

HERITAGE STATEMENT
Reading Crown Court
9566 | Rev 00 | October 2024
56379-9573-FMW-RCC-XX-RP-A-0009-S2-B0700



OFFICIAL

Document Control

Revision	Description	Originator	Approved	Date
00	Draft for comment	CE	SK	07/10/2024

Sally Keogh
Partner

Feilden+Mawson LLP
21-27 Lambs Conduit Street
London WC1N 3NL
Tel: 020 7841 1980
www.feildenandmawson.com

Contents

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Summary of proposals
- 3.0 Heritage policy and guidance
- 4.0 History of the site
- 5.0 Statement of significance
- 6.0 Impact assessment
- 7.0 Conclusion
- Appendix A Planning history
- Appendix B Listing description

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This Heritage Statement has been prepared on behalf of AtkinsRéalis (Project Managers on behalf of HMCTS) by Feilden+Mawson LLP to accompany an application for Full Planning Permission and Listed Building Consent relating to the proposals to introduce one new court room within the ground floor of Reading Crown Court (a summary of the proposals is provided in section 2.0). The building is Grade II listed (list entry number 1113476) and located in The Forbury in Reading Town Centre. It does not lie within a conservation area.

1.2 Reading Crown Court is a prominent historic building and where many Berkshire defendants are tried. The building was completed in 1861 and designed by John Clacy. Following the Courts Act in 1971 a significant proportion of the building was demolished to make way for new purpose-built courtrooms. The modern portion of the building complex reaches across 7 floors in total (mainly housing the new court rooms). It was designed by Broadway Malyan and built between 1989-97.

1.3 The purpose of this Heritage Statement is to identify heritage assets, both designated and undesignated, and to provide an assessment of their cultural significance, which will provide an evidence base to inform the client and the design team and help conserve the assets identified. It provides a baseline of understanding for the heritage impact assessment which evaluates the impact of the proposals upon the value or 'significance' of the heritage asset and its setting. This approach is required in order to satisfy the provisions of Sections 66(1) and 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) where the impact of development on a heritage asset is being considered (Paragraphs 205-214).

1.4 This Heritage Statement considers above-ground built heritage only. This document should be read in conjunction with the technical reports associated with this application including the Planning Statement and Design and Access Statement.

1.5 When deciding on a planning application for development that affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority must have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. Preservation in this context means not harming the interest in the building/place, as opposed to keeping it utterly unchanged.

1.6 This Heritage Statement concludes that the proposals accord with the statutory duties outlined in The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and have no detrimental impact on the special interest of the listed building. The proposals maintain the court building in active, beneficial use, which is a primary aim of conservation.



Fig.01 Aerial View of Reading Crown Court. (extracted from Google Maps and produced here for information only: https://www.google.com/maps/place/Reading+Crown+Court/@51.4578623,-0.9663121,269a,35y,180h,39.41t/data=!3m1!1e3!4m6!3m5!1s0x48769b3d00df5b57:0x3eadb45921c2696f!8m2!3d51.45621!4d-0.9670782!16s%2Fg%2F1tflrhtw?entry=ttu&g_ep=EgoyMDI0MTAwMi4xIKXMDSOASAFQAw%3D%3D [accessed: October 2024].

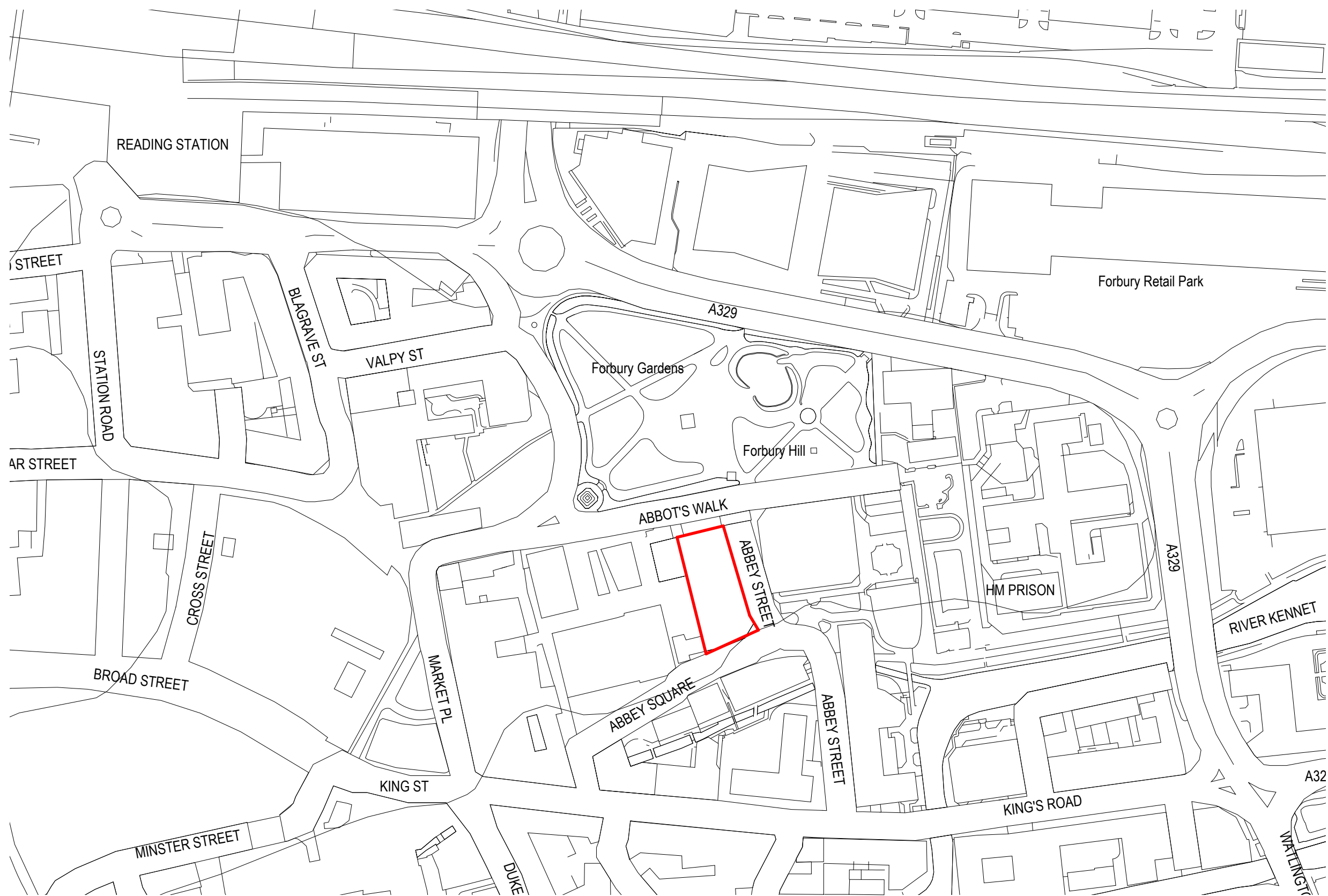
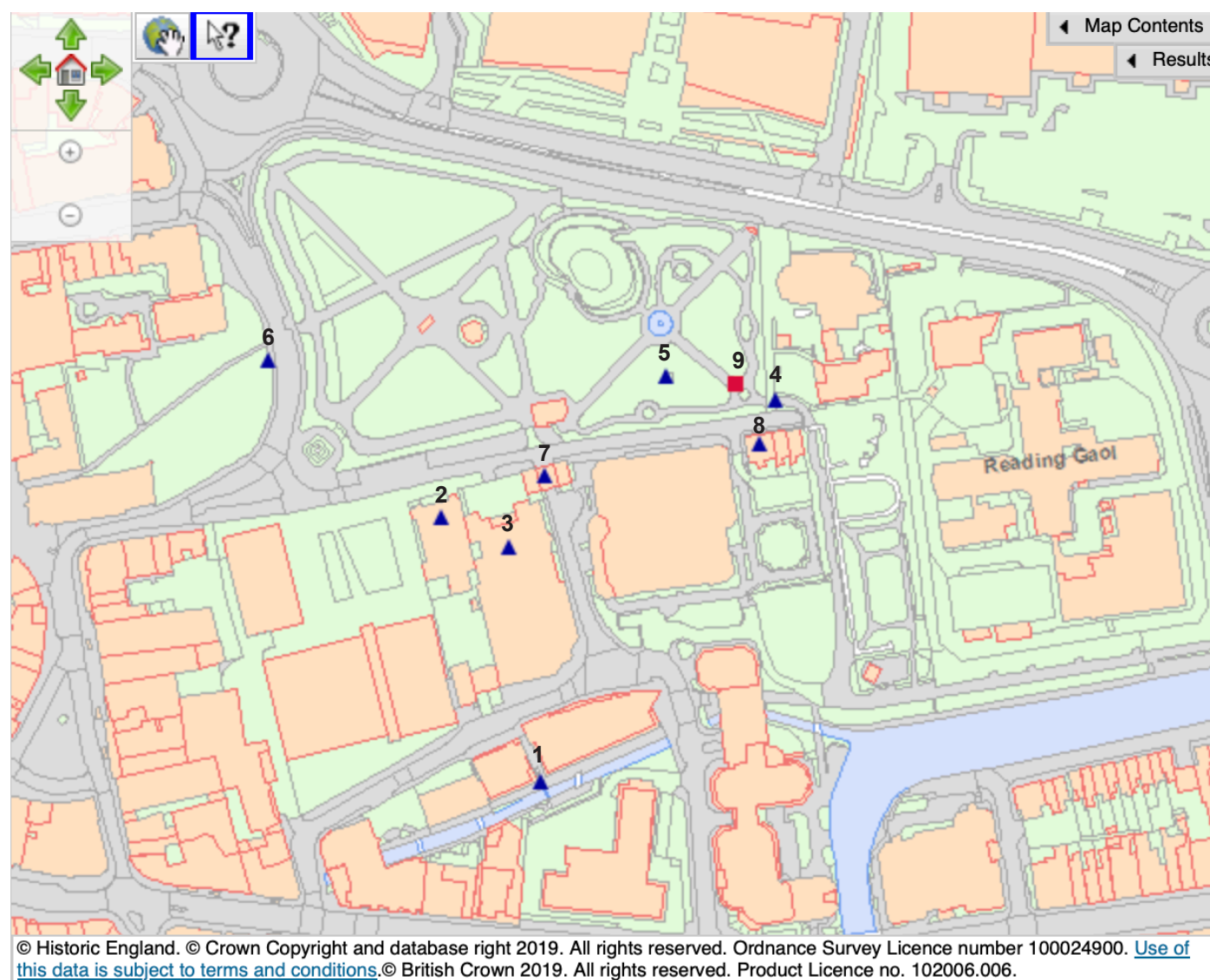


Fig.02 Site location plan



Legend

- ▲ Listed Building (NHLE)
- EH PastScape
- Local HER record points
- ▲ Local HER record polygons
- National Trust HBSMR
- Building Preservation Notice
- ◆ Designation Decision Records De-listed
- Parks and Gardens (Non Statutory Data)
- ✚ Church Heritage Record (Non Statutory Data)
- Scheduled Monument (centre point)
- Registered Park/Garden (centre point)
- Registered Battlefield (centre point)
- Protected Wreck Site (centre point)
- World Heritage Site
- Certificate of Immunity
- ★ Designation Decision Records Non-designated
- Expired Certificate Of Immunity
- ✚ NMR Excavation Index

Fig.03 Map showing heritage assets within 100m of Reading Crown Court

	Title	Type	Location	Grade
1	Abbey Mill Ruins	Listing	Abbey Mill Ruins, Abbey Square, READING, Non Civil Parish, Reading	II
2	SHIRE HALL	Listing	SHIRE HALL, THE FORBURY, READING, Non Civil Parish, Reading	II
3	ASSIZE COURTS	Listing	ASSIZE COURTS, THE FORBURY, READING, Non Civil Parish, Reading	II
4	ARCHWAY CONNECTING FORBURY GARDENS TO ABBEY RUINS. INCLUDING RETAINING WALLS FLANKING PATH TO ABBEY RUINS	Listing	ARCHWAY CONNECTING FORBURY GARDENS TO ABBEY RUINS. INCLUDING RETAINING WALLS FLANKING PATH TO ABBEY RUINS, FORBURY GARDENS ARCHWAY CONNECTING FORBURY GARDENS TO ABBEY RUINS. INCLUDING RETAINING WALLS FLANKING PATH TO ABBEY RUINS, FORBURY ROAD, READING, Non Civil Parish, Reading	II*
5	ANGLIAN CROSS	Listing	ANGLIAN CROSS, FORBURY GARDENS, READING, Non Civil Parish, Reading	II
6	Wall and gate piers of the Church of St Laurence's graveyard	Listing	Wall and gate piers of St Laurence's graveyard, The Forbury, Reading, RG1 3BB, Non Civil Parish, Reading	II
7	ABBAY GATE	Listing	ABBAY GATE, THE FORBURY, READING, Non Civil Parish, Reading	I
8	No name for this Entry	Listing	10, ABBOT'S WALK, READING, Non Civil Parish, Reading	II
9	Reading Abbey: a Cluniac and Benedictine monastery and Civil War earthwork.	Scheduling	Non Civil Parish, Reading	Not Applicable to this List Entry

2.0 Summary of proposals

2.1 The proposals forming this application are summarised as follows:

Internal changes:

- 1 x additional crown court hearing room with secure dock and Jury seating.
- 1 x new virtual hearing room and associated public gallery.
- 1 x new jury deliberation room.
- 1 x new jury assembly room with small meeting room and associated WCs.
- 2 x new consultation rooms.
- 2 x new video link rooms.
- 1 x new video call room.
- 1 x new baby changing room / WC.
- 1 x new judicial accessible WC.
- Refurbished advocates robing room.
- Redecorated and refurbished administration office space.
- New WC provision throughout the ground floor.
- Service lift 5 to be reinstated to benefit the movement of materials up to the ground floor by the contractor.
- Modification and reprogramming to lift core No.3 with a new structural opening and lift level opening to allow defendant level access to the ground floor.
- New structural opening in Stair core no.3 to enable defendant access to the ground floor.
- Relocation and redesign of the reception desk in the public foyer, along with a barista point.

External changes:

- The current proposals require minor interventions to the external fabric with a need to make penetrations for ventilation, which will be shrouded with metal louvres. These interventions will be on the Northwest elevation above the neighbouring property's car park (The Roseate Hotel).
- The door at the new restricted entrance will be replaced.

2.2 The proposed design is predominantly located in the modern portion of the building complex which does not hold any heritage significance, and will mainly require the demolition and reinstatement of new partition walls with new access and circulation for jurors and members of the judiciary. No changes are proposed which impact the original, historic fabric of the building.



Fig.04 View from The Roseate Hotel car park to the west elevation of Reading Crown Court, showing the proposed size and location of new ventilation grilles.



Fig.05 Public foyer where a new reception desk and barista point are proposed.



Fig.06 Existing door at restricted (north) entrance to be replaced..

3.0 Heritage policy and guidance

National Policy

Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas Act 1990)

3.1 The primary legislation relating to Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas is set out in the Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Section 66(1) reads: “In considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.”

National Planning Policy Framework (2023)

3.2 Chapter 16, “Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment” states that heritage assets can range from sites and buildings of local interest to World Heritage Sites considered to have an Outstanding Universal Value. The NPPF subsequently requires these assets to be conserved in a “manner appropriate to their significance” (Paragraph 195).

3.3 NPPF directs local planning authorities to require an applicant to “describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting” and the level of detailed assessment should be “proportionate to the assets’ importance” (Paragraph 200).

3.4 Paragraph 201 states that the significance any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal should be identified and assessed. This includes any assets affected by development within their settings. This significance assessment should be taken into account when considering the impact of a proposal, “to avoid conflict between the heritage asset’s conservation and any aspect of the proposal”. This paragraph therefore results in the need for an analysis of the impact of a proposed development on the asset’s relative significance, in the form of a Heritage Impact Assessment.

3.5 Paragraph 205 requires that “When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance. It is then clarified that any harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, either through alteration, destruction or development within its setting, should require, “clear and convincing justification” (Paragraph 206). This paragraph outlines that substantial harm to Grade I listed heritage assets should be exceptional, rising to “wholly exceptional” for those assets of the highest significance such as Scheduled Monuments, Grade I and Grade II* listed buildings or Registered Parks and Gardens as well as World Heritage Sites.

3.6 In relation to harmful impacts or the loss of significance resulting from a development proposal, Paragraph 207 states the following:

“Where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to (or total loss of significance of) a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or total

loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss, or all of the following apply:

- a . the nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable uses of the site, and
- b . no viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation; and
- c . conservation by grant-funding or some form of not for profit, charitable or public ownership is demonstrably not possible; and
- d . the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use.”

3.7 The NPPF therefore requires a balance to be applied in the context of heritage assets, including the recognition of potential benefits accruing from a development. In the case of proposals which would result in “less than substantial harm”, paragraph 208 provides the following: “Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.”

3.8 It is also possible for proposals, where suitably conceived and designed, to result in no harm to the significance of heritage assets.

3.9 The NPPF therefore recognises the need to clearly identify relative significance at an early stage and then to judge the impact of development proposals in that context.

Local policy

Reading Borough Local Plan

3.10 The primary policy relating to listed buildings is EN1: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment, which reinforces the policies set out in the NPPF.

3.11 It states that: “All proposals will be expected to protect and where possible enhance the significance of heritage assets and their settings, the historic character and local distinctiveness of the area in which they are located. Proposals should seek to avoid harm in the first instance. Any harm to or loss of a heritage asset should require clear and convincing justification, usually in the form of public benefits. Applications which affect Listed Buildings will not have an adverse impact on those elements which contribute to their special architectural or historic interest including, where appropriate, their settings.”

Guidance

Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) (2014)

3.12 The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) was published in April 2014 as a companion to the NPPF, replacing a large number of foregoing Circulars and other supplementary guidance. The document was updated in February 2018.

3.13 In respect of heritage decision-making, the PPG stresses the importance of determining applications on the basis of significance and explains how the tests of harm and impact within the NPPF are to be interpreted..

3.14 In particular, the PPG notes the following in relation to the evaluation of harm: “In determining whether works to a listed building constitute substantial harm, an important consideration would be whether the adverse impact seriously affects a key element of its special architectural or historic interest... The harm may arise from works to the asset or from development within its setting.” (Ref ID: 18a-018-20190723)

3.15 This guidance therefore provides assistance in defining where levels of harm should be set, tending to emphasise substantial harm as a “high test”.

Historic England ‘Conservation Principles: Policies and Guidance’ 2008

3.16 Historic England sets out in this document a logical approach to making decisions and offering guidance about all aspects of the historic environment, including changes affecting significant places. It states that: “New work or alteration to a significant place should normally be acceptable if: a. there is sufficient information comprehensively to understand the impacts of the proposal on the significance of the place; b. the proposal would not materially harm the values of the place, which, where appropriate, would be reinforced or further revealed; c. the proposals aspire to a quality of design and execution which may be valued now and in the future; d. the long-term consequences of the proposals can, from experience, be demonstrated to be benign, or the proposals are designed not to prejudice alternative solutions in the future” (page 59).

4.0 History of the site

Early history

4.1 In medieval times, Reading was the site of a great royal Abbey – a religious community centred round a magnificent church - one of the largest monasteries in Europe. In 1121, King Henry I announced that he wanted to have a new abbey built at Reading. The Abbey would have a large and impressive church and living quarters for dozens of monks, who would worship in the church. No expense was spared in its construction. The Abbey Quarter covers the former precinct of this royal monastery.

4.2 The site of Reading Crown Court formed part of the Abbot's Lodging and garden, lying adjacent to the Inner Gateway. More information on the early history of the site and surroundings can be found online on the Reading Museum's website, and is not repeated here.

Reading Crown Court

4.3 The building, which was designed by the county surveyor, John Clacy, in the Baroque revival style and built at a cost of £21,644, was completed in 1861. It became the main venue for the assizes from 1867 when Abingdon County Hall ceded that role to Reading.

4.4 The design involved a symmetrical main frontage with seven bays facing onto The Forbury with the end bays projected forward; the central section of five bays featured a three-bay portico with Doric order columns; there were round headed sash windows flanked by Ionic order columns on the first floor. The complex included the county police station which was built behind the courthouse.

4.5 Following the implementation of the Local Government Act 1888, which established county councils in every county, it also became the meeting place for Berkshire County Council. The administrative staff and committee rooms of the county council were accommodated in the Shire Hall next door.

4.6 Following the implementation of the Courts Act 1971, the former assizes court was re-designated Reading Crown Court. In 1981 the county council moved to a new Shire Hall at Shinfield Park and subsequently the building was used solely by the Crown Court.

Case history

4.7 Important cases heard by Reading Crown Court included the trial and conviction of Leslie Bailey for the murder of Mark Tildesley in December 1992 and the trial and conviction of Llewellyn Adams, Indrit Krasniqi, Michael Johnson, Jamaile Morally, Joshua Morally and Adrian Thomas for the murder of Mary-Ann Leneghan in March 2012. It was also the venue for the Munir Hussain case, in which a businessman, Munir Hussain, was tried and convicted of assaulting a burglar, Walid Salem, in December 2009. The initial stages of the trial of Jed Foster for the killing of Andrew Harper were also heard at Reading Crown Court in August 2019, but on 19 September the Crown Prosecution Service said that they had discontinued the case against him.

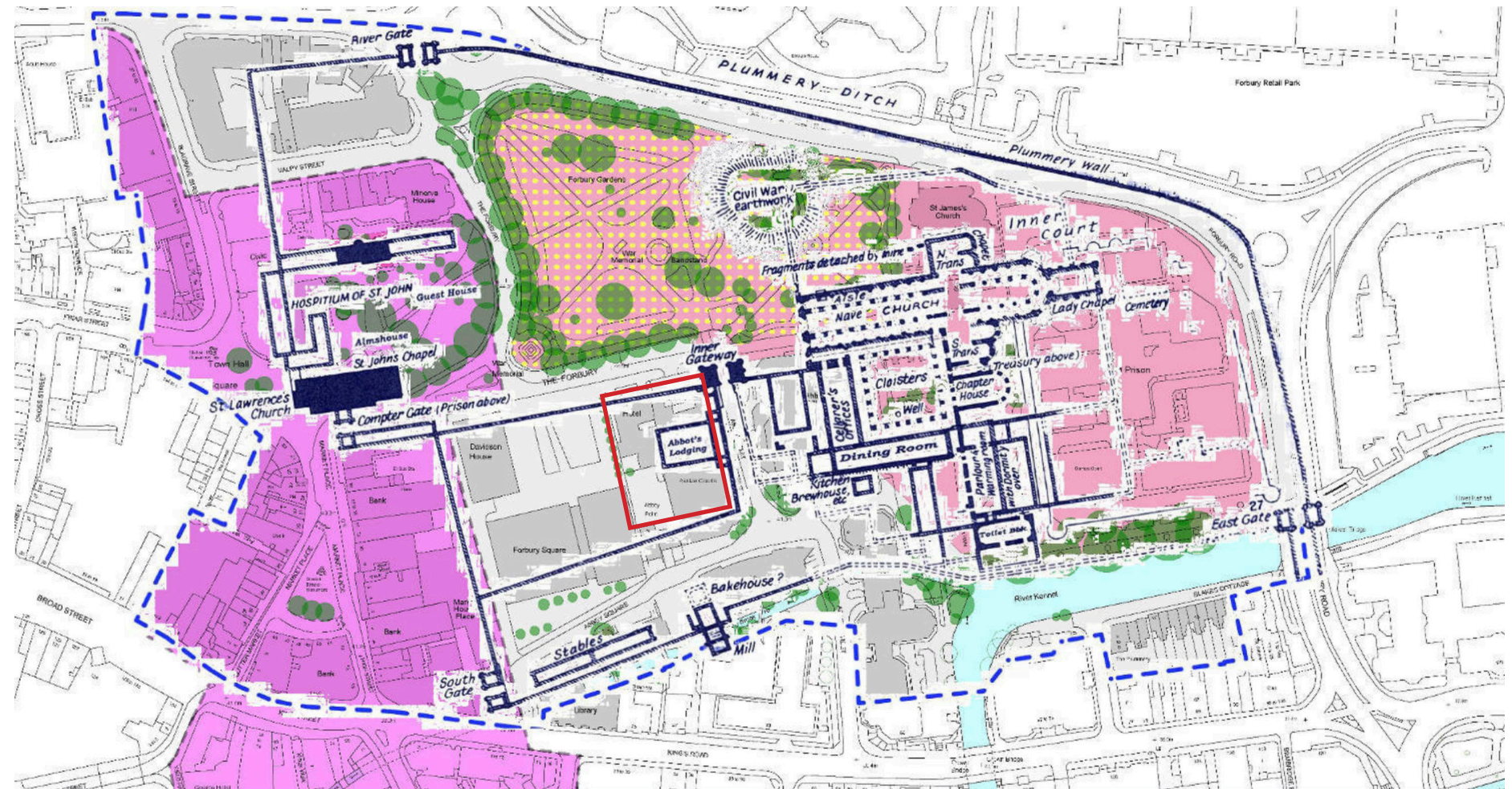


Fig.07 Plan of Reading Abbey overlaid on a modern street map. Location of Reading Crown Court is outlined in red (source: Reading Museum).



Fig.08 Clacy's survey of Reading 1853 (map annotated with some later developments c.1870) (source: Royal Berkshire Archives).

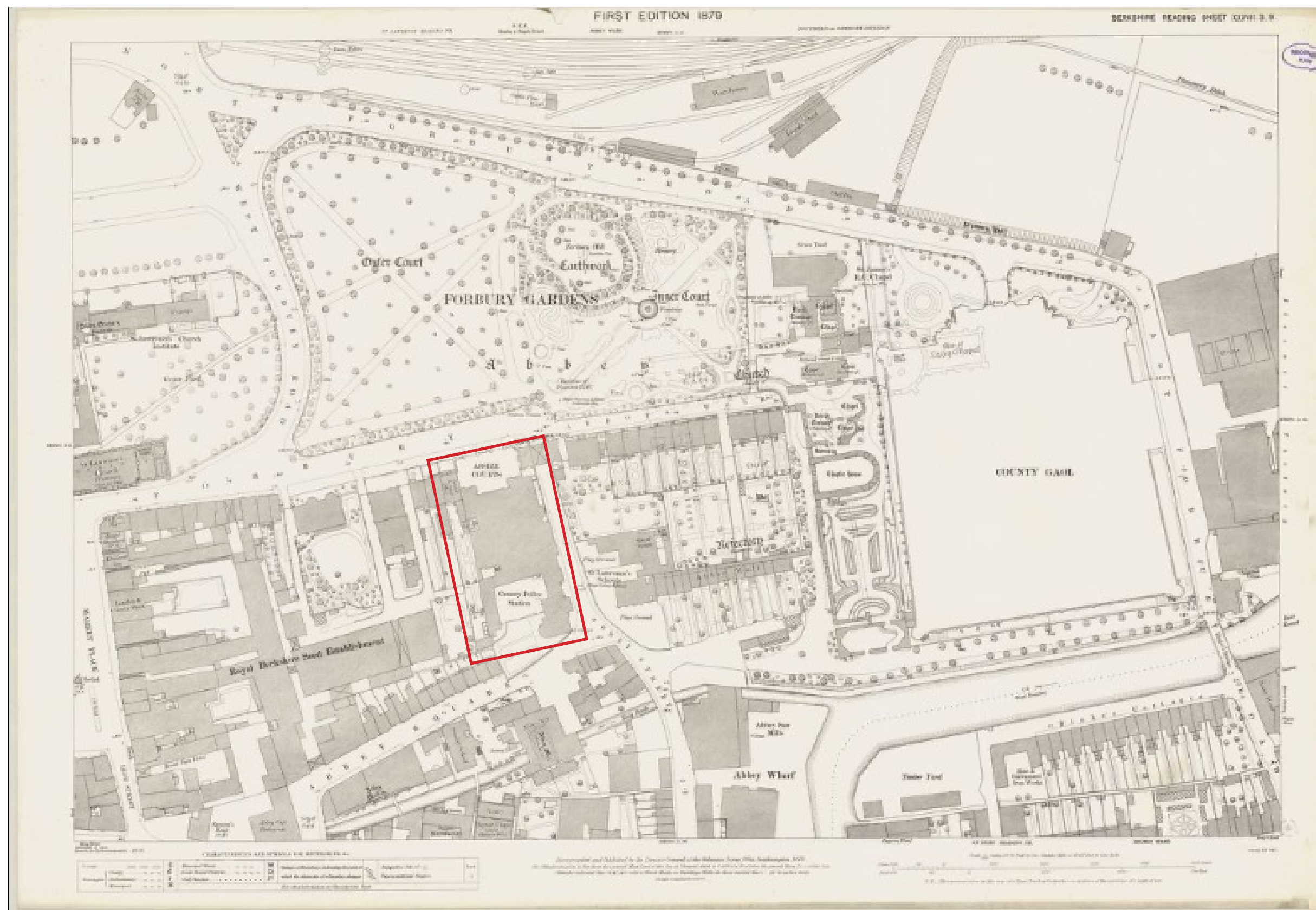


Fig.09 1879 map (source: National Library for Scotland).

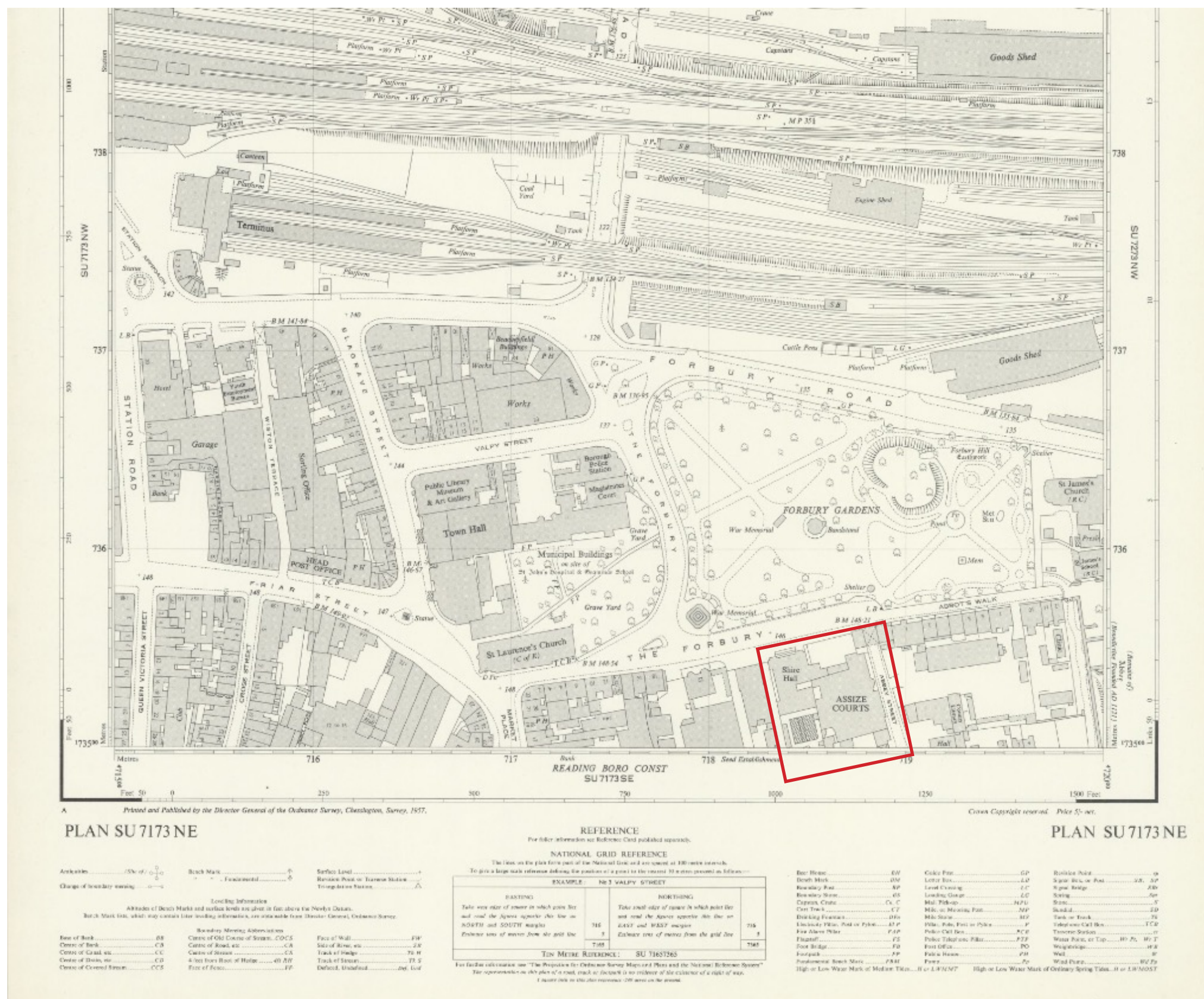


Fig.10 1957 map (source: National Library for Scotland).

5.0 Statement of significance

5.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) defines significance as: Significance (for heritage policy): The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset’s physical presence, but also from its setting.

5.2 Historic England’s Good Practice Advice Note 2 Managing Significance in Decision Taking in the Historic Environment (2015) provides guidance on the assessment of significance as part of the application process, and is intended to provide information to assist applicants, decision-makers and other interest parties in implementing historic environment policy.

5.3 Further to this, Historic England’s Conservation Principles Policies and Guidance (2008) sets out a framework of four inter-related key values for assessing the significance of historic buildings and places, comprising evidential/archaeological, historical, architectural/aesthetic and communal, and it is this framework that forms the basis for our assessment. (This framework is further developed in Historic England’s Advice Note 12, October 2019).

5.4 The levels of significance we are using for this assessment are as follows:

- Exceptionally significant: internationally significant aesthetic, cultural, evidential or communal significance; exceptional areas/elements such as primary elevations or workmanship; nationally and/ or internationally important associations with people or events; unique and intact elements of highest quality; unquestionable group value.
- Highly significant: nationally important historic or architectural features; high quality of workmanship; potential for nationally important archaeology; largely intact and/or rare examples of a particular building type or technique; important positive group value.
- Significant (Medium significance): Formal, heritage or aesthetic significance, architectural character or notable features, including areas with potential for significant enhancement; some group value; surviving decorative features of historic or architectural interest.
- Low significance: Little or no architectural or heritage significance or area of lost significance.
- Not significant (Neutral): Of no heritage interest.
- Detrimental: Features or areas that detract from a building’s significance.

5.5 Where a proposal may have an effect on the surroundings in which the heritage asset is experienced, a qualitative assessment is made of whether, how and to what degree setting contributes to the significance of heritage assets. This is informed by the checklist of potential attributes of a setting, as outlined by the Historic England guidance document Historic Environment Good Practice Advice (GPA) in Planning Note 3 The Setting of Heritage Assets (2017).

5.6 GPA Note 3 identifies five steps towards assessing the implications of development proposals which may affect the setting of heritage assets (it is consistent with other guidance):

- Identify the assets affected

- Assessing the contribution setting makes to significance
- Assessing the effect of the proposed development
- Maximising enhancement and minimising harm
- Making and documenting the decision and monitoring outcomes

5.7 Setting is defined in the NPPF as “the surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral”.

Assessment of significance

Archaeological / Evidential value

5.8 There will be archaeological interest in a heritage asset if it holds, or potentially holds, evidence of past human activity worthy of expert investigation at some point. (Historic England Advice Note 12).

5.9 Reading Crown Court lies within the precinct of the medieval Reading Abbey, occupying an area to the west of the refectory and cellarer’s office, and to the north of what were probably the stables. Archaeological work in the immediate vicinity of the site demonstrates considerable disturbance to medieval deposits. Observation work of geopits excavated on the site in 1987, then referred to as the Assize Courts, suggested that much of the present site has been quarried and subsequently backfilled, with cellarge then being excavated in the backfilled site (Wessex Archaeology 1987). This evidence therefore suggests that the archaeological value of the Reading Crown Court site is low (low significance).

Architectural / Aesthetic value

5.10 These are interests in the design and general aesthetics of a place. They can arise from conscious design or fortuitously from the way the heritage asset has evolved. More specifically, architectural interest is an interest in the art or science of the design, construction, craftsmanship and decoration of buildings and structures of all types. Artistic interest is an interest in other human creative skills, like sculpture. (Historic England Advice Note 12).

5.11 Reading Crown Court was designed in the Baroque revival style - an architectural style adopted for many major public and institutional buildings in Great Britain and the British Empire between 1885 and the outbreak of the First World War in 1914. Known at the time as the English Renaissance style, it adopted many of its motifs such as domes and cupolas from what is now regarded as the English Baroque style of Wren, Hawksmoor, Vanbrugh, and Gibbs. One of many notable examples of the Baroque Revival style is the Old Bailey (Central Criminal Courts), London, of 1900–6 with its central dome modelled after Wren’s Royal Hospital at Greenwich.

5.12 The north façade of Reading Crown Court is an impressive display of the style.

5.13 The form of courthouses evolved between the 18th century and the

1960s to meet the changing needs of its users. Judges gradually became more remote, leading to courthouses having a separate, secure, but modest, entrance at the rear of the building. In some buildings the public was only granted access to the public galleries of the courts, but in most buildings a main, front entrance gave all participants, apart from the judiciary, access to the building. A major historic courthouse, such as Reading Crown Court, is usually located in the relatively dense heart of a town or city and therefore in many cases there is only a single façade that can be treated with any elaboration. The form and detailing of the façade helped to establish the building’s function, while symbols clarified its function.

5.14 For this reason, the north façade is considered to be significant.

5.15 The original east façade is less grand, and now meets the modern portion of the building complex (mainly housing the new court rooms), designed by Broadway Malyan and built between 1989-97. It is less significant in comparison, but still an important part of the original building.

5.16 Assize Courts were among the grandest buildings in a town or city and would usually be located in the area occupied by other government buildings. Their massing would indicate that a grand public hall and large courtrooms were located within the building.

5.17 The proportions of the original Assize Courts at Reading (with additional buildings to the rear) have largely been lost. Some of the original interiors remain, such as the grand public hall, however the original courtrooms were demolished along with approximately half of the original building to make way for a new building complex in the late 20th century.

5.18 It would be fair to say that the architectural / aesthetic value of Reading Crown Court has been diminished over the years given the vast extent of change that has taken place. However, the elements of the original building that do remain, namely the north façade and original interiors at the northern end of the building complex are considered to be significant.

5.19 The modern additions are not significant.

Historical value

5.20 An interest in past lives and events (including pre-historic). Heritage assets can illustrate or be associated with them. Heritage assets with historic interest not only provide a material record of our nation’s history, but can also provide meaning for communities derived from their collective experience of a place and can symbolise wider values such as faith and cultural identity. (Historic England Advice Note 12).

5.21 Reading Crown Court lies on the site of the medieval royal Abbey – a religious community centred round a magnificent church - one of the largest monasteries in Europe. The Abbey would have a large and impressive church and living quarters for dozens of monks, who would worship in the church. No expense was spared in its construction. The Abbey Quarter covers the former precinct of this royal monastery. Although much of the original medieval construction has since been lost, there are elements surrounding the site that

nod to its history – namely the Abbey Gateway which lies closely adjacent to Reading Crown Court at the north, and Forbury Gardens.

5.22 The building of the original Reading Crown Court (then referred to as the Assize Courts) took place in the 1850s and was completed in 1861. It was designed by the county surveyor, John Clacy. Clacy's map of Reading shows the form of the original building (see fig. 08).

5.23 It became the main venue for the assizes from 1867 when Abingdon County Hall ceded that role to Reading. The design involved a symmetrical main frontage with seven bays facing onto The Forbury with the end bays projected forward; the central section of five bays featured a three-bay portico with Doric order columns; there were round headed sash windows flanked by Ionic order columns on the first floor. The complex included the county police station which was built behind the courthouse (no longer extant).

5.24 Following the implementation of the Local Government Act 1888, which established county councils in every county, it also became the meeting place for Berkshire County Council. The administrative staff and committee rooms of the county council were accommodated in the Shire Hall next door.

5.25 By the 1960s the need for fundamental change was widely recognised. The Government appointed Lord Beeching in 1966 as Chairman of the Royal Commission on Assizes and Quarter Sessions, a review that took three years to complete. The report stated that the ultimate ideal was to have purpose-built court buildings in selected centres designed to a common pattern and capable of expansion. The extent of facilities provided in new Crown Courts would separate future buildings from those built for the Assizes. Although judges and juries always had separate rooms, few other users had individual facilities in older courthouses. In 1971 criminal trials by jury took place in 144 towns and cities, but the creation of the Crown Court meant an immediate decrease in the number of sites that would be needed when the Crown Court replaced the Assizes in 1972.

5.26 Following the implementation of the Courts Act 1971, the former Assizes Court was re-designated Reading Crown Court. In 1981 the county council moved to a new Shire Hall at Shinfield Park and subsequently it was used solely by the Crown Court.

5.27 Extensive works were undertaken on the site in the late 1980s and during the 1990s which involved the demolition of much of the original Assizes Court, and the addition of a new building complex at the rear to house modern court rooms. These changes were an inevitable part of the reforms to the Courts Act and many buildings suffered a similar fate. However, despite the amount of change that has taken place on the site over the centuries, it has a rich and detailed history and is therefore considered to be highly significant.

5.28 In terms of the existing building fabric, the original Clacy elements are considered to be highly significant in historical terms. The remaining modern elements are not significant, although they do point to a marked step change in court reform in the late 20th century.

Communal value

5.29 Reading Crown Court is likely to have some communal value considering its location and use within the town. Although the building is not usually open to the public, it has opened its doors on selected occasions in recent years as part of heritage open days. In addition, the Court has heard the trials and convictions of a number of nationally recognised cases, such as the murder of Mark Tildesley in December 1992.

5.30 For these reasons, the communal value is considered to be significant.

Contribution of setting to significance

5.31 The immediate setting of Reading Crown Court is an important part of our understanding of its significance – most notably of the early history of the site.

5.32 The Grade I listed Gateway (adjacent to Reading Crown Court) is a substantial part of what remains of Reading Abbey. This Gateway divided the public area of the Abbey grounds (what is now Forbury Gardens) and the private area where the rest of the ruins are. In 1861 the Gateway collapsed in a storm, shortly after funds had been raised for vital conservation. Instead, the Gate had to be substantially rebuilt. This work was completed by Sir George Gilbert Scott, a Victorian architect known for his Gothic Revival work. He also designed Reading Gaol within the Abbey Quarter.

5.33 The present area of Forbury Gardens directly to the north of the site has been in use since at least AD 870 when a Viking encampment was set up there. In 1121 Henry I founded Reading Abbey on the site, then probably open fields, enclosing it within the Abbey precincts, divided into the Inner and Outer Courts (to east and west respectively). Part of the Abbey nave appears to have covered an area at the south-east corner of the present gardens. In 1150, during the war between King Stephen and Matilda, a castle was erected within the Abbey precinct and the present Forbury Hill on the north boundary may be part of this defence, the Hill being later used as a gun emplacement during the 1643 Siege of Reading in the Civil War. Following the Dissolution, the Abbey was largely demolished, although the Outer Court, previously used for fairs, continued in this use and as a place for other public gatherings, becoming known as Forbury Green.

5.34 Pleasure Gardens, laid out in the Inner Court (still enclosed with the Abbey ruins in the 1830s) and on Forbury Hill, were opened on Easter Sunday 1856. The gardens were laid out by Charles Clacy, the Borough Surveyor, with the planting of shrubs and trees supervised by Suttons Seeds, who were at that time based locally. Forbury Green, the Outer Court area to the west, was bought by the Borough in 1860 and opened in August 1861 (presumably around the time the Assize Courts were completed) being separated from the Pleasure Gardens by a wall. The two parts were united in 1873. The Garden remains in public use.

5.35 To the west of Reading Crown Court is the Grade II listed Shire Hall.

5.36 Since Berkshire County Council had been formed in 1889, meetings

of the full council had taken place in the Assize Courts. Following continuing increases in the responsibilities of the county council, county leaders chose to procure a new purpose-built Shire Hall for council officers and their departments: the site selected on the southern side of Forbury Gardens had been occupied by buildings associated with the Royal Berkshire Seed Establishment.

5.37 The new building, which was designed by Septimus Warwick and H Austen Hall in the Queen Anne style, was built by E. C. Hughes of Wokingham and opened as the Shire Hall in 1911. The building accommodated the administrative staff of Berkshire County Council while full council meetings continued to be held in the Assize Courts next door.

5.38 In 1981 the building was converted to commercial use and today is in use as a hotel however its historical connection to Reading Crown Court remains important.

Significance plan

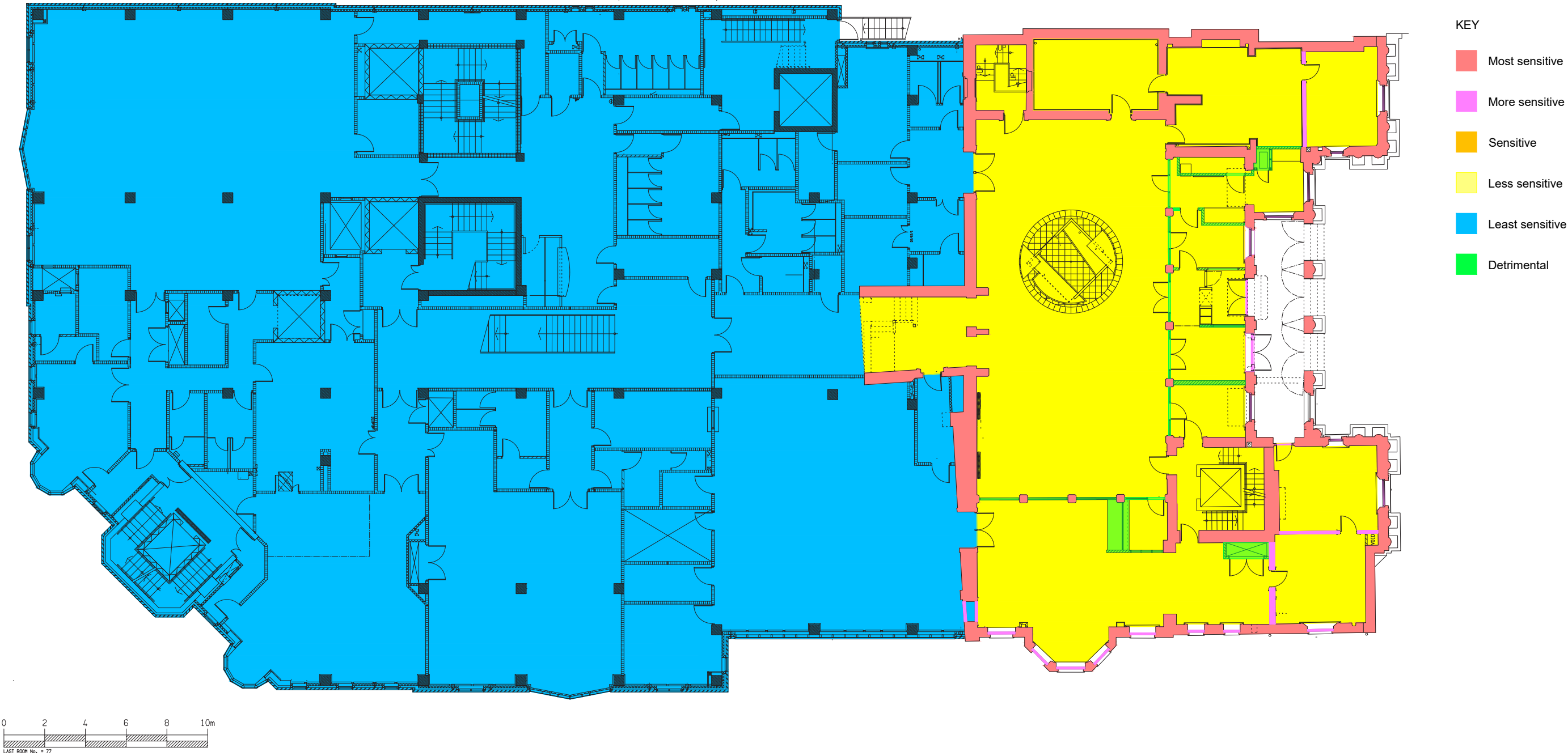


Fig.11 Ground level significance plan

Intactness plan

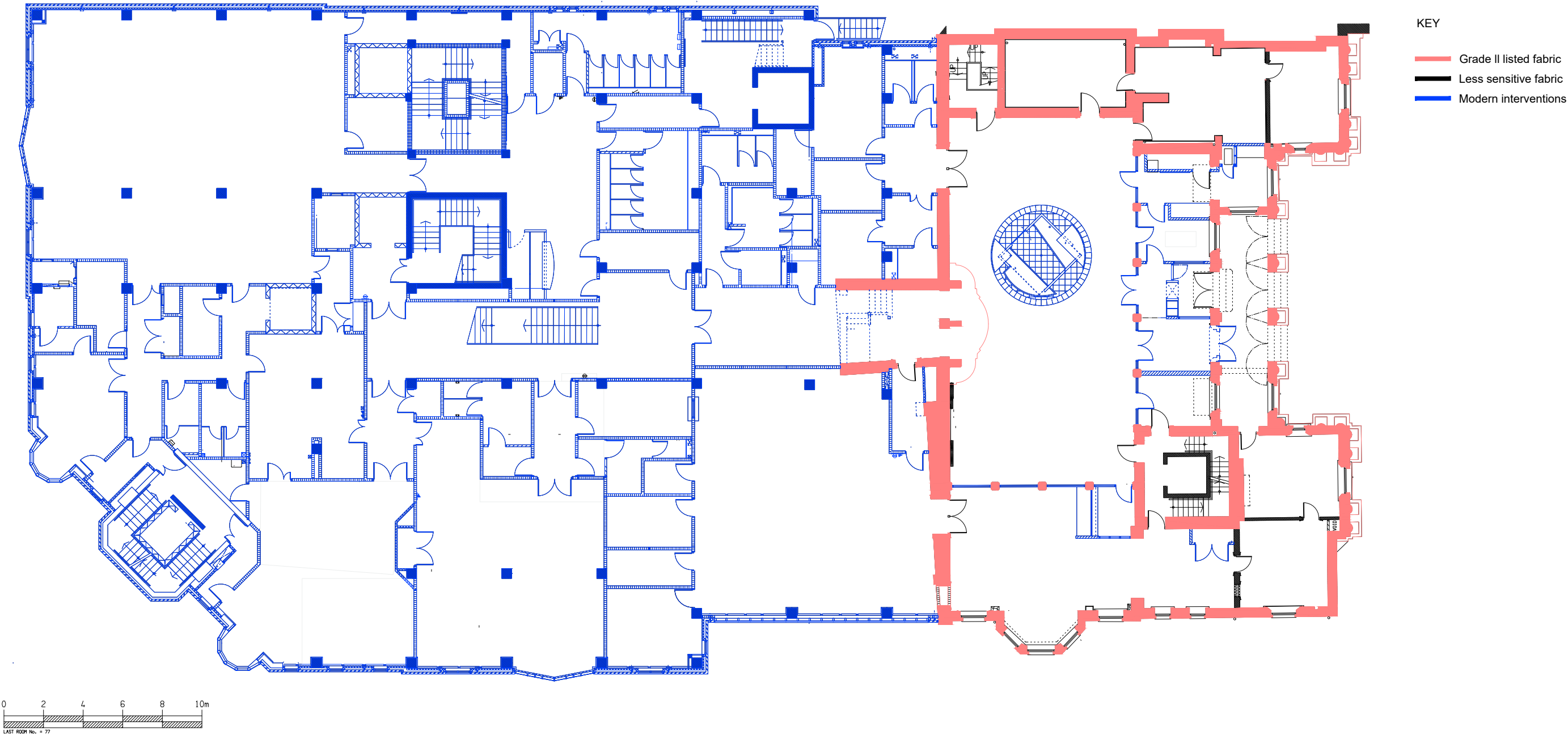


Fig.12 Ground level intactness plan

6.0 Impact assessment

6.1 A heritage impact assessment (HIA) is a “practical assessment of the magnitude of the impact from proposed change on the significance of a heritage asset or historic building.” - BS7913:2013.

6.2 The purpose of a heritage impact assessment is to gain an understanding of the effect of change on a heritage asset and how to manage and mitigate that change.

Baseline

6.3 The previous sections of this document are intended to provide an understanding of the site, surroundings and significance, and is considered to be the baseline for the heritage impact assessment. This approach to impact assessment is required in order to satisfy the provisions of sections 66(1) and 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and the National Planning Policy Framework where the impact of development on a heritage asset is being considered.

6.4 A study boundary of 100m around the application site has been established as an appropriate boundary for understanding the site and its surroundings, including heritage assets that could be affected by proposals. A map of heritage assets within the study boundary is shown in fig. 03.

Methodology

6.5 The aim of this section of the HIA is to identify and assess any impacts that the proposed development may cause to the value or significance of the identified heritage assets and/or their settings.

6.6 Overall, it is a balanced understanding of the foreseeable likely effect of proposals on significance as a result of predicated impacts which is being sought through undertaking this process. It should be clearly understood that the level of detail provided within these assessments is “proportionate to the assets’ importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance” as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework.

Definitions of heritage asset significance

6.7 It is evident that the significance/value of any heritage asset(s) requires clear assessment to provide a context for, and to determine the impact of, development proposals. This is provided in section 5.0.

6.8 An overall sum of the values is taken into account when ascribing a level of value to a heritage asset.

6.9 In this case, the following levels and values apply (also see Table 01):

Levels of significance	Significance ‘value’
Exceptionally significant	Very high
Highly significant	High
Significant	Medium
Low significance	Low
Not significant	Negligible

6.10 Where a proposal may affect the surroundings in which the heritage asset is experienced, a qualitative assessment is made of whether, how and to what degree setting contributes to the significance of heritage assets. This is informed by the checklist of potential attributes of a setting, as outlined in Historic England’s GPA3.

6.11 Setting is defined in the NPPF as “the surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral”.

Magnitude / scale of impact

6.12 Scale or severity of impacts or changes can be judged taking into account their direct and indirect effects and whether they are temporary or permanent, reversible or irreversible. The cumulative effect of separate impacts should also be considered. The scale or severity of impact can be ranked as:

No change: No change to the value of the receptor.
Negligible change: Barely discernible change to the value of the receptor. Very minor loss of or alteration to one or more key elements / features / characteristics of the baseline.
Minor change: Slight change to the value of the receptor. The proposals are dissimilar to a main component of the receptor but similar to other components. The proposals would not be readily noticeable. Minor loss of or alteration to one or more key elements / features / characteristics of the baseline. The duration of this effect may be temporary and reversible.
Moderate change: A clearly discernible change to the value of the receptor. The proposals are dissimilar to a main component of the receptor but similar to other components. The proposals would be readily noticeable. Partial loss of or alteration to one or more key elements / features / characteristics of the baseline. The duration of this effect may be semi-permanent and partially reversible.
Major change: Considerable change to the value of the receptor. The proposals are a new component, ranging from a notable change in receptor characteristics over an extensive area to intensive change over a more limited area. The proposals would be very noticeable. Loss of or major alteration to key elements / features / characteristics of the baseline. The duration of this effect may be permanent and irreversible.

6.13 Magnitude considers whether the proposed development:

- Conforms with the pattern, scale, mass, grain and historic features of the receptor;
- Creates a loss or restoration of key features of the receptor;
- Contributes to the identified receptor character; and

- Accords with national, regional and local planning policy and guidelines.

6.14 The magnitude of impact of change should be assessed in relation to the value of the heritage asset.

6.15 Table 02 shows the magnitude of impact set against the value of the heritage asset in order to determine the overall impact of the change proposed.

Overall impact

6.16 Following the assessment of magnitude (as summarised above), the overall summary of residual effects of the proposal on receptors can be determined by considering the weight of the magnitude in relation to potential mitigation strategies. Overall residual effects are categorised in the table below.

Major beneficial: The scheme would be in keeping with and would provide a major improvement to or reinforce the value of the receptor
Moderate beneficial: The scheme would be in keeping with and would provide a noticeable improvement to or reinforce the value of the receptor
Minor beneficial: The scheme would be in keeping with and would provide a slight improvement to or reinforce the value of the receptor
Neutral: The degree of effect would be neither beneficial or adverse
Nil: The scheme would have no effect on the value of the receptor
Negligible: The scheme would be barely perceptible or would be in keeping with and would maintain the value of the receptor
Minor adverse: The scheme would have a minor negative effect to the value of the receptor
Moderate adverse: The scheme would cause a noticeable deterioration in the value of the receptor
Major adverse: The scheme would cause a major deterioration in the value of the receptor

6.17 A professional judgement is made of the overall impact and whether or not the change proposed is beneficial or adverse.

Value	Criteria	Examples
Very high	Building/site/area of international significance	Likely to be World Heritage Sites, Areas of Natural Beauty and National Parks. Often listed buildings Grade I and II* and their settings, Scheduled Monuments with upstanding remains, registered Historic Parks and Gardens Grade I and II* and their settings.
High	Building/site/area of national significance	May be listed buildings Grade I and II* and their settings, Scheduled Monuments with upstanding remains, registered Historic Parks and Gardens Grade I and II* and their settings.
Medium	Building/site/area of national significance	Often listed buildings Grade II and their settings, Conservation Areas and their settings, Scheduled Monuments without upstanding remains and registered Historic Parks and Gardens Grade II and their settings.
Low	Building/sites/areas of national significance and/or regional significance, or local assets of particular significance	May be listed buildings Grade II and their settings, Conservation Areas and their settings, Scheduled Monuments without upstanding remains and registered Historic Parks and Gardens Grade II and their settings, and buildings of local interest.
Negligible	Buildings/sites/areas with some evidence of significance but in an incoherent or eroded form of local interest and generally with no statutory protection	Often buildings of local interest and dispersed elements of townscape merit. Assets may be so badly damaged that too little remains to justify inclusion into a higher grade.

Table 01 Definitions of heritage asset significance

Value of heritage asset	Magnitude or scale of impact				
	No change	Negligible change	Minor change	Moderate change	Major change
	Significance of effect / Overall impact				
Very High	Neutral	Slight	Moderate/ Large	Large/very Large	Very Large
High	Neutral	Slight	Moderate/ Slight	Moderate/ Large	Large/Very Large
Medium	Neutral	Neutral / Slight	Slight	Moderate	Moderate/ Large
Low	Neutral	Neutral / Slight	Neutral/Slight	Slight	Slight/ Moderate
Negligible	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral/Slight	Neutral/Slight	Slight

Table 02 Magnitude of impact plotted against significance value

Summary of impacts on heritage assets within the study boundary

6.18 The below table sets out the impact of proposals on heritage assets within the study boundary (within 100m of the application site) and gives a summary of the effect:

Heritage asset	Designation	Significance value	Scale of impact of proposals	Overall impact	Residual effect	Justification
Abbey Mill Ruins	Grade II listed	Medium	No change	Neutral	Nil	The proposals are largely concentrated to the interior of the modern (south wing) portion of the building with very limited, localised changes to the exteriors (in the form of new ventilation grilles with louvred covers on the west elevation of the south wing, and the replacement of an existing door on the north wing). In both instances, these changes will not be perceptible from the asset in question and will result in no change to its significance value.
Shire Hall	Grade II listed	Medium	No change	Neutral	Nil	As above.
Assize Courts	Grade II listed	Medium	Moderate change	Moderate	Neutral	The proposals as outlined in section 2.0 of this report will have no direct impact on historic fabric, however they have been developed to be sympathetic to the listed building. The majority of the changes are internal, and located in the 1990s south wing, which is not considered to be significant. Changes proposed in the historic north wing are very limited and will not impact the historic fabric. They include the replacement of an existing door at the north entrance (the door appears to be non-original) and the relocation of the reception desk in the public foyer along with the addition of a barista point. Both of these items will be free-standing and not fixed to the historic fabric. Their installation will be entirely reversible without any impact. It is also felt that the relocation of the reception desk will improve the aesthetics and overall appreciation of the public foyer which is a important historic space. The replacement door at the north entrance will be more in-keeping with the historic character of the building and is considered to offer a small heritage gain given that the existing modern installation is not sympathetic to the building. More broadly, the proposals will ensure that the building is maintained in active, beneficial use, providing necessary improvements in order to keep the building functioning as a modern court. It is also noted that the building is not part of any significant views with heritage interest as identified in the Reading Local Plan (2019), and therefore the proposals will have no effect on significant views of the building. Overall and on balance, the effect of the proposals is considered to be neutral.
Archway connecting Forbury Gardens to Abbey Ruins including retaining walls flanking path to Abbey Ruins	Grade II* listed	High	No change	Neutral	Nil	The proposals are largely concentrated to the interior of the modern (south wing) portion of the building with very limited, localised changes to the exteriors (in the form of new ventilation grilles with louvred covers on the west elevation of the south wing, and the replacement of an existing door on the north wing). In both instances, these changes will not be perceptible from the asset in question and will result in no change to its significance value.
Anglian Cross	Grade II listed	Medium	No change	Neutral	Nil	As above.
Wall and gate piers of the Church of St Laurence’s Graveyard	Grade II listed	Medium	No change	Neutral	Nil	As above.
Abbey Gate	Grade I listed	High	No change	Neutral	Nil	As above.
10 Abbot’s Walk	Grade II listed	Medium	No change	Neutral	Nil	As above.
Reading Abbey	Scheduled Monument	High	No change	Neutral	Nil	As above.

7.0 Conclusion

7.1 In accordance with the statutory duties outlined in The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, it is deemed that these proposals will have no detrimental impact on the special interest of the listed building. They will improve and enhance the character and appearance of the building and will have a moderate beneficial effect overall which means that the proposals will provide a noticeable improvement to the listed building.

7.2 To summarise, this report concludes that the proposed changes will:

- Not harm the significance of the Grade II listed Reading Crown Court.
- Maintain the listed building in active, beneficial use, with a more coherent and well-designed use of internal floor space and circulation.
- Have no detrimental impact on nearby heritage assets, setting or views.

Appendix A Planning history

03/02/1990 900726 Relocation of study block. Application Permitted

09/09/1993 930798 Listed building consent for refurbishment and alteration to Assize Courts to provide new Crown Courts. Circular 18/84.
Observations sent

02/12/1996 950547 A canopy over a new entrance to the rear. Conditions Discharged

02/12/1996 950071 Small canopy on to an extension to the existing building.
Conditions Discharged

18/01/1996 950854 Temporary freestanding sign boards.
Application Permitted

07/04/1998 980958 New coat of arms to be erected on front of existing Crown Court. Application Permitted

07/04/1998 980871 New Royal Coat of Arms to be erected on front of existing crown court. (Application for Listed Building Consent).
Application Permitted

07/04/1998 980109 New Royal Coat of Arms to be erected on front of existing building. Application Permitted

07/05/2003 030958 Circular 18/84 Application - Installation of cabling equipment to Grade II listed building.
Observations sent

31/10/2005 051065 Proposed erection of a plaque to commemorate Jane Austen's schooling at the Abbey Gateway. To be erected on the East facing wall of the crown court in the small garden area adjoining Abbey Gateway.
Application Permitted

23/12/2008 081562 Replace defective heat curtains to main entrance (retrospective)
Application Refused

24/10/2022 220907 To install wall mounted electric car charge points and associated cabling. The charge points will be surface mounted to the concrete supporting columns to the rear staff car park (enclosed).
Application Permitted

24/11/2022 221486 The proposal seeks to improve the current alarm system. This would be achieved via installation of new concealed cabling and an alarm control keypad, mounted on one wall of exit lobby (ground floor).
Application Permitted

Appendix B Listing description

Heritage Category: Listed Building
Grade: II
List Entry Number: 1113476
Date first listed: 14-Dec-1978
List Entry Name: ASSIZE COURTS
Statutory Address 1: ASSIZE COURTS, THE FORBURY

Location
Statutory Address: ASSIZE COURTS, THE FORBURY
The building or site itself may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.
District: Reading (Unitary Authority)
Parish: Non Civil Parish
National Grid Reference: SU 71868 73529

Details
THE FORBURY 1. 5128 Assize Courts SU 7173 NE 1/306 II GV 2. 1861. Said to be by J B Clacy. Baroque revival style in channelled Bath stone ashlar. 2 storeys with 2 1/2 storey corner pavilions which break forward. Cornices on ground and 1st floors, panels with palmettes over caps. 5 bay centre with flanking 1x1 bay wings. Ground floor Doric with engaged rusticated columns, paired to pavilions. Ionic 1st floor. C19 glazed sash windows, round headed on 1st floor, segmental headed on ground floor, with architrave surrounds and keys. Ground floor of centre projects between flanking pavilions and has 3 bay arcaded portico with balustrade over. Attics have elaborate recessed scroll terminals above entablature forming aedicules. Extensive buildings to rear. Interior: large central top lit and galleried hall. Street wall with 2 pairs of high cruciform piers with rusticated rebates to corners and ball-finials. Heavy lozenge pattern panels of rails.

Listing NGR: SU7186873529