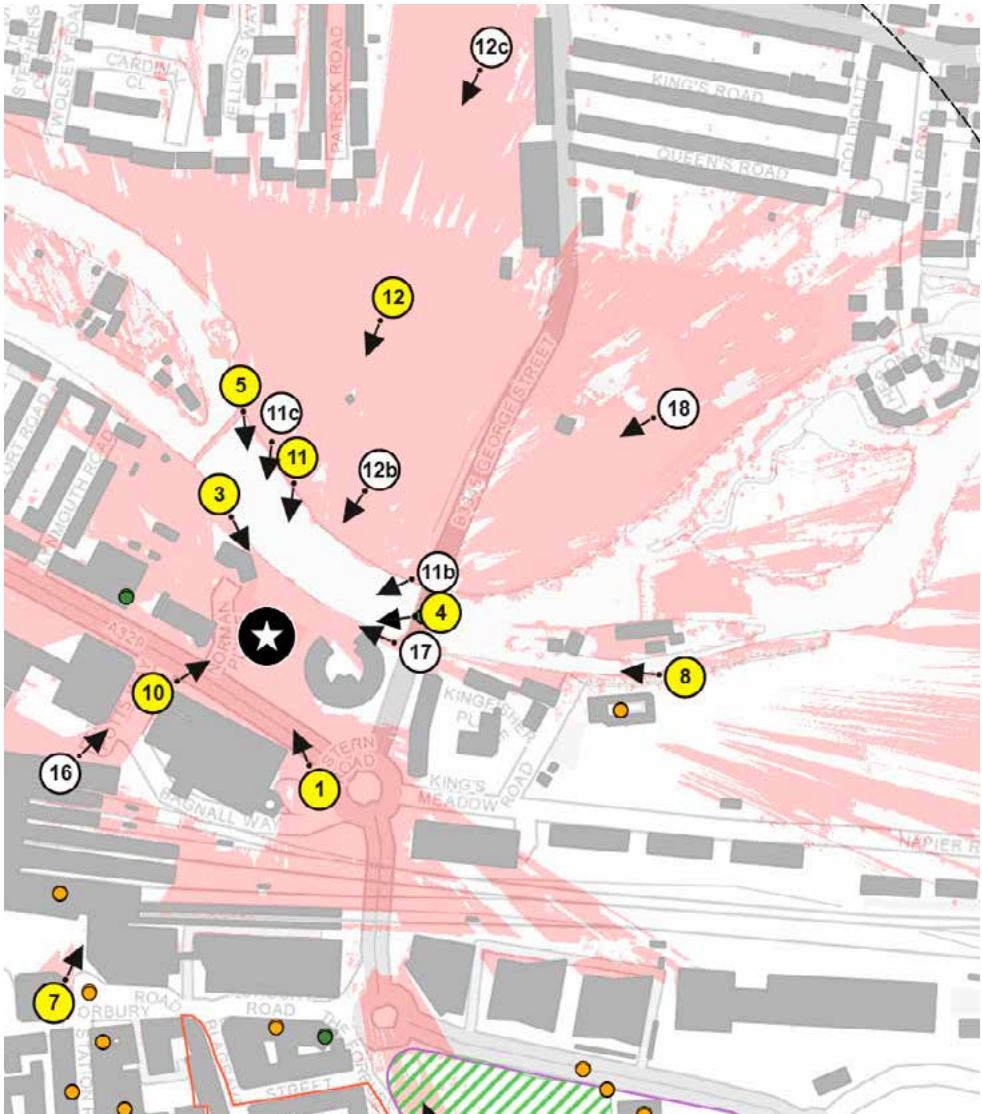
Visual effect

The proposed development would be seen in the context of existing large scale modern office and residential buildings including Thames Quarter, Clearwater Court, Reading Bridge House and One Station Hill. It would be a characteristic addition to the view in form and an appropriate addition to the skyline and would tie into the scale of surrounding trees. The pale brickwork would be consistent with other buildings within the view. The soft green of the 11 storey element would complement the greenery in the surroundings. It would be a distinctive element that would reinforce legibility.

There would be a **Minor Beneficial** visual effect.

Cumulative effect

The Vastern Court and Station Hill developments will be seen in the backdrop of the view above the trees on the skyline. The proposed development would be a minor and lower element and would not distract from the emerging cluster around the station.



Extract from Viewpoint Location Plan



View 18: Existing



View 18: Proposed (illustrative - non verified)



Summary of visual effects

5.48 The visual assessment is summarised in Table 5.2

5.49 The visualisations including the cumulative schemes show that the scale and form of development would complement the 55 Vastern Road scheme, while maintaining the role of the latter as a focal point in views from Christchurch Meadows towards the bridge link.

5.50 The cumulative schemes around the station will create a prominent cluster of tall buildings on the skyline marking the station. The scheme would be well separated from and considerably lower than the cluster and would not distract from or undermine the legibility created.

Ref	Location	Sensitivity	Degree of Change	Visual Effect	Comment on cumulative effects
1	Vastern Road (east)	Low	High	Moderate Beneficial	The scale and form would complement 55 Vastern Road.
2	Vastern Road (west)	Low	Medium	Minor Beneficial	The proposal would be a relatively minor and characteristic addition to emerging context of 55 Vastern Road and Vastern Court
3	Thames Path (west)	High	Medium	Moderate to Major Beneficial	N/A
4	Reading Bridge	Low (motorists/ cyclists); Medium (pedestrians)	Medium	Minor to Moderate Beneficial	55 Vastern Road would draw the eye, the proposed development would be a compatible and positive element
5	Christchurch Bridge	Medium (cyclists); High (pedestrians)	Medium	Moderate to Major Beneficial	The proposed development reflects the pattern of stepping up away from the river and would not distract from the prominence or legibility of the emerging cluster.
6	Caversham Bridge	Low (motorists); Medium (cyclists/ pedestrians)	Low	Minor Beneficial	The proposed development would be a minor, compatible element and would not distract from the emerging cluster within the town centre.
7	Station Hill	Low (people on buses); Medium (pedestrians)	Nil (summer); Very Low (winter)	Negligible	The proposed development would be a minor element and would not add to the visual effect of Vastern Court
8	Thames Path (Caversham Lock)	High	Very Low (summer); Low (winter)	Negligible (summer); Minor Beneficial (winter)	Cumulative schemes would be compatible with the scale and form of existing buildings
9	Baltimore Walk	High	Low	Minor Beneficial	The proposed development would be a small additional element of comparable scale to existing buildings on the skyline and 55 Vastern Road and be separated from the cluster at the station. It would not add materially to the visual effects of the cumulative schemes.
10	Vastern Road/Trooper Potts Way	Low	High	Moderate Beneficial	N/A
11	Christchurch Meadows/ footpath along Thames	Medium (cyclists); High (pedestrians)	Medium	Moderate to Major Beneficial	The proposed development would reflect the stepping up in height away from the river and would maintain the prominence of the emerging cluster around the station.
12	Christchurch Meadows	High	Low (summer); Medium (winter)	Minor Beneficial (summer) to Moderate Beneficial (winter)	The proposed development would be a relatively limited, compact and compatible addition when seen in conjunction with 55 Vastern Road and Vastern Court.
13	Caversham War Memorial	High	Very Low (summer); Low (winter)	Negligible (summer); Minor Beneficial (winter)	The additional change associated with the proposed development would be limited. It would be a minor, compatible element.
14	McIlroy Park	High	Very Low	Negligible	The proposed development would be screened by cumulative schemes
15	Forbury Gardens	High	Very Low (summer); Low (winter)	Negligible (summer); Minor Neutral (winter)	N/A
16	Reading Railway Station North entrance	Low	Medium	Minor Beneficial	Vastern Couet would be a prominent foreground element but would not affect the legibility of the proposed development
17	Thames Path near Reading Bridge	High	Low (summer); Medium (winter)	Minor Beneficial (summer) Moderate Beneficial (winter)	55 Vastern Road would draw the eye. The propsed development would remain a compatible minor element.
18	Hills Meadow	Low	Low	Minor Beneficial	The proposed development would be a minor and lower element and would not distract from the emerging cluster around the station.

Table 5.2: Summary of visual effects

6.0 Summary and conclusion

6.1 This TVA has been prepared to consider the townscape and visual effects arising from the application scheme. The report has been informed by, best practice guidance, townscape character assessments and heritage designations as well as planning context relevant to the consideration of townscape and visual matters.

Townscape effects

- 6.2 The assessment has considered the effects on the townscape character of the site and surrounding TCAs. There are no positive townscape receptors within the site itself although the river is a positive aspect of the townscape to the north. The site lies within TCA1: Vastern Road which has Low sensitivity to change. To the south of, and including, the railway and station is TCA2 Station Hill with TCA3 Station Hill East extending along Forbury Road. Both these areas have Low sensitivity to change. TCA4 Kings Meadow includes the River Thames and associated areas of open space, has a High value townscape due to its amenity and recreational value. It has medium susceptibility to change from the proposed development resulting in Medium sensitivity to change.
- 6.3 The proposed development would transform the character of the site resulting in a series of benefits to the townscape in aesthetic, functional and perceptual terms that would result in a Major Beneficial effect due to improved permeability, introduction of new planting and public realm, improved ground level interface with the street including active frontages and natural surveillance.
- 6.4 There would be positive (Moderate Beneficial) effects on the townscape of TCA1: Vastern Road
- 6.5 There would be Negligible effects on TCA2 Station Hill and TCA3 Station Hill East to the south.
- 6.6 There would be a Minor Beneficial effect on TCA4: King’s Meadow to the north where there would be improvements to the River frontage as a result of the new public realm and uses. The proposal is of high quality and has responded sensitively to its location on the riverside and is compatible with existing buildings within the surrounding urban context.

6.7 Overall it has been found that there would be no adverse townscape effects.

Visual effects

- 6.8 The assessment of visual effects has considered at total of 18 representative view locations and the effects on visual receptors over a range of different distances and directions. The scope of the assessment was agreed with planning officers during pre-application discussions.
- 6.9 The visual assessment has found that there would be generally beneficial visual effects on receptors in the surrounding area as a result of the replacement of the existing office building and its car park with a residential led development of up to 11 storeys and public open space and commercial use fronting the river.
- 6.10 People along Vastern Road (views 1 and 2) would experience Minor to Moderate Beneficial visual effects as a result of the introduction of a distinctive and well designed new building, high quality public realm and new street trees. Although more prominent in the street scene, it would complement and enhance townscape character at the eastern end of Vastern Road as well as increasing legibility. From the junction with Trooper Potts Way (view 10), there would be a Moderate Beneficial effect view towards the river would be opened up by the alignment of the building and the removal of the substation.
- 6.11 Leaving Reading station (view 16) from the northern entrance, there would be a Minor beneficial visual effect, the distinctive and well designed building would act as a marker to Norman Place and a view towards the river would be opened up.
- 6.12 Travelling along the Thames Path and crossing Christchurch Bridge, people would experience a Moderate to Major Beneficial effect close to the site (views 3 and 5) where the proposed new public realm with public art and seating would provide a more attractive and interesting interface with the river and the architectural design of the building would provide greater visual interest and its scale and form would be compatible with the context. Approaching the site from the east, views from around Caversham Lock are limited by buildings

and trees and people would experience a Negligible to Minor Beneficial effect (view 8). Beyond Reading Bridge, where more of the site frontage would be seen there would be a Moderate Beneficial visual effect (view 17).

- 6.13 Crossing Reading and Caversham Bridges (views 4 and 6), people would experience a Minor Beneficial to Moderate Beneficial or Minor Beneficial effects respectively.
- 6.14 People within Christchurch Meadows would see the proposed development from various locations. Along the public footpath on the north bank of the river there would be Moderate Beneficial to Major Beneficial effects (view 11). The proposal would be a characteristic addition to the more urban side of the river introducing additional planting. The building form would relate well to adjacent buildings and break up the massing along the frontage. The relationship to adjacent buildings would remain comfortable from other locations.
- 6.15 Crossing the open space (view 12), there is screening provided by trees along the river, and wider panorama including the emerging urban context around the station. There would be a Minor Beneficial to Moderate Beneficial visual effect. Passing the play area (view 12b) there would be a Moderate to Major Beneficial effect. Further to the north, within the playing fields (view 12c) there would be Minor Beneficial effect. To the west, around Caversham War Memorial (view 13), where there is increased screening there would be a Negligible to Minor Beneficial effect.
- 6.16 The potential for effects on people within open spaces in the wider area has been considered and found that there would be a Minor Beneficial visual effect in views from Balmore Walk (view 9) and Hills Meadow (view 18), a Negligible to Minor Neutral visual effect in views from Forbury Gardens (view 15) and a Negligible effect on views from McIlroy Park.
- 5.51 The visualisations including the cumulative schemes show that the scale and form of development would complement the 55 Vastern Road scheme, while maintaining the role of the latter as a focal point in views from Christchurch Meadows towards the bridge link.

5.52 The cumulative schemes around the station will create a prominent cluster of tall buildings on the skyline marking the station. The scheme would be well separated from and considerably lower than the cluster and would not distract from or undermine the legibility created.

Compliance with policy

- 6.1 The proposal complies with local and national planning policy in respect townscape and views as follows:
- Is the proposal a Tall Building? Is site in an accessible location where change or increased densities are encouraged? (RLP CC6, CR10 and H2; NPPF Paragraphs 128 and 135)**
- 6.2 All of the proposed development is under 12 storeys and under 36m above ground level. It does not therefore fall within the definition of a tall building as set out within policy CR10. The Site is within a highly accessible location within Central Reading close to public transport at Reading Station and to shops and facilities within Reading town centre.
- 6.3 It is a previously developed site within an urban area. There are no heritage assets on or adjoining the site. It is an appropriate and sustainable location to seek to optimise the use of urban land to deliver new homes.

Would proposals be sympathetic to local character within this area? Is the development well integrated with the context including surrounding townscape and landscape setting? Has regard been had to factors including topography; layout, form, scale, appearance, details and materials, views and uses? Would it contribute to local distinctiveness or create a positive new identity or sense of place? (RLP CC7, CR2, H2 and EN5, NPPF Paragraph 128, 135, NDG)

6.4 The site is located within the Vastern Road character area TCA1. It is an area of Low townscape value, as acknowledged in the Council’s TBS and Update and has Low sensitivity. The proposed residential use would be compatible with the mix of uses within the townscape.

6.5 The proposed development has been designed to integrate well with the surrounding context in its form, scale, design and materials. It has been

	designed to respond to the differing townscape character to the north and south of the site.				
6.6	The building form step down and break up the massing along the river frontage with a single storey podium between the five to eight storey wings, which tie in well to the scale of adjacent buildings. The creation of an area of public realm on the riverside, retaining existing trees where possible and integrating new tree and other planting, as well as providing a prominent piece of public art, would complement and enhance the wider landscape setting. The pattern of buildings enclosing space that opens up to the river is a pattern that is seen along the southern bank.				
6.7	The proposed development would introduce a mews along the eastern edge of the site creating a separate urban block, enhancing the grid structure consistent with policy CR2 and increasing permeability. The building forms would address adjacent streets and the mews creating active frontages and defining the routes to the river.				
6.8	The existing stepping up in height away from the river is reflected in the building forms. The tallest elements would relate to the broad main route of Vastern Road, marking the junction with Norman Place and enhancing the legibility of the route through to the river. The proposed heights are compatible with the varied character of the townscape which includes other 11 storey elements at the eastern end of Vastern Road. It is also consistent with the pattern of future change to the townscape which will include buildings of similar scale and form at 55 Vastern Road and Vastern Court.				
6.9	The pale brickwork ties in with buildings and structures at the eastern end of Vastern Road. The use of green pre-cast concrete elements with fluted and undulating details reference the verdant corridor of the River Thames and street trees extend the existing tree lined character of Vastern Road further to the east.				
6.10	The scheme is compatible with the varied character of the Vastern Road TCA and would be a positive element within the townscape. The architecture and landscape has been designed with reference to local character and would reinforce the existing sense of place and local distinctiveness.				
		Would proposals create a well-defined public realm and high-quality place that is attractive, safe and functions well. Would a positive contribution to urban design objectives including continuity and enclosure, permeability and legibility be made? Have existing trees and natural features been retained and street trees introduced where possible? Does the scheme have appropriate and effective landscaping? (RLP CC7, CR2, CR3 and EN14, NPPF Paragraphs 135 and 136, NDG) 6.11 Compatible with good urban design principles, the orientation of the buildings, and their placement, provides continuous frontages to the new urban block created by the introduction of the mews. This would improve the permeability of the area. The legibility of the existing route via Norman Place to the river would be enhanced by the building form, its set back, providing improved visibility and the design and materials of the building at the junction which would enhance legibility. 6.12 A variety of entrances and windows would provide activity and natural surveillance helping to foster a sense of ownership and perception of safety. Set backs and planting provide a threshold to ground level residential units and reinforce the definition of public and private space. 6.13 The proposed development would introduce a new area of well-designed public realm along the river frontage. The area incorporates seating and would be activated by ground level uses and entrances and overlooked by residential development on the upper floors. 6.14 Along Vastern Road, the landscaped public realm would provide an attractive setting for the building and two new street trees would reinforce and enhance the character of the street. Existing trees have been retained where possible and replacement and additional trees planted within the scheme. 6.15 The design of the landscape and public realm would be of very high quality and is considered to be both appropriate and effective in integrating the development within the local townscape.	Would development be sensitive to nearby open spaces and waterspaces with no adverse effect on the setting, character and appearance of the River Thames as a major landscape feature? Would the relationship of buildings and spaces to the watercourse be enhanced having regard to distinct character, views and public realm (RLP EN7, EN11 and EN13) 6.16 The development is in a location where there is an existing urban setting to the River Thames along its southern bank. The proposed development is compatible with that existing urban setting and would enhance the relationship to the river in a number of ways. 6.17 The proposed development has responded sensitively and positively to its setting by providing an area of publicly accessible space with seating, public art and additional tree and other planting that would increase the extent of trees and greenery along the frontage and reinforce the verdant character along the river. In addition, the building forms step down to five storeys on the frontage to the River responding sympathetically to the scale of adjacent buildings. The proposed articulation of the massing with the podium arrangement open to the river side provides greater variation in massing and sense of space which viewed from the north. 6.18 The visual assessment has demonstrated that the proposed development would have a beneficial effect on views from along the River and from adjacent open spaces. The proposal is of high architectural design quality? Is the scheme attractive? Has consideration been given to the relevant requirements local and/or national design guidance? Has the design evolved as a result of effective engagement? (RLP policy CR2; NPPF Paragraphs 131, 135, 137 and 139) 6.19 The proposed development is well designed nd would comply with the relevant requirements of the National Design Guide. As set out in the DAS it has evolved as a result of engagement with key stakeholders. 6.20 The building would to respond sympathetically to its context, stepping down in height and breaking up the massing on the river frontage, defining streets and pedestrian routes with active frontages and locating the tallest elements on Vastern Road, reinforcing legibility.	6.21 The steps in the massing, both in section and in plan, would successfully break up the massing into distinct elements, reinforced by the variation in the architectural design and materials. 6.22 The arrangement of the fenestration and the detailing of the facades, including projecting bands and the grouping of windows creates balanced and well-proportioned elevation with increased vertical emphasis at the upper floors. The grouping of windows breaks down the elevations and reduces the apparent scale on the tallest buildings. 6.23 The use of pale and brown brick reflects the colours and tones of materials in the immediate surroundings. The detailing has drawn reference from River, introducing curved and undulating motifs that would add texture, modelling as well as express the hierarchy of the facades. Together with the materials they would create a highly distinctive building that is appropriate for its context. 6.24 The contrast and interest created by the use of green coloured concrete, the circular columns and glazing clearly define the base taking its cues from the wider landscape. The middle of the building is well composed with a balance of horizontal and vertical elements and modelling provided by reveals and the projecting bands. The tops of the buildings are subtle, appropriate to the scale of the development, with banding defining the parapet. 6.25 The design would be distinctive and positively reinforce the sense of place. Does the proposal optimise the use of land? (RLP policy CR2 and H2; NPPF Paragraph 123, 135) 6.26 The assessment has found that development of the scale and form proposed can be comfortably accommodated without any adverse townscape or visual effects. It is considered that on amount of development on the site has been optimised in townscape and visual terms.	
Conclusion 6.27 The assessment has considered the effects of the scheme on the townscape of the site and surrounding area. It has been found that the scheme is acceptable in townscape and visual terms and complies with the relevant planning policy context.					

Appendix 1

Methodology statement

Appendix 1 Methodology statement

Townscape and Visual Appraisal

The methodology is in conformity with the approach set out in the *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment* prepared by the Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, 2013 (GLVIA3). The guidance in the Landscape Institute’s updated Technical Guidance Note (06/19) Visual Representation of Development Proposals and Townscape Character Assessment Technical Information Note 05/2017 Revised April 2018 has also been reviewed.

This study comprises separate but interrelated assessments: an assessment of the likely significant effects on the character and quality of the townscape and an assessment of the effect of development on views, viewers and their visual amenity.

Drawings and illustrative CGIs and visualisations prepared by Assael Architecture have been used in combination with the Accurate Visual Representations (AVRs) from Ambiente to assess the change to the townscape character and identified views as a result of the proposed development.

Approach to Townscape Appraisal

Townscape is a product of the interaction between a range of physical characteristics (e.g. topography buildings and landscaping) and human activity (e.g. land use, human culture and history). The assessment of townscape effects requires the existing characteristics, quality and sensitivity of the application site and the surrounding area to be defined to enable an evaluation of the effects of the proposed development on the townscape to be made.

For each character area identified, the key characteristics which give the area its distinct sense of place are set out. These are usually positive features but can also be negative in a degraded environment. Key positive characteristics are sensitive receptors that could be directly or indirectly affected by the development.

For townscape character areas, compatible with the National Design Guide/ PPG and GLVIA3 para 5.5 the following aspects of townscape character have been reviewed where relevant:

- The context and setting;
- Topography and relationship to built form;
- Historic evolution of the area;
- The urban grain – pattern and scale of streets, blocks, development plots and buildings;
- Land use and activity;

- Movement patterns;
- The scale, mass and form of buildings;
- Building style, details and use of materials including vernacular traditions; and
- The public realm including the role of open spaces, vegetation and water features.

The value of the townscape is established, having regard to any designations and the value of its component parts. It is noted that undesignated townscapes may also have value in their constituent elements and overall character. The existing townscape quality and value is categorised as high, medium, low or negligible/zero, based on the criteria in Table 1.

The susceptibility of the townscape receptors to accommodate change arising from the proposed development is based on factors such as rarity, robustness and consistency based on the criteria at Table 2.

The sensitivity of the townscape to accommodate change is categorised as being high, medium, low or negligible/nil by experienced assessors having regard to both to its “value” (table 1) and the susceptibility of the receptors to change (table 2).

The nature (or degree) of change to the townscape receptors that arises from the introduction of the development is then predicted, and is defined with reference to the criteria in Table 3.

The assessment considers, at a site-wide and character area level the effects of proposals on elements of the townscape that contribute to its character and on the character areas as a whole.

The townscape effects are judged based on a combination of both the sensitivity of the townscape to change and the degree to which the proposed development will effect the townscape, making reference to table 7. Consideration is then given as to whether effects on receptors are adverse, neutral or beneficial in light of local/other relevant policy objectives. A balanced view is taken in cases where there are both positive and negative changes.

Visual Assessment Methodology

The assessment of a development’s visual effects relates to the changes that will occur in views as a result of the development, viewers’ responses to those changes and the effect the changes have on visual amenity.

The existing baseline situation has been recorded; establishing the components, character and amenity of

the existing scene within each view.

The value of views is determined having regard to Table 4.

Analysis of the effects of the proposed development on those views has then been undertaken with reference to the application drawings, photographs of the existing situation, AVRs and illustrative visualisations.

An AVR is a visualisation (either wireline or photomontage) which is prepared using survey data to align the scheme within the photograph and is verifiable.

The illustrative views are not survey verified and have been produced using a digital model of the site and surrounding area. In some locations, photographs have been integrated into the outputs to more clearly illustrate the context.

Visual effects relate to changes in available views of the townscape and the effects of those changes on people. It considers:

- The effects (adverse, neutral or beneficial) due to proposed development upon representative views through intrusion or obstruction;
- The reactions and numbers of viewers who may be affected; and,
- The overall effects on visual amenity.
- The sensitivity of visual receptors (i.e. people at specific locations) to proposed change has been determined having regard to:
- The activity and expectations of the receptors – their susceptibility to change; and
- The importance or value of the view.

The criteria applied in assessing the susceptibility of visual receptors is set out in Table 5.

The sensitivity of receptors to change has been assessed as being high, medium, low or nil. This is based on the judgement of experienced assessors having regard to the susceptibility of the receptor to change and the value of the view/visual amenity.

The degree of the change to representative views which is introduced as a result of the development has been predicted using the visualisations together with the application plans. The assessment of the degree of change has had regard to the lens selection and the scale of change that would be seen on Site. The degree of change is categorised as nil/negligible, low, medium or high and are set out in Table 6, having regard to the scale of change

to the views, their composition, the contrast/integration of features with the prevailing townscape, whether the view of development is clear, partial/filtered or glimpsed.

The effects on views and visual amenity is assessed on the basis of a series of representative views. This enables an assessment of the effects on a range of typical receptors in the surrounding area.

A judgement is made by experienced assessors on the visual effect at each of the representative view positions having regard to the sensitivity (susceptibility to change and value) of the receptor, the degree of change that would be experienced and the qualitative nature of the change (i.e. whether overall it is beneficial, neutral or adverse). Reference is made to the general criteria set out at Table 7. In some cases, whilst there may be changes to a view, where these are compatible with the context and will neither harm nor benefit the outlook they are assessed as being neutral.

It is recognised that whilst the description of the baseline, the identification of sensitive receptors and the prediction of the nature of the effects, can be objectively established, the sensitivity of receptors and the significance of the effect are essentially a qualitative judgement.

Table 1: Classification of Townscape Value

Classification	Townscape Character
High	Visually coherent groups of well-designed/well-proportioned buildings, well related to streets, spaces and townscape elements, highly distinctive sense of place established over time, may be protected by heritage designation (e.g. conservation area or listing). Few detracting elements.
Medium	Relatively coherent grouping of buildings reasonably well-related to the public realm to create a good although not exceptional sense of place (may include locally listed buildings) - occasional buildings and spaces may lack quality and cohesion.
Low	Largely undistinguished area lacking sense of place and identity, poor spatial definition and generally limited visual interest. Area of emerging character as a result of large scale new development.
Very Low	Poor quality environment lacks cohesive form and structure significant potential for enhancement and very little or no visual interest. Area in a state of development or change in character.

Table 2: Classification of Townscape Receptors to Change

Classification	Susceptibility of Townscape Receptors to Change
High	Rare/ intact area or component of townscape (may be designated)
	Vulnerable to change - limited potential for change without effect on integrity of feature or area
	Notable aesthetic/ perceptual qualities or cultural associations that could be adversely affected
Medium	Townscape component or area may be sufficiently robust or frequent to accommodate some changes without affecting integrity
Low	Aesthetic/ perceptual qualities may be affected by detracting elements
	Robust or frequent component or robust area of townscape
	Integrity of townscape receptor would be maintained
Very Low	Not vulnerable to change
	No component within townscape that has any special quality/ interest

Table 3: Classification of Nature of Change to Townscape

Classification	Nature of Change to Townscape
High	Large change/addition to townscape over a wide area or loss/major alteration of key characteristic feature(s).
Medium	Moderate permanent changes in localised area, or partial loss/alterations of characteristic feature(s). Change may include the introduction of prominent new elements which are characteristic/appropriate to the existing townscape.
Low	Change to minor component, feature that is characteristic of the townscape. Introduction of elements which are in character with the existing townscape.
Very Low	Very minor loss or alteration to minor feature / characteristic or virtually imperceptible change in any components / No noticeable change. Maybe very short term or reversible.

Table 4: Classification of Value of View

Classification	Value of View
High	Protected view, viewpoint or panorama, designated vista, scene with considerable scenic or amenity value (may be protected by designations).
Medium	View/outlook with local scenic or amenity value.
Low	View/outlook with limited scenic/amenity value.
Very Low	View dominated by significant detracting elements. No residual scenic or aesthetic values.

Table 5: Susceptibility of Visual Receptors to Change

Classification	Susceptibility of Visual Receptors to Change
High	People within/using public open spaces whose focus is on amenity value
	People using public rights of way through highly valued townscape or using national/ regional/tourist routes
	People within the immediate setting of elements of national cultural heritage value who may be focused on visual amenity
	Residents with outlook from main aspect of residential property
Medium	People using open spaces whose appreciation of amenity is secondary to their activity
	People using public rights of way through townscape of moderate/low value whose main focus is on the journey/commute than its amenity
	Residents with compromised visual amenity/ limited outlook.
Low	People at work who are not focused on visual amenity
	Transient receptors such as motorists whose focus is on travelling

Table 6: Nature of Change to Visual Receptors

Classification	Nature of Change to Visual Receptors
High	Large change to the view. Development becomes the prominent feature in the scene introducing a major new component. Limited screening effects. Alternatively, existing development may be replaced by notably larger (more prominent) or notably smaller (less prominent) development.
Medium	The proposals are a visible and recognisable new element, moderately prominent within the scene. Possible screening of some, but not all elements. Alternatively, new development may replace existing buildings with larger (more prominent) or notably smaller (less prominent) development.
Low	The proposals would be a new, relatively small component in the overall view. Development may be seen at a distance in context of existing development and/or screening effects limit amount of new development in the view.
Very Low	May be substantive screening. Views over such a distance that barely distinguished from the general scene. Alternatively, development may replace existing development with buildings of the same or a similar scale. Overall, change to view imperceptible.

Table 7: Criteria applied to judgment of effect

Effect	Significance criteria
Major Adverse	Loss/ alteration of valued/characteristic townscape feature(s) such that the integrity of a townscape is undermined.
	Introduction of discordant/prominent element within an important or protected view that obscures/ distracts from a key feature.
	Extensive, incongruous change to view.
Moderate Adverse	Marked uncharacteristic alteration to/partial loss of sensitive townscape character/ features that gives rise to some loss of integrity of feature/ townscape character.
Minor Adverse	Introduction of an element within that may be noticeable and detrimental due to its scale, incompatibility with the existing scene and/or relationship to important elements.
	Limited or localised alteration to valued townscape component or characteristic.
	Slight reduction in the integrity of positive townscape character/ features overall.
Negligible	Limited harmful overall change to / minor incongruous element in protected/ important view.
	Change to townscape character or view would be almost imperceptible.
	Neutral
Minor Beneficial	Change would be evident but entirely consistent with the townscape character or view or could comprise positive and negative change that overall would not be harmful to townscape character or the view. Can be major, moderate, minor or negligible.
	Limited change to the view or townscape character that is positive/ reinforces existing positive characteristics/ introduces a positive and compatible new feature.
	Small overall improvement to existing view.
Moderate Beneficial	Marked change to the view or townscape character that is positive/ reinforces existing positive characteristics/ introduces new elements that are compatible with policy objectives.
	Distinct improvement to existing view.
	Major Beneficial
Major Beneficial	Extensive change to townscape character or view that is positive/ reinforces existing positive townscape characteristics or introduces new elements that are compatible with policy objectives.
	Considerable improvement to existing view.

Appendix 2

Visualisation methodology



Methodology Statement

Norman Place, Reading

ambiente architectural visualisation, Suite 2, Second Floor, New Hall Hey Business Centre, New Hall Hey Road
Hurstwood Rawtenstall Rossendale BB4 6AJ

01706 215160 | ambiente-i.com

Photography

All views were initially identified on an Ordnance Survey map by the Planning Consultant and Architect. The photographer then visited the positions to identify any obstructions such as signage, road works etc. which would impact on the camera position.

Once the positions had been agreed the photographer then marked spots with surveyors chalk via a plum line from the centre of the tripod. All the images were taken from 165cm from the centre of the lens. The camera was then aligned using a spirit level.

The images were recorded using a Canon 5D Mk II camera (Full frame sensor 36mmx24mm, native resolution 5616x3744 pixels) The lens used was a Canon 24mm TS-E Mk II which has an angle of view : 84°. A TS-E is a shift lens. The centre of the lens can be raised or lowered to adjust the position of the subject. This method is commonly known as architectural photography. The 24mm shots were used because an 84° angle of view allows for the development to be viewed in context with its surroundings.

Surveying and Verification

We identified key points within each photograph such as roof corners lampposts etc. (*fig1*). The requested points were surveyed by a professional land and engineering surveying team. The information was then provided as a 3D CAD file (*fig.2.*)

This information was then imported into the 3D software to begin the camera matching process. A 3D camera was created to match the equipment used in creating the photographs and was positioned according to the survey information. The scene was verified by matching the survey points to their respective positions on the photographs. This is achieved by a pan and zoom tool which allows to check the accuracy of the survey points relative to the photograph.

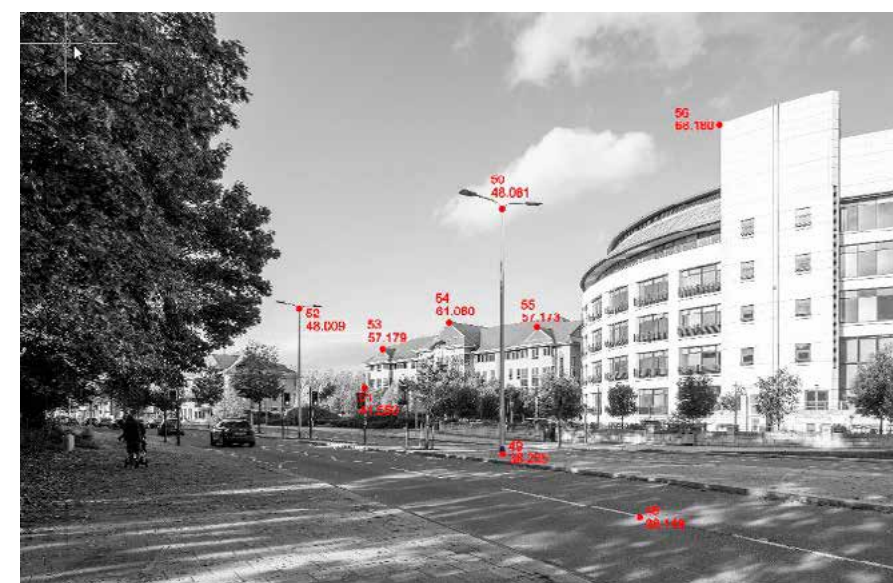


Fig.1 Example of Survey Points requested

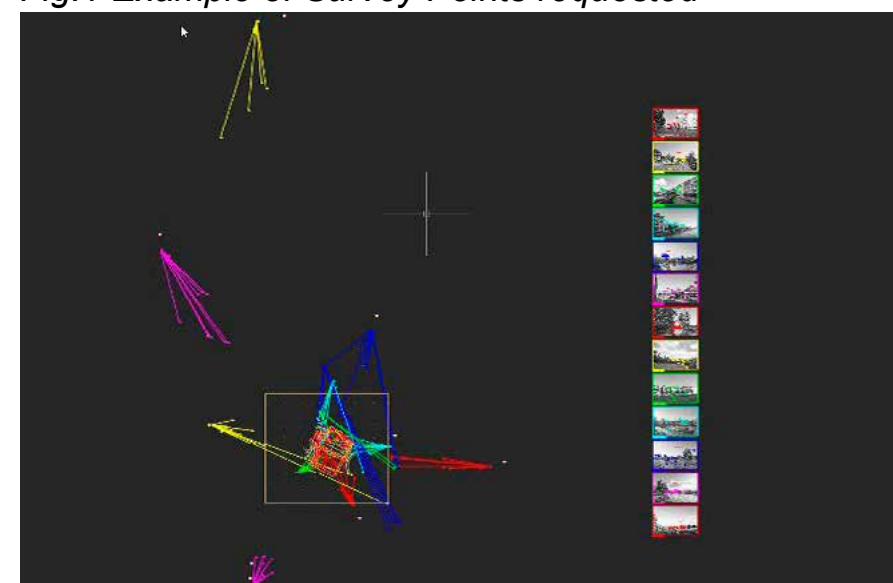


Fig.2 3D CAD data received from Surveyors

3D Model and Compositing

A 3D model of the scene was provided by the Architect. Additional detail was added to the model which was then positioned according to the survey data and site plan provided by the architect.

A lighting system was used to determine the direct sunlight component within the scene. The date, time and location are then added accordingly.

Materials were applied to the model to reflect the chosen specification if the image was required to fully rendered. Each camera was then rendered to produce a still image of the proposed. (*Fig.3*)

The computer generated image was then combined with the photograph a technique referred to as 'compositing'.



Fig.3 Base render ready for composition



Fig.4 Final composited photomontage

ambiente architectural visualisation, Suite 2, Second Floor, New Hall Hey Business Centre, New Hall Hey Road
Hurstwood Rawtenstall Rossendale BB4 6AJ

Appendix 3

Relevant planning policy

Appendix 3 Relevant planning policy

This section provides a summary of the policy context that has informed this appraisal.

Relevant Statutory Development Plan

The relevant statutory development plan relating to the proposed development comprises Reading Borough Local Plan (RBLP) and Proposals Map (2019).

Reading Borough Local Plan (RBLP)

The following policies are relevant to the townscape and visual assessment:

CC6: Accessibility and the Intensity of Development – notes the correlation between accessibility and the scale and density of development, “... with the densest and largest scale development taking place in the most accessible locations...”

CC7: Design and the Public Realm – requires “... high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located....” The development form should make “....a positive contribution to the following urban design objectives:

- Character - a place with its own identity and sense of place
- Continuity and enclosure
- Quality of the public realm and provision of green infrastructure and landscaping
- Ease of movement and permeability
- Legibility - clear image and easy to understand...”

Development also needs to:

“...Respond positively to their local context and create or reinforce local character and distinctiveness, including protecting and enhancing the historic environment of the Borough and providing value to the public realm:

- Create safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder or fear of crime does not undermine quality of life or community cohesion;
- Address the needs of all in society and are accessible, usable and easy to understand by them, including providing suitable access to, into and within, its facilities, for all potential users, including disabled people, so that they can use them safely and easily;

- Are visually attractive as a result of good high quality built forms and spaces, the inclusion of public art and appropriate materials and landscaping.”

EN5: Protection of Significant views with Heritage Interest – includes view 1: View from McIlroy Park towards Chazey Barn Farm, the Thames Meadow and the Chilterns escarpment.

EN7: Local Green Space and Public Open Space – include Christchurch Meadows, Forbury Gardens, Hills Meadow and Kings Meadow. “Proposals that would erode their quality through insensitive adjacent development or jeopardise their use or enjoyment will not be permitted.”

EN11: Waterspaces – “...will be protected and enhanced, so that they can continue to contribute to ... local character, heritage and visual amenity... There will be no adverse impact on the functions and setting of any watercourse and its associated corridor.” Acceptable development will (amongst other things):

“Provide appropriate, attractive uses and buildings that enhance the relationship of buildings, spaces and routes to the watercourse, including through creating or enhancing views of the watercourse, and create a high quality public realm;

Make positive contributions to the distinct character, appearance, historic significance, landscape and amenity of the watercourses...”

EN13: Major Landscape Features and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty – Development should not detract from the character and appearance of the Major Landscape Feature of the Thames Valley.

EN14 Trees Hedges and Woodlands – existing trees of importance will be protected. Development should make provision of tree retention and planting particularly on the street frontage.

H2: Density and Mix - Appropriate residential density of development should be informed by various factors including:

“the character and mix of uses of the area in which it is located, including the housing mix, and including consideration of any nearby heritage assets or important landscape or townscape areas;

its current and future level of accessibility by walking, cycling and public transport; • the need to achieve high quality design;

the need to maximise the efficiency of land use...”.

CR2: Design in Central Reading – requires that:

“a. Development will build on and respect the existing grid layout structure of the central area, providing continuity and enclosure through appropriate relationships between buildings and spaces, and frontages that engage with the street at lower levels, and contributing towards enhanced ease of movement through and around the central area;

b. Development will provide appropriate, well designed public spaces and other public realm, including squares, open spaces, streetscape, utilising high quality and well-maintained hard and soft landscaped areas, and public art, that provide suitable functions and interest, sense of place and safe and convenient linkages to adjoining areas;

c. Development should consider and, where possible, include ways of providing green infrastructure designed into the development, for instance through roof gardens, green walls and green roofs, to enhance the otherwise very urban environment;

d. The architectural details and materials used in the central area should be high quality and respect the form and quality of the detailing and materials in areas local to the development site;

e. Development and any associated public realm should contribute to the diversity of the central area, be capable of easy adaptation over time to meet changing circumstances, and be designed to enhance community safety; and

f. Development should be designed with consideration of adjacent development sites, and should not prevent or cause unreasonable burdens on the future development of those sites.”

CR3: Public Realm in Central Reading – proposals should make a positive contribution to the public realm and indicates that a number of criteria will be applied.

Sites over 1 hectare should integrate new public open space or civic squares (criteria i)

Imaginative uses will be encouraged. “New open spaces should be of a size and shape to be flexible enough to accommodate such uses... water features, trees (including street trees) and other planting, as well as hard landscaping, to create high quality spaces, will be expected, where appropriate” (criteria ii)

“Development proposals .. in close proximity to a watercourse will retain and not impede existing continuous public access to and along the watercourses...” (criteria 3)

“The design of developments adjacent to a watercourse... will be required to enhance the appearance of the watercourses and to provide active elevations facing the watercourses...” (criteria iv)

CR10: Tall Buildings – “In Reading, tall buildings are defined as 10 storeys of commercial floorspace or 12 storeys of residential (equating to 36 metres tall) or above.”

National policy and guidance

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (December 2023)

To achieve sustainable development, Paragraph 8 establishes an overarching social objective of “fostering well-designed, beautiful and safe places” and an environmental objective to “protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land... and using natural resources prudently...”

Paragraphs 123-124 state that decisions should promote effective use of land (para 123), giving substantial weight to the value of using suitable brownfield land for homes and other needs (124c) and promoting development of under-utilised land (124d).

On achieving appropriate densities Paragraph 128 d and e state “Decisions should support development that makes efficient use of land, taking into account:

“...the desirability of maintaining an area’s prevailing character and setting (including residential gardens) or of promoting regeneration and change; and

the importance of securing well-designed, attractive and healthy places.”

Paragraph 129 notes that “*area based character assessments, design guides and codes and masterplans can be used to help ensure that land is used efficiently while also creating beautiful and sustainable places...*”

Paragraph 131 confirms that “*the creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities....*”

To achieve well-designed places Paragraph 135 identifies that planning decisions should ensure that developments “*function well and add to the overall quality of an area...*” They should also be “*...visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping...*”; “*...sympathetic to local character and history including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities); establish or maintain a strong sense of place...*” and “*optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks...*”

Development that is not well designed should be refused, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design. Conversely development that reflects design policies and guidance should be given significant weight (para 139) as should:

“*...outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability or help raise the standard of design more generally in an area, so long as they fit in with the overall form and layout of their surroundings.*”

National Planning Policy Guidance (PPG)

The PPG section on Design, as updated in 2019, provides guidance on how well-designed places should be achieved. It notes that local design guides should set out standards for an area, following the themes in the National Design Guide and shaped by an areas qualities and opportunities.

The PPG – Design states that the following characteristics are used to define good design in the National Design Guide:

- context
- identity
- built form
- movement
- nature
- public spaces
- uses
- homes and buildings
- resources
- lifespan

The PPG notes that tools for assessing design quality include the National Design Guide, any local design guides, design review or assessment frameworks. In this case, extensive pre-application consultation and design review has been undertaken as set out in a range of documents accompanying the application.

National Design Guide, October 2019

This guidance seeks to ensure well-designed places that are beautiful, enduring and successful are achieved. It notes that “*the long-standing, fundamental principles for good design are that it is: fit for purpose; durable; and brings delight.*”

It comments on the complexity of places noting that:

“*it is a setting for a diverse range of uses and activities, and is experienced by many people in many different ways; it is made up of buildings, and also landscape and infrastructure, which are likely to endure longer than the buildings themselves; most places evolve over a long period of time once they have been established, with many incremental changes that can affect their quality; the quality of ‘delight’ includes a richness of experience gained from all of our senses, not only the visual; and beauty in a place may range from a long view down to the detail of a building or landscape.*”

Ten characteristics of well-designed places are defined. These are:

- Context – enhances the surroundings.
- Identity – attractive and distinctive.
- Built form – a coherent pattern of development.
- Movement – accessible and easy to move around.
- Nature – enhanced and optimised.

- Public spaces – safe, social and inclusive.
- Uses – mixed and integrated.
- Homes and buildings – functional, healthy and sustainable.
- Resources – efficient and resilient.
- Lifespan – made to last.

In relation to context it explains that “*well-designed places are: based on a sound understanding of the features of the site and the surrounding context, using baseline studies as a starting point for design; integrated into their surroundings so they relate well to them; influenced by and influence their context positively; and responsive to local history, culture and heritage.*”

In relation to identity or character of a place it notes that this derives from:

“*...the way that buildings, streets and spaces, landscape and infrastructure combine together and how people experience them. It is not just about the buildings or how a place looks, but how it engages with all of the senses. Local character makes places distinctive. Well-designed, sustainable places with a strong identity give their users, occupiers and owners a sense of pride, helping to create and sustain communities and neighbourhoods. Well-designed places, buildings and spaces: have a positive and coherent identity that everyone can identify with, including residents and local communities, so contributing towards health and well-being, inclusion and cohesion; have a character that suits the context, its history, how we live today and how we are likely to live in the future; and are visually attractive...*”

The guide notes that:

“*Well-designed new development is influenced by: an appreciation and understanding of vernacular, local or regional character, including existing built form, landscape and local architectural precedents; the characteristics of the existing built form ... ; the elements of a place or local places that make it distinctive; and other features of the context that are particular to the area ... This includes considering: the composition of street scenes, individual buildings and their elements; the height, scale, massing and relationships between buildings; views, vistas and landmarks; roofscapes; the scale and proportions of buildings; façade design, such as the degree of symmetry, variety, the pattern and proportions of windows and doors, and their details; the scale and proportions of streets and spaces; hard landscape and street furniture; soft landscape,*

landscape setting and backdrop; nature and wildlife, including water; light, shade, sunshine and shadows; and colours, textures, shapes and patterns.”

Local guidance

Reading Tall Buildings Strategy (RTBS) (January 2008, and 2018 update)

The analysis underpinning the RTBS was undertaken for the whole of the Reading Central Area including the Site. While its policy context is very out of date, some of the analysis of townscape character, as updated in 2018 remains relevant.

It identifies views that, over short, medium and long range may be sensitive to tall building development. Regard has been had to these in preparing this TVA, notwithstanding the proposed development is not a tall building.

The RTBS also undertakes a character study of the Central Area which has formed the basis of the evaluation of the existing character of the townscape.

The RTBS notes that:

“*Views of tall buildings can be both a positive and a negative feature. They can enhance certain views, providing a focal point, and detract from others, forming an unsympathetic backdrop to important townscape features, or becoming an uncharacteristic feature of views from tranquil rural landscapes.*” (p19)

Reading Station Area Framework (RSAF) (December 2010)

Although the RSAF is not directly relevant to the Site, it identified views towards Reading Town Centre which are to be considered in connection with development in the Reading Station area. At the request of Officers, consideration has been given to these views in determining the scope of the visual assessment, where some intervisibility has been identified.

Assessment of Significant Views with Heritage Interest (ASVHI) (January 2018)

In relation to the view from Macillroy Park in Tilehurst the document notes that it is the one place “*...where there is a complete view of the Town centre, the Caversham escarpment dropping down to the river, glimpses of the River Thames itself and also out of the Borough towards Mapledurham....*”

It notes that current receptors are “...residents of Tilehurst and the surrounding area enjoy and use on a daily basis. This includes those seeking general recreation and access to semi natural open space as well as dog walkers.”

Also confirms the following:

“The importance of this view of the Thames is recognised by the River Thames Society and the Thames Rivers Trust who included it in their book, ‘Exploring the Thames Wilderness’.”

“The view is also experienced from much of the mid 20th Century housing below the Park contributing to the quality of life for the residents of this area and adding to its attractiveness...”

“The viewing place provides ‘kinetic’ views – that is a series of changing panoramic views seen as a person moves through this linear park. The views change as a result of the direction a person is facing and the framing effect of trees...”

The description of the view is limited to the Caversham Escarpment and Thames water meadows due to Mapledurham being beyond Reading and the views to the town centre being covered by the tall buildings policy. The site is seen within the context of the town centre, although not a tall building.

Appendix 4
24mm views with 50mm frame guide

View 1: Existing



View 1: Proposed



View 1: Cumulative



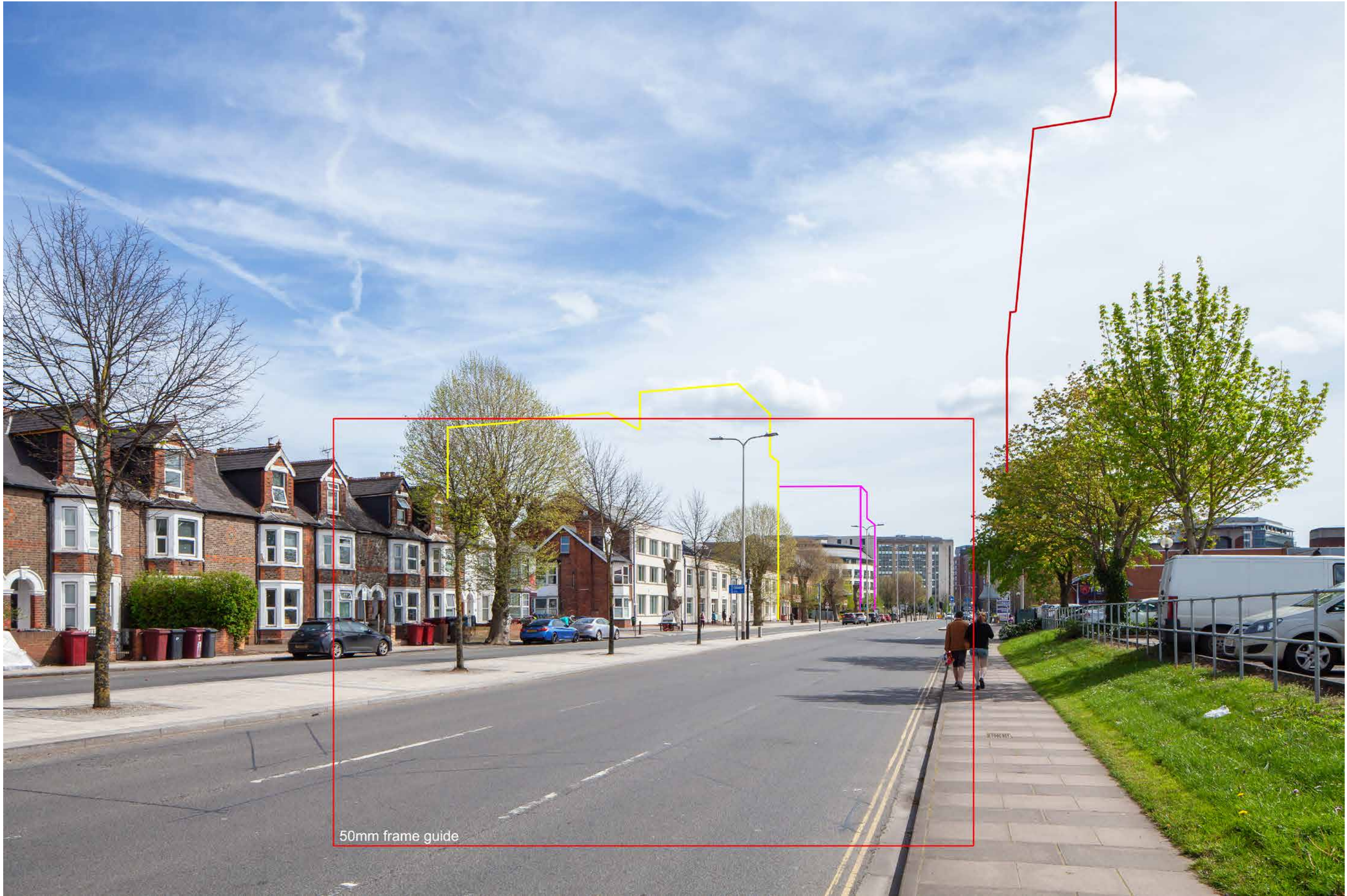
View 2: Existing



View 2: Proposed



View 2: Cumulative



View 3: Existing



View 3: Proposed



View 4: Existing (April '24)



View 4: Proposed (April '24)

