05 March 2025

Reading Borough Council
Working better with you

Title	**PLANNING APPLICATION REPORT**
Ward	Abbey
Planning Application Reference:	PL/24/1593
Site Address:	St Mary's House, 66-68 St Mary's Butts, Reading, RG1 2LG
Proposed Development	Change of use of first to third floors from office (Class E) to 31 serviced apartments (Class C1), erection of a fourth storey comprising 6 serviced apartments (Class C1) and various associated alterations.
Applicant	Mr V Goldstein
Report author	Jonathan Markwell, Principal Planning Officer
Deadline:	Originally 7th March 2025, but an extension of time has been agreed with the applicant until 4th April 2025
Recommendation	Delegate to the Assistant Director for Planning, Transport and Public Protection Services (AD PTPPS) to (i) GRANT full planning permission subject to the satisfactory completion of a Section 106 legal agreement and delegate to the AD PTPPS to make such minor changes to the conditions, Heads of Terms and details of the legal agreement as may be reasonably required to issue the permission or (ii) to REFUSE permission should the Section 106 legal agreement not be completed by the 4th April 2025 (unless the AD PTPPS agrees to a later date for completion of the legal agreement).
S106 Terms	• **Securing the Class C1 serviced apartments use:** - Serviced apartment Use (Class C1) only and for no other purpose (including any other purpose in the same Use Class of the Schedule to the Town & Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended), or in any provision equivalent to that Class in any statutory instrument revoking or re-enacting that Order with or without modification – (for example as a hotel (Class C1), self-contained residential units (Class C3), small/large houses in multiple occupation (Class C4 or Sui Generis) or co-living (Sui Generis) - not to let or licence for occupation or permit or suffer occupation of any of the serviced apartment units for a continuous period of more than 3 months to the same occupier or occupiers - other than those customers staying in accordance with the above, not to let or licence for occupation or permit or suffer occupation of any serviced apartment unit for a continuous period for more than 3 months to the same customer or customers

	- not to require customers of any serviced apartment unit to agree to any minimum period of occupation (of whatever duration) - to provide to the Council within 14 days of written request evidence regarding the use or occupation of the serviced apartment units or any of them • **Employment, Skills and Training** - The production, implementation and monitoring of an Employment and Skills Plan (ESP) for both the construction and end use phases of the development. <u>or</u>, in the event that the developer chooses not to provide the ESP themselves, financial contribution commuted sums for the two phases, calculated using the Employment, Skills and Training SPD 2013 formula, will be secured in lieu of an ESP. • Contribution towards **monitoring costs** plus a separate commitment to pay the Council's reasonable legal costs in connection with the proposed S106 Agreement, to be payable whether or not the Agreement is completed. • Any unexpended contributions to be repaid within ten years beginning with the start of the Financial Year after the final obligation payment for each obligation is received. In accordance with Policy CC9 . • Indexation - All financial contributions to be index-linked from date of permission unless expressly stated otherwise.
Conditions	1. Time Limit for implementation – 3 years. 2. Approved plans. 3. * Pre-commencement details of all external materials to be submitted to the LPA (and sample details to be provided on site) and approved in writing with the LPA. Approved details to be retained on site until the work has been completed. 4. * Pre-commencement Construction Method Statement (also including Environmental Protection measures) 5. Vehicle Parking provided as shown prior to first occupation (compliance condition) 6. Cycle Parking provided as shown prior to first occupation (compliance condition) 7. Refuse, recycling and food waste bins and storage provided as shown prior to first occupation (compliance condition) 8. Pre-occupation submission and approval of measures to prevent pests and vermin accessing bin stores 9. *Pre-commencement internal noise mitigation scheme 10. Demolition/ Construction hours of works (compliance condition) 11. Noise mitigation scheme provided as specified prior to first occupation (compliance condition) 12. *Pre-commencement site access and security strategy 13. * Pre-commencement submission and approval of an interim BREEAM Certificate demonstrating a minimum BREEAM 'Very Good' rating 14. Pre-occupation submission and approval of a final BREEAM Certificate demonstrating a minimum BREEAM 'Very Good' rating 15. Pre-occupation submission of green roof specification and maintenance details, with installation and the approved details to be provided prior to first occupation and subsequently retained and maintained.

	16. Pre-occupation submission of bird and bat box details, with installation and the approved details to be provided prior to first occupation and subsequently retained and maintained. 17. Compliance condition stipulating a maximum of 37 serviced apartments, within the proposed Class C1 serviced apartment use, with no fewer than 2 accessible rooms. 18. No flat roof area to be use as a balcony, roof garden or similar amenity area (compliance condition).
Informatives	1. Positive and Proactive Working – approval 2. Pre-commencement conditions 3. Highways 4. S106 Legal Agreement 5. Terms and conditions 6. Building Regulations 7. Complaints about construction 8. Encroachment 10. Community Infrastructure Levy 11. Parking Permits 12. Thames Water Informatives 13. Specific advice regarding level of information associated with spandrel panels as per condition 3

1. Executive summary

1.1. Full planning permission is sought for the change of use of the upper floors and the creation of one additional storey at roof level to create a total of 37 serviced apartments, together with a series of associated alterations. The two ground floor units are not part of the proposals. The loss of the existing upper floor use and the principle of the proposed serviced apartment use in this Central Reading location is considered acceptable, with the serviced apartments being controlled for short-term use only via legal agreement. In terms of design and heritage matters, the proposed works are supported and considered appropriate on this prominent crossroad location, aided by some refinements at application stage following input from the Reading Design Review Panel. An overall good standard of accommodation would be provided for future guests, while not significantly impacting the amenity of neighbouring occupiers or users either. In overall terms the proposals are supported, subject to the completion of a legal agreement and a series of planning conditions.

2. Introduction and site description

2.1. The application site is located on the corner of St Mary's Butts (eastern side) and Broad Street (southern side), at the prominent crossroads of Oxford Road, Broad Street, St Mary's Butts and West Street within the town centre (see Figure 1 below). The application site building is basement and four storeys in height as existing, with a rooftop plant room. There are two basement and ground floor level commercial units (Class E – Caffé Nero and Cancer Research UK), the entrances to which are on Broad Street. These units are designated primary frontages in Central Reading, as per Policy CR7 of the Local Plan. The upper floors are in use as offices, accessed from a separate entrance on St. Mary's Butts. The first floor is occupied by Reed Recruitment Agency, the second floor by Agility and the third floor is vacant. To the rear (east) of the site is a hard-surfaced parking and servicing area accessed from the south. This comprises 16 car parking spaces and bin storage, with the Transport Statement specifying that 2 parking spaces are allocated to Caffé Nero, 4 to Reed, 3 to Agility and the remaining 7 are unallocated. The servicing area within the site is enclosed by a security gate, beyond which is a wider servicing area

utilised by a series of premises on both Broad Street and St Mary's Butts. This wider servicing area is in the process of being upgraded with its own security gates, with vehicular access to this space off St Mary's Butts, adjacent to the Church of St Mary's.

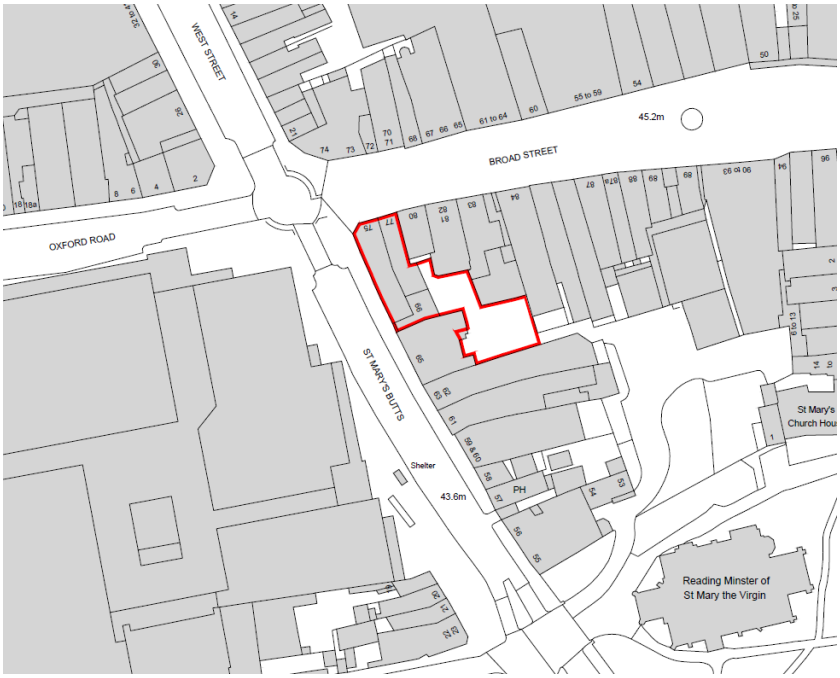


Figure 1 - Extract of the site location plan submitted with the application

2.2. The original building has been re-clad at upper floors in the past decade (see section 4 for details), to create a more contemporary style of building. The building is prominent in its setting given its position in the streetscape (see Figure 2 below). The buildings on this crossroads vary in age, style and design quality, with the south-west corner of the crossroads opposite the site featuring the squarer Metrobank unit, part of Broad Street Mall. The application site building currently stands one storey higher than the three storey buildings directly to the east on Broad Street and south on St. Mary's Butts.

Figure 2 – Present view showing both the Broad St & St Mary's Butts frontages

2.3. The site is surrounded by buildings which similarly comprise retail/commercial uses such as restaurants, shops and cafés at ground floor level with a variety of uses (storage, office and residential) above, although many of these buildings are more traditional in appearance, particularly directly to the south along St. Mary's Butts and to the east along Broad Street.

2.4. Based on the Local Plan policies, as adopted in November 2019, it is first clarified that the application site is not specifically allocated for development within the local plan. The site is not part of a site allocation as part of the emerging Local Plan Partial Update either.

Whilst the site is not within a conservation area (nor is it a listed building), the St Mary's Butts/Castle Street Conservation Area is further to the south of the site (27m away at its closest point – see Figure 3 below), along with a cluster of Listed Buildings, most notably the landmark Grade I Listed Church of St Mary's in St Mary's Butts (shown below). To the north of the site nearby Greyfriars Church is Grade I listed too, while on Broad Street to the east of the site No's 67, 68, the Congregational Church (currently occupied by Waterstones bookshop), 89 & 89a are all Grade II listed. In addition, No's 85-88 Broad Street, to the east of the site, are locally listed.

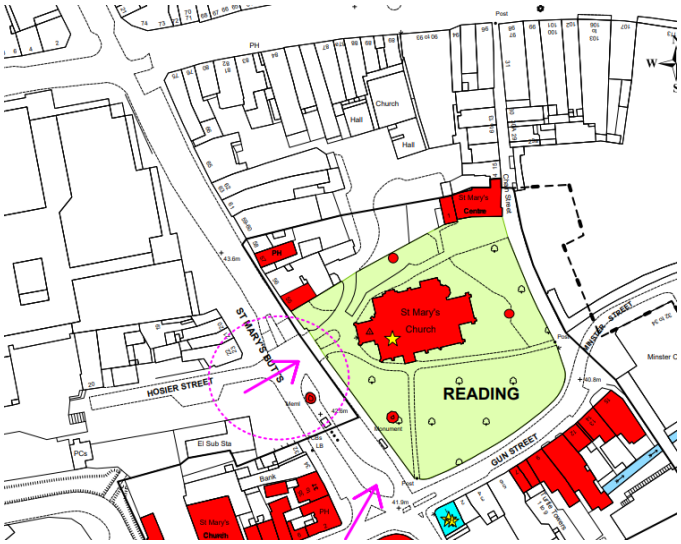


Figure 3 - Extract from St Mary's Butts/Castle Street Conservation Area Appraisal, showing the proximity of the application site to the conservation area and various listed buildings (in red).

2.5. The site is within the Central Area of Reading, as defined by the Local Plan. It also sits within the Office Core, an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) and is restricted by the Article 4 Direction removing the ability to convert Class E uses to residential through the prior approval process. St Mary's Butts is part of the classified highway network, while Broad Street is pedestrianised. From a transport perspective the area is well served by rail and bus links and also contains the largest proportion of public car parking spaces within the Borough. St Mary's Butts and the surrounding road network all have extensive parking restrictions that include time restricted access, operation of the Council's residential parking permit scheme, double yellow lines and red route restrictions, all preventing unauthorised on street parking. An aerial view of the site and surrounding area is shown below in Figure 4, with further aerial images provided in Appendix 2.

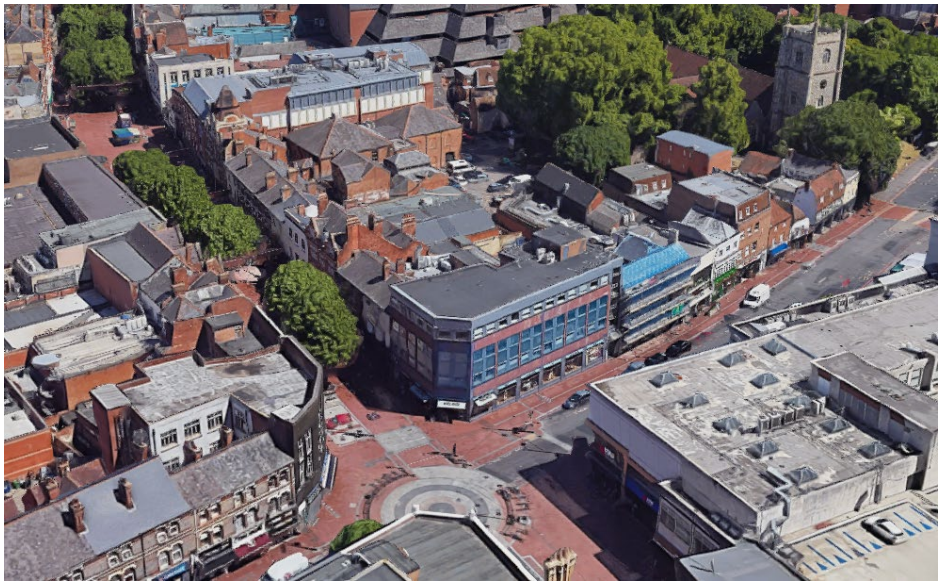


Figure 4 - Aerial view from Google Maps looking south-east

2.6. The application is being considered by the Planning Applications Committee as it involves the change of use of gross floorspace in excess of 1000sqm, which as per the scheme of delegation is required to be considered by the Committee.

3. The proposal

3.1. Full planning permission is sought for the change of use of the first to third floors from office (use Class E) to 31 serviced apartments (Class C1). In addition, it is also proposed to erect a fourth floor roof extension to provide 6 further serviced apartments, resulting in a grand total of 37 services apartments being proposed. The fourth floor addition takes the form of a mansard roof extension with dormer on the Broad Street and St Mary's Butts frontages, with a straight vertical extension with conventional windows on the rear (east) elevation. To clarify, the two ground floor units do not form any part of the proposed development works.

3.2. Within the glossary of the draft updated Local Plan November 2024, serviced apartments are defined as:

> *A use falling between hotels and housing, providing basic facilities for self-sufficient living but also the amenities of a hotel, and let on short-term tenancies, often less than three months. Generally classed as C1 hotels for planning purposes.*

3.3. A series of associated alterations are also proposed, such as the inclusion of additional spandrel panels on the upper floors of the Broad Street and St Mary's Butts elevations and window/door changes on the eastern (rear) elevation. The existing third floor diamond shaped metal cladding is proposed to be changed to vertical standing seam metal cladding to provide consistency with the proposed additional storey material. At newly created roof level, an area of green roof is proposed. Within the rear parking area, it is proposed to reduce the number of car parking spaces from 16 to 10, to create space for a proposed cycle store (4 Sheffield Stands providing space for 8 cycles) and additional waste storage areas. The Transport Statement specifies that 2 spaces will continue to be used by Caffé Nero, 2 will be for the existing retail use and 6 spaces are proposed *"for the operational needs and residents/guests of the serviced apartments".* However, the statement then continues by stating, *"In practice due to the rear access not being attractive to users especially at night these spaces would not be used by residents/guests".* To clarify, both internally and externally the two commercial units at ground floor level remain unchanged in the proposals.

3.4. In floorspace terms, the proposals (according to information provided by the applicant) involves the change of use of 1022.5sqm (gross internal area) from Class E to Class C1, with the proposed roof extension creating an additional 250.4sqm (gross internal area) Class C1 floorspace. This, together with a breakdown of the proposed accommodation on a floor-by-floor basis, is stipulated below in Figure 5:

Floor	Existing GIA floorspace (in sqm)	Proposed GIA floorspace (in sqm)	Change in GIA floorspace (in sqm)	Number of serviced apartments
1st floor	347.9	347.9	0	9
2nd floor	337.3	337.3	0	11
3rd floor	337.3	337.3	0	11
4th floor	0	250.4	+ 250.4	6
Total	1022.5	1272.9	+ 250.4	37

Figure 5 – The existing/proposed floorspaces and number of units per floor

3.5. During the course of the application a series of revisions and additional information was submitted in order to address officer comments. A summary of the main changes incorporated since the original submission of the application are:

- Provision of a proposed green roof and lift overrun at roof level, rather than the originally submitted flat roof area not including any such features
- Spandrel panel locations amended, with associated internal layout changes too
- The existing third floor diamond shaped metal cladding is proposed to be changed to standing seam to provide consistency with the proposed additional storey material.
- The dormer window widths have been reduced, cill height of the glazing reduced, chamfering of the dormer cheeks back towards the glazing and internal layouts adjusted accordingly.
- An accessible ramp has been added to the rear entrance, with the provision of three accessible rooms indicated on the proposed plans.
- Elevation plans associated with the cycle and bin store have been provided, together with the layout of the stores
- A revised noise report has been submitted to address consultee comments.

3.6. In terms of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), the applicant has submitted the necessary forms as part of the application. The provision of 250.4sqm of new-build Class C1 accommodation will generate a CIL payment of £46,063.58 (250.4 x the 2025 CIL rate of £183.96 for hotel accommodation). Given that the existing upper floors are still in use, it is likely that the liability will in practice be reduced to zero for these floors. This is on the basis of the building being in use for a continuous period of at least 6 months in the previous 36 months prior to a decision being issued. However, this will only be able to be confirmed once any planning permission has been issued.

3.7. The plans and documents submitted with this application are listed at Appendix 1 of this report.

4. Planning history

Application site

4.1. There have been numerous planning applications at this site in the past, many of which are not particularly relevant to the current proposals (e.g. various advertisements associated with the ground floor uses). Those considered to be relevant to the proposals are listed below:

4.2. PL/94/0606 - Change of use from (Class B1) offices to (Class A2) employment agency. Granted 17/11/1994.

4.3. PL/13/1550 - The replacement of the exterior skin and exterior single glazing units with new cladding and double glazed units to the active facades on St Mary's Butts and Broad Street, whilst retaining the interior skin and secondary glazing. Granted 06/01/2014.

4.4. PL/15/1901 - Non-material amendment following a grant of planning permission (131550) to increase the height of the junction between the flat lock zinc cladding and Alucobond cladding within the existing entryway up to a height of 4.19m (previous approved height of Alucobond cladding of 3.42m). Non-material amendment agreed 17/11/2015.

4.5. PL/21/1160 - Recladding of Broad Street and St Mary's Butts elevation. Certificate of Lawfulness Granted 21/09/2021.

Nearby to the application site

200-202 Broad Street (diagonally to the north-west of the application site)

4.6. PL/23/0330 - Erection of a two storey roof extension to create six flats, with cycle store and bin store at basement level. Alterations to shopfront, reduction of parapet to front elevation and insertion of nine windows to rear elevation. Current application under consideration by the local planning authority.

Broad Street Mall, Broad Street (to the west of the application site)

4.7. PL/24/0173 - Part-demolition of existing retail units, car park and service areas, demolition and rebuild of car park ramp, and construction of a residential-led, mixed-use development fronting Queens Walk and Dusseldorf Way, including all necessary enabling and alteration works required. Current application under consideration by the local planning authority.

5. Consultations

5.1. RBC Transport

5.1.1 In summary, there are no transport objections to the proposals subject to a number of conditions.

5.1.2 Considering parking matters, the site currently has 16 car parking spaces within the existing service courtyard. The proposals seek to reduce this provision to 10, with 4 allocated for use by the existing retail use and 6 for the operational needs of the proposed C1 use. In accordance with the Council's current parking standards and Design and SPD C1 (Hotels) would require 0.25 parking spaces per room, equating to 9 parking spaces. Given the site's highly sustainable location and extensive parking restrictions that operate in the area, the availability of short term on street parking and longer-term parking in the public car parks located nearby, a lower parking provision for the C1 use can be accepted in this instance. This is essentially a car free development, with visitors/guests being able to rent available spaces. Occupants of the serviced apartments would not be eligible to apply for resident or visitor permits; conditions to secure this are not considered necessary in this instance (with the short-term occupation being secured via legal agreement), so an informative will suffice to clarify this matter.

5.1.3 Turning to consider cycle parking, 4 Sheffield stands are proposed, which will provide 8 spaces in total. In accordance with the Council's current Parking Standards and Design SPD, a C1 use would require 1 cycle storage space per 6 staff, with none required for guests (owing to the nature of the use). The proposal therefore exceeds the SPD requirements, which in itself is welcomed and supported, with the cycle provision secured via condition.

5.1.4 With regard to servicing, the C1 use would be serviced via the existing courtyard. The ground floor Class E premises would continue to be serviced as existing, with loading bays also available on St Mary's Butts. Refuse storage is also located in the rear courtyard, with the proposal introducing an additional refuse area (through the removal of 6 car parking spaces), which is welcomed. The proposal does not change the existing commercial refuse or servicing arrangements which will continue to be collected by a private contractor from the rear and the front of the building. The C1/serviced apartments would be serviced in the same way by a private contractor from the rear of the site. The refuse store space will be secured via a compliance condition.

5.1.5 Given the site's location, a comprehensive Construction Method Statement (CMS) will be required, in order to protect amenity and highway safety. Any works affecting the highway would have to comply with the Borough's Guidance Notes for Activities on the Public Highway and works would need to be scheduled with the Council's Streetworks team prior to commencement on site. A CMS will therefore be secured via a pre-commencement condition.

5.2. RBC Conservation Officer

5.2.1 It is considered that the proposed massing of the new fourth floor has no substantial impact on the settings of heritage assets (listed buildings and conservation area). This is due to its set back position, height, mansard roof form, proportionate new openings and existing matching materials. It can be considered consistent in scale with the existing scale and character of the surrounding historic environment.

5.2.2 The works involving the spandrel panels would have a neutral impact on the settings of heritage assets, given the anticipated same materials and those being altered being vertically in-line with each other.

5.2.3 There is no impact on the historic environment from the proposed bin and cycle store, given its scale and location.

5.2.4 In overall terms there are no objections to the proposal, with the submitted Heritage Statement being satisfactory.

5.3. RBC Environmental Protection

5.3.1 It is confirmed that the submitted air quality assessment is acceptable and nothing further is required in this regard.

5.3.2 In terms of the noise assessment, the originally submitted noise assessment was largely considered acceptable, barring a lack of clarity as to precisely how the proposed mitigation for external noise met the criteria and the absence of consideration of noise transfer from the ground floor uses to the first floor. During the course of the application more information has been submitted, demonstrating in terms of external noise, the proposed mitigation can meet the Lowest Observed Adverse Effect Level (LOAEL), but the more stringent No Observed Effect Level (NOEL) is not proposed to be met. Environmental Protection would prefer for the NOEL standard to be met, but Planning Officers consider that the temporary serviced apartment use (rather than permanent residential accommodation) means flexibility can be applied in this specific instance. A condition will secure the mitigation measures specified within the report. In terms of insulation between the ground and first floors, the applicant proposes to use the Council's standard criterion, so there is agreement that this can be secured via the submission of further details prior to the commencement of the development. Accordingly, subject to these conditions, the proposals are acceptable from a noise perspective.

5.3.3 It is also considered necessary that the Council's standard environmental protection based conditions associated with the construction of the development, including hours of works, are secured to protect nearby amenity. For similar reasons, measures to prevent pests and vermin accessing bin stores are also required to be secured via condition too.

5.4. RBC Waste Services

5.4.1 Initial comments raised queries in relation to the number of existing and proposed bins and the arrangements for collection, within the context of the wider servicing area to the rear of Broad Street and St Mary's Butts at this point. Whilst the serviced apartments would not be entitled to the standard household waste collection service and would need to have a private commercial waste contract in place, there will still be a need to have space for separate collections of general waste, recycling and food waste. The dimensions of the store and number of bins would need to be indicated, so that the frequency of collection can be calculated.

5.4.2 In response, the applicant reiterated their intention for a private contractor to continue to collect waste from the site, with 2 x 1100L refuse, 2 x 1100L recycling and 1 x 180L food waste bins shown to be provided within an enclosed store within the parking area. The applicant has also confirmed that the precise arrangements for the collections will be agreed with the Waste Contractors, in conjunction with the serviced apartments on-site staff, thereby ensuring that the waste is moved to the correct location, collected, and then returned immediately to the appropriate storage area. RBC Waste Services are satisfied with the additional information submitted during the application and concur with the RBC Transport recommended condition (see section 5.1 above) for the store and provision of bins to be secured via a pre-occupation compliance condition.

5.5. GS Ecology (RBC's ecology consultants)

5.5.1 The ecology technical note (AAE, 2024) concludes that the proposals are unlikely to affect protected species and as such there would be no ecological objections to the plans. Habitats on site comprise entirely hardstanding and buildings. Given the existing site characteristics, the development is exempt from mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain, owing to the de-minimis exemption.

5.5.2 The technical note recommends bird and bat roosting boxes to be provided, which is positive. However, the submitted plans do not show where these will be located or any details. These details are therefore recommended to be secured via condition. In a related regard, there is considered to be scope for a blue/green roof to be provided as part of the development, with this potentially providing numerous ecological benefits. Again, such details can be secured via condition.

5.6. RBC Building Control

5.6.1 Comment that for the purposes of Building Regulations this would be treated as flats. The general layout is acceptable, subject to some minor tweaks. For example, sprinklers will be required to be installed throughout the building, as the top floor more than 11 m high. In addition, smoke ventilation to the common corridors will be required to be provided, necessitating a smoke outlet on the roof.

5.7. RBC CCTV / Community Safety

5.7.1 No objections raised, with the external changes not interfering with the current CCTV views of the area and no extra/new external lighting shown.

5.8. Reading's Economic and Destination Agency (REDA)

5.8.1 The proposed development of serviced apartments is part of a trend in small, flexible, short term let units in the town centre more suited to people visiting / staying on business, possibly for leisure purposes, that want a more self-contained alternative to a hotel. In REDA's 2023 Tourism Survey it was reported that there were 1.35 million nights spent by people in the area as a result of overnight trips; this would be a mixture of single and multiple nights and £121 million is generated by overnight trips.

5.8.2 Retaining offices in the town centre is important, but hybrid and a mix of home working is here to stay. In addition, so called 'older offices' have been replaced with new offices on other sites (for example, Station Hill) and offices such as St Marys House are less attractive as offices to investors.

5.8.3 As we lose office workers and office space in the town centre the replacement as hotel/ serviced apartment accommodation is a useful addition to the town centre and important to meet demand for visiting Reading for leisure and business purposes. It contributes to the local day and night time economy with additional spend in town centre hospitality, retail and leisure services, helping maintain the vibrancy of the town centre.

5.8.4 Operators of serviced apartments themselves are businesses so not classed as residential so contributes to the economic output of the Reading economy and business rates collected in Reading

5.8.5 REDA is happy to support this application and has no objection to its increase height by an additional storey. REDA recommends that a construction stage and end user ESP is secured via legal agreement. This can be secured on a flexible basis of either an 'on-site' ESP or financial contribution.

5.9. Reading Design Review Panel (DRP)

5.9.1 The proposals were considered by the Reading DRP on 16th January 2025. Below is a summary of the comments received:

- The mansard roof approach is generally supported and could be considered an improvement, helping to soften the existing 'top' of the building.
- Most of the Panel support the proposed dormers, although their width could be reduced to create a more elegant roofscape. Some panel members suggested rooflights instead of dormers.
- The hipped termination of the mansard roof on Broad Street was considered successful; query whether this could be replicated on St Mary's Butts

(currently terminates with a vertical mansard profile), to improve the overall appearance and reduce the impact on the neighbouring building.

- Suggestion for the existing upper storey to be reclad to match the other lower floors, so that only the new storey has a vertical metal standing seam finish.
- Additional glazed spandrel panels questioned, owing to the impact on the building's appearance at night. In addition, concerns about the 'new' spandrel panels not matching the existing visually, and the longevity of them if they are only treated internally.
- Some of the Panel suggested an alternative materiality for the panels should be considered. One suggestion was for insulated metal panels to match the roof and tie all storeys together, and bring practical and energy efficiencies too.
- Comment for any proposed mansafe, services or lift installations visible at roof level to be shown on the planning drawings.
- The Heritage Statement missed the opportunity to fully assess the impacts of the proposals upon Heritage Assets. A more positive impact may occur if the elevations are to be redesigned.

5.10. Designing Out Crime Officer at Thames Valley Police

5.10.1 In the absence of information on security measures and arrangements for the proposed development, it is recommended that the applicant submits an Access and Security strategy. This could potentially be secured via condition. The strategy should include information relating to:

- on site staff/security personnel roles and responsibilities;
- access control measures for residents/guests and visitors;
- compartmentation of the building;
- the bin and cycle store area;
- provision for secure postage and deliveries to the site;
- location, number and type of CCTV cameras, informed by an Operational Requirements Study;
- the security specifications of all communal doorsets.

5.11. Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service

5.11.1 RBFRS advise that at this stage there is no duty placed upon the Fire Authority under legislation to make any comment relative to the application. The proposals have, however, been cursorily examined and in as much as would affect the planning application and appear to meet the basic principles of means of escape in case of fire.

5.11.2 Any structural fire precautions and all means of escape provision will have to satisfy Building Regulation requirement. These matters are administered by the local authority Building Control or approved inspectors. No comments made by the Fire Authority at this stage should be taken as formal approval that the plans conform to the requirements of current Guides or Codes of Practice for means of escape in case of fire.

5.12. Thames Water

5.12.1 Thames Water advises with regard to surface water drainage that if the developer follows the sequential approach to the disposal of surface water no objection is raised.

5.12.2 Thames Water has confirmed no objection with regard to the waste water network, sewage treatment works infrastructure capacity matters, the water network and water

treatment infrastructure capacity matters, subject to informatives being included on any future decision notice.

5.13. Public Consultation

5.13.1 Three separate site notices were erected on 15/01/2025, expiring on 05/02/2025. A press notice was published on 23/01/2025, expiring on 13/02/2025. No responses have been received but any that are received will be reported to your meeting.

5.14. Local Groups

5.14.1 Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee (CAAC) was formally consulted owing to the proximity of the site to the St Mary's Butts / Castle Street Conservation Area, but no response has been received at the time of writing.

6. Legal context

6.1. Section 16(2) and 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the local planning authority to have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of special interest which it possesses.

6.2. Section 72 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the local planning authority in the exercise of its functions to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.

6.3. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) - among them the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'. However, the NPPF does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making (NPPF paragraph 12).

6.4. In this regard, the NPPF states that due weight should be given to the adopted policies of the Local Plan 2019 according to their degree of consistency with the NPPF (the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the NPPF, the greater the weight that may be given).

6.5. Accordingly, the latest NPPF and the following development plan policies and supplementary planning guidance are relevant:

NPPF December 2024

2. Achieving sustainable development
4. Decision-making
6. Building a strong, competitive economy
7. Ensuring the vitality of town centres
8. Promoting healthy and safe communities
9. Promoting sustainable transport
11. Making effective use of land
12. Achieving well-designed places
15. Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
16. Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

National Planning Practice Guidance (2014 onwards)

Reading Borough Local Plan 2019

CC1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
CC2: Sustainable Design and Construction
CC3: Adaptation to Climate Change
CC5: Waste Minimisation and Storage

CC6: Accessibility and the Intensity of Development
CC7: Design and the Public Realm
CC8: Safeguarding Amenity
CC9: Securing Infrastructure
EN1: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment
EN3: Enhancement of Conservation Areas
EN5: Protection of Significant Views with Heritage Interest
EN6: New Development in a Historic Context
EN9: Provision of Open Space
EN10: Access to Open Space
EN12: Biodiversity and the Green Network
EN14: Trees, Hedges and Woodland
EN15: Air Quality
EN16: Pollution and Water Resources
EN17: Noise Generating Equipment
EM3: Loss of Employment Land
TR1: Achieving the Transport Strategy
TR3: Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters
TR4: Cycle Routes and Facilities
TR5: Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging
RL1: Network and Hierarchy of Centres
RL2: Scale and Location of Retail, Leisure and Culture Development
CR1: Definition of Central Reading
CR2: Design in Central Reading
CR3: Public Realm in Central Reading
CR4: Leisure, Culture and Tourism in Central Reading
CR6: Living in Central Reading
CR7: Primary Frontage in Central Reading

Reading Borough Council Supplementary Planning Documents
Topics
Employment, Skills and Training (2013)
Revised Parking Standards and Design (2011)
Planning Obligations under Section 106 (2015)
Sustainable Design and Construction (2019)
Sites
Minster Quarter Area Development Framework (2018)

Other relevant documentation

Reading Borough Local Plan Pre-Submission Draft Partial Update, November 2024
St Mary's Butts / Castle Street Conservation Area Appraisal (2008)
Reading Borough Council Tree Strategy (2021)
Reading Biodiversity Action Plan (2021)
Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 2: Managing Significance in Decision-Taking (Historic England, 2015)
Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: 3 (2nd Edition) The Setting of Heritage Assets (Historic England, 2017)

Local Plan Update

6.6 The current version of the Local Plan (adopted in November 2019) turned five years old on Tuesday 5th November 2024. The Local Plan was reviewed in March 2023 and around half of the policies in the plan are considered still up to date. However, the rest need to be considered for updating to reflect changing circumstances and national policy. A consultation version of the draft updated version of the Local Plan was published on 6th November 2024.

6.7 Although there is a five-year period for carrying out a review of a plan after it is adopted,

nothing in the NPPF or elsewhere says that policies automatically become “out of date” when they are five years old. It is a matter of planning judgement rather than legal fact whether a plan or policies within it are out-of-date. This will depend on whether they have been overtaken by things that have happened since the plan was adopted, either on the ground or through changes in national policy, for example.

6.8 Officer advice in respect of the Local Plan policies pertinent to these applications listed above is that they remain in accordance with national policy and that the objectives of those policies remains very similar in the draft updated Local Plan. Therefore, they can continue to be afforded weight in the determination of this planning application and are not considered to be ‘out of date’.

7. Appraisal

7.1. The main considerations relevant to the determination of this application are:

i. Land use principles

ii. Design & related matters: scale, massing, appearance and impact on heritage assets

iii. Quality of accommodation for future occupiers/users

iv. Amenity for nearby occupiers

v. Transport and Highways

vi. Sustainability

vii. Ecology / Natural Environment

viii. Other matters – legal agreement and pre-commencement conditions

i. <u>Land use principles</u>

7.2 The starting point for the assessment of these proposals are the land use principles. The proposals involve the loss of the upper floor Class E use (which, as per the planning history section above, relates to a 1994 permission for Class A2, now Class E (c) (ii) Professional services), totalling 1022.5sqm of gross internal floorspace at first to third floor level. Based on the officer site visit, the first and second floors are presently occupied, with the third floor vacant and stripped out internally (see Figure 6 below). The applicant has provided commentary in respect of Policy EM3 (Loss of Employment Land), which broadly applies in this instance, most notably (as per EM3v) advocating that the need for the proposed use is greater than the need for the retention of employment land and that (as per EM3iii) there is a surplus of a similarly sized/type of accommodation in Reading. In short, these points are accepted by officers in this specific instance.

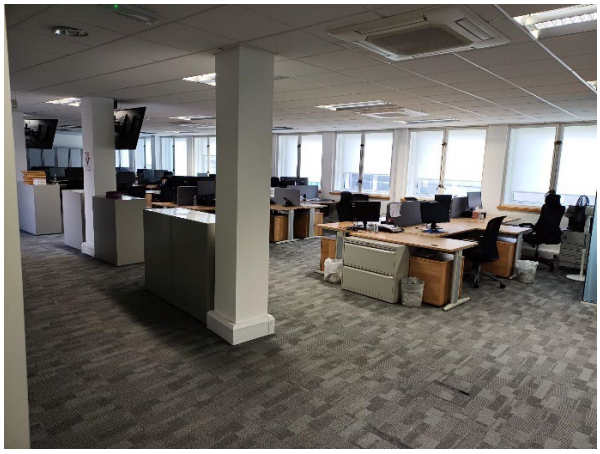


Figure 6 - Internal photographs of the existing offices at second (left) and third (right) floor level.

7.3 Such proposals are also required to be considered in the context of the proposed serviced apartments (Class C1) use. Whilst there is no explicit adopted (2019) or emerging (draft updated) local plan policy specifically relating to serviced apartments, Policy RL1 (Network and hierarchy of Centres) acknowledges that Central Reading will see the greatest levels of development and change, Policy CR1 (Definition of Central Reading) recognises that other main town centre uses (such as serviced apartments) will take place in the Central Core (which the site is within), while Policy CR4 (Leisure, Culture and Tourism in Central Reading) encourages uses that would attract a wide range of people into the centre, which the proposed use would help facilitate. The overriding strategy for the Central Area, at paragraph 5.2.5 of the Local Plan, recognises a mix of uses across the central area. All of these policies and references weigh in favour of the proposed use, with such matters also referenced within the REDA consultation response (see section 5.8 above), which supports the proposed use.

7.4 In addition, adopted Policy CR6iv (and replicated in the emerging policy) does reference that where serviced apartments fall outside of a Class C3 use (as proposed in this instance), they will be located within the Central Core of the Borough. The proposals comply in this regard. Furthermore, the policy goes on to reference there being a requirement to restrict the duration of occupancy, with monitoring information regularly supplied. Accordingly, the serviced apartment use is recommended to be secured via s106 legal agreement for serviced apartment (within Class C1) use only, with maximum occupancy of no more than 3 months. Further obligations are proposed, including those in relation to monitoring, as stated in the Recommendation at the outset of this report. The applicant confirmed agreement to these matters prior to the validation of the application.

7.5 Amongst other matters, this robustly guards against the scheme being occupied for other uses (e.g. residential flats, as referenced in Policy CR6) without first applying for planning permission. In addition, a separate planning condition will secure there being a maximum of 37 serviced apartments at the site (as proposed), to prevent the possible future sub-division of units in the future, given the proposal has been assessed solely on the basis of the 37 units proposed. Accordingly, subject to the use being secured via legal agreement and the maximum number of units being managed through a planning condition, the principle of the proposed use is considered to be suitable. Moreover, this is considered to outweigh the loss of the existing use on the upper floors of the building. Therefore, in terms of land use principles, the proposed use is considered to be established.

ii. Design & related matters: scale, massing, appearance and impact on heritage assets

7.6 Considering first the principle of a roof addition at the host building, whilst it is acknowledged that the existing top storey could already appear as a natural terminating point for the building, the recessive nature of the proposed mansard roof addition on the street frontages (set back 1.2m from the façade) means the proposal is considered to sit comfortably within the context of the host building and wider streetscene. The proposed massing has been tested in various short and long views from all directions (as shown below in Figures 7-11, with further viewpoints also provided in Appendix 2), with the additional massing not being overly discernible or harmful in either short or long views, assisted by the mansard form proposed. The principle of the additional storey is supported by both the RBC Conservation Officer (see section 5.2 above) and the Reading Design Review Panel (see section 5.9 above). it also adheres with the indicative building heights parameters stated within the Minster Quarter Area Development Framework SPD (figure 20). This is a prominent location, with the other corner buildings at the crossroads being all distinctly different in style and appearance. Whilst adding an additional storey would make this building taller than the other corner buildings, as well as further increasing the differential in height to the existing neighbouring buildings on both Broad Street and St Mary's Butts, this is not considered to be harmful in this instance, with the corner location and setting of the surroundings meaning this can comfortably assimilate into the streetscene and in overall terms be a positive addition of suitable high quality. In addition, it is not considered that positively determining this application would impinge on

the Council's on-going assessment of a current application diagonally to the north-west of the site at 200-202 Broad Street, or the current application to the west of the site at Broad Street Mall (see section 4 of this report for details of these separate applications).

Figure 7 - Comparison of the existing context (top) and a proposed* visualisation of the corner elevation view (provided by the applicant) from the junction of West Street and Oxford Road.

(* the proposed visualisation is as per the original application submission – a revised version showing the amended design may be submitted in time for an update report to committee)

7.7 From a heritage perspective, it is considered that the site is in a sensitive location, as although not being a listed building or within a conservation area itself, the site is within 27m of the St Mary's Butts / Castle Street Conservation Area and close to statutory listed and locally listed buildings along Broad Street, as highlighted at paragraph 2.4 above. Accordingly, the applicant has submitted a detailed Heritage & Townscape Assessment, which the Council's Conservation Officer considers to suitably justify the proposals in terms of protecting the heritage assets (in accordance with Policy EN1 – Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment), conserving the setting of the nearby conservation area (in accordance with Policy EN3 – Enhancement of Conservation Areas) and would not unduly affect locally important heritage assets (therefore complying with Policy EN4 – Locally Important Heritage Assets). As per the Conservation Officer's

comments at section 5.2 above, the proposals are supported, with the roof addition considered to be consistent with the existing scale and character of the surrounding historic environment, with the set back and mansard form on the street elevations minimising any impact on the streetscape.

7.8 In terms of Policy EN5 (Protection of Significant Views with Heritage Interest), the proposals are not considered to harm the view northwards down Southampton Street from Whitley Street towards St Giles Church, St Mary's Church or Greyfriars Church, with the relatively modest increase in height and bulk at the application site being indiscernible in these long views.

Figure 8 - Comparison of the existing St Mary's Butts streetscene looking north (officer photo on the left), with a visualisation of the proposals* on the right, as provided by the applicant

(* the proposed visualisation is as per the original application submission – a revised version showing the amended design may be submitted in time for an update report to committee).

Figure 9 - Comparison of the existing (officer photo left and applicant massing centre) and proposed (applicant massing right) long views from St Mary's Butts looking north.

Figure 10 - Comparison of the existing (officer photo left and applicant massing centre) and proposed (applicant massing right) long views from Oxford Road looking east.

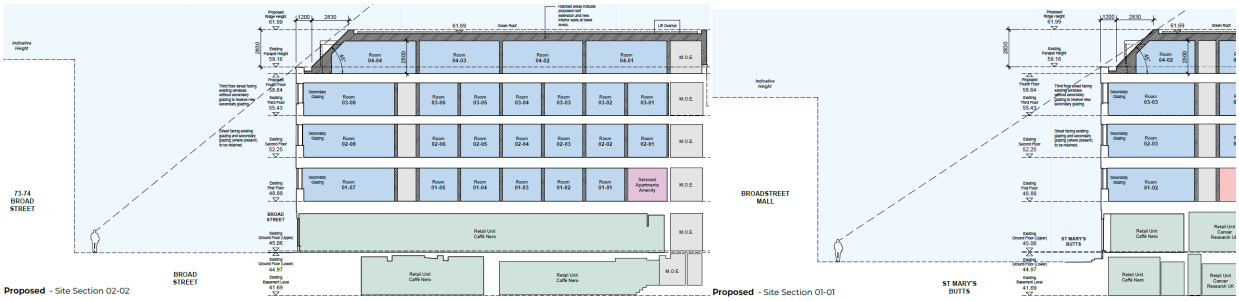


Figure 11 - Proposed sections indicating the limited visibility of the proposed roof addition in close views from St Mary's Butts (left) and Broad Street, owing to the set-back dormer design.

7.9 In respect of the detailed design of the proposed roof works, during the course of the application, following input from the Reading Design Review Panel (see section 5.9 above), the dormer windows have been narrowed in width and the glazing has increased in depth (in comparison with the original submission) to make the dormers better align with the windows/panels below and appear more elegant in form. These alterations are considered to be positive moves in respect of the overall appearance of the building as a whole and within the wider streetscenes. The proposed materials of the roof extension comprise vertical standing seam metal cladding, with the applicant indicating that this will match the proposed material of the third floor. The proposals also involve replacing the existing diamond shaped metal cladding at third floor level with vertical standing seam metal cladding. The dormer windows will also be metal clad too. These works will result in consistency with the third floor, bringing forward a coherent and high quality finish which is considered appropriate in principle. Given the prominence of the site and the need to ensure high quality design, as per Policies CC7 (Design and the public realm) and CR2 (Design in Central Reading), samples and details of the materials are recommended to be secured via condition.

7.10 The proposals also incorporate a significant increase in glass spandrel panels on the main street frontages (instead of conventional glazing) at first to third floor level, as shown below in Figure 12. This is acknowledged to be a necessary component of the scheme to facilitate an efficient internal layout of units, as proposed. Given the façades already includes spandrel panels between the existing first and second floors, these are an existing feature. Whilst the increase in provision of panelling does change the balance between glazing and spandrel panels (altering the overall appearance of the facades), they have been sensitively located at consistent intervals (following revisions during the application) to add a degree of vertical rhythm to the building and have attempted to align with the ground floor pilasters. Accordingly, providing the spandrel panels match the appearance of those existing as stated (with material details again considered to be required to be secured via condition – with an informative recommended to supplement the condition to outline the expectations, following on from the Reading Design Review Panel discussions – see section 5.9 above), these alterations are considered appropriate.

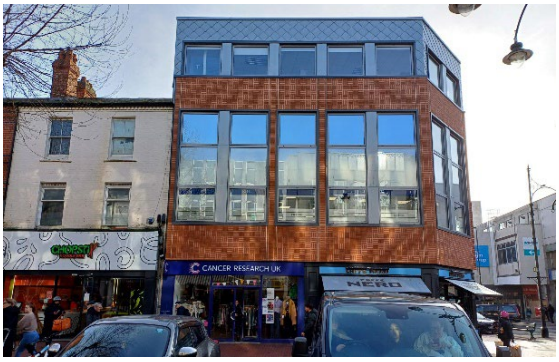


Figure 12 - Existing (middle row) and proposed (bottom row) Broad Street (left) and St Mary's Butts (right) elevations, indicating the increase in spandrel panels being proposed. Officer site photos are provided in the top row for additional context of the existing arrangements.

7.11 On the rear elevation the existing windows are to be replaced with new grey metal framed windows, in generally the same locations as existing, as shown in Figure 13 below. These are considered to be positive alterations, with the also proposed concrete string course at each floor re-finished in grey to align with the proposed window frames being supported too, representing a clear visual improvement at this point. The roof addition at this point is a straight vertical extension, differing from the street frontages where a dormer design is proposed. Given the limited visibility of this rear elevation from the public realm, together with the existing floors being in brickwork (meaning the proposed metal clad finish contrasts from the other floors, acting as a natural single storey 'top' to the building at this point), such an approach is considered appropriate in this instance. The indicated removal of various unsightly plant units is another improvement to the visual appearance of the building, aligning with Policies CC7 (Design and the public realm) and CR2 (Design in Central Reading).

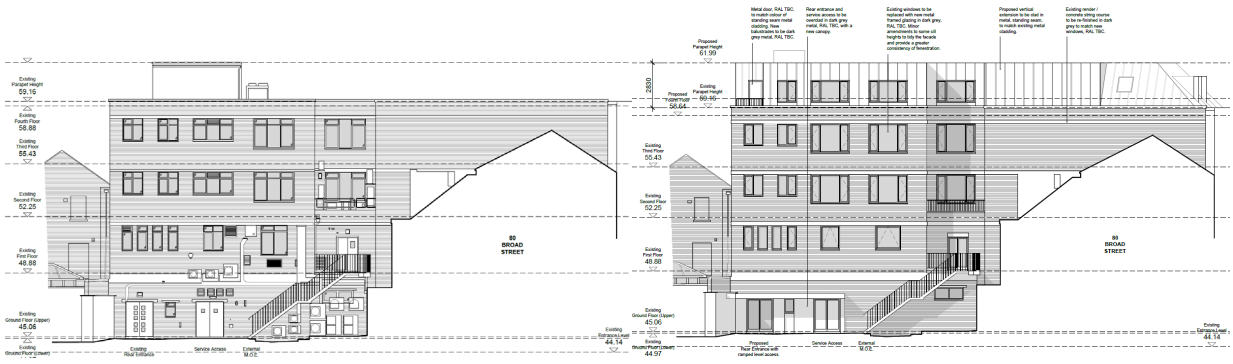


Figure13 - Existing (left) and proposed (right) rear elevation plans, with an existing officer site photo (top left) and aerial view via Google Maps (top right).

7.12 Accordingly, in overall terms the proposed works are considered appropriate from a design and heritage perspective, subject to material details being secured via condition.

iii. Quality of accommodation for future occupiers/users

7.13 It is considered that an overall good standard of accommodation would be provided for future occupiers of the proposed serviced apartments. Each of the upper floor rooms are regular in size and shape, providing natural outlook and suitable access to daylight and sunlight for future occupiers. The units are all shown to be open plan in nature, with combined living/dining/kitchen/bedrooms throughout (no bedrooms include separate doors or are enclosed). In addition, at first floor level a dedicated reception space, staff room, toilet and back of house stores are provided, together with an indoor amenity room and luggage space for guests. Although other ancillary facilities such as a gym or clothes washing facilities are not indicated, like some other serviced apartment schemes approved elsewhere in the Borough, this proposal is of a smaller scale to other similar recent proposals considered. Accordingly, it will be for guests to make their own arrangements in these regards. The lack of such facilities are not considered to significantly compromise the overall quality of the accommodation in this instance.

7.14 The serviced apartment units themselves vary in size, but by means of context, all are significantly smaller than the minimum gross internal floor area associated with new permanent residential properties (37sqm), meaning the units would not be appropriately sized for such a use (which, for the avoidance of doubt, is <u>not</u> proposed as part of this application). Just over half (19) of the units are smaller than 20sqm internally, with the smallest unit being 17.5sqm in area. 10 of the units are 20-25sqm in size, with 7 units being between 25-30sqm (with 5 of these on the uppermost floor) and one larger unit being 33.7sqm in size (again on the uppermost floor). These unit sizes are comparable with other similar proposals which have come forward elsewhere in the Borough in recent years, indicating that they are tailored to the distinct serviced apartment market. None of the units include any external amenity space, with no accessible external space indicated on the plans (any flat roof area is for maintenance access only, to the green roof for example). Given the nature of the proposals, in particular the short-term nature of the occupation, and the site constraints (town centre location with a limited existing car park within an enclosed location), the non-provision of open space is accepted in this specific instance. It is however considered that the lack of outdoor amenity space is a sub-optimal component of the development.

7.15 In terms of access and fire safety, the limited height of the building means a fire safety statement is not a statutory requirement as part of this application. However, it is nevertheless noted that a lift and two separate staircores within the building are provided to the upper floors of the building, which provides a welcomed alternative means of escape if necessary. Moreover, fire safety will be secured as part of the normal Building Regulations regime. Step free access is not presently provided to the upper floors of the building, with a series of steps from the current St Mary's Butts entrance (owing to the land levels) and a single step from the rear car park. The proposal seeks to remedy this, providing step free access via a newly proposed ramped entrance from the car park area. This is welcomed as a positive improvement at the site, with it being impractical to expect

step free access from St Mary's Butts, too given the ground floor use and arrangements are not altering. Furthermore, during the application the applicant has indicated that 3 of the serviced apartments are designed internally to be accessible rooms, with turning circles and enlarged bathroom spaces shown on the floor plans (1 unit at 2nd floor unit and 2 units at 3rd floor level – see Figure 14 below). This means that 8% of the units will be accessible. Whilst there is no specific standard for accessible rooms for serviced apartment schemes, bearing in mind that for residential proposals there is a 5% requirement, this is considered to be a benefit of the proposals. Set within this context, the provision of accessible rooms are welcomed, with it recommended for a condition to secure at least 2 accessible units (which would be more than 5% provision), with this being necessary to secure the planning benefit indicated by the proposals.

Figure 14 - Above: Proposed 1st floor. Below: Proposed 2nd (left), 3rd (right), 4th (bottom left) & roof level (bottom right).

7.16 Linked to access matters, an Access and Security strategy is recommended to be secured via pre-commencement condition, in line with observations from the Designing Out Crime Officer at Thames Valley Police (see section 5.10 above). As indicated within the consultation responses from RBC Transport, Waste Services and Environmental Protection (see section 5 above), the applicant has suitably demonstrated the quality of accommodation in respect of matters such as cycle and waste storage, servicing, air quality and noise, subject to a number of conditions. Therefore, in overall terms, whilst it

is considered that the serviced apartments lack some of the facilities seen in other similar proposals within the Borough in recent years, an overall good standard of accommodation for future guests is proposed.

iv. Amenity for nearby occupiers

7.17 The change of use and roof extension is not considered to cause a detrimental impact on the living environment of existing nearby residential occupiers. The closest existing residential occupiers are directly to the south of the application site (flats at Orbit House, 64-65 St Mary's Butts), with other flats on the upper floors of buildings to the south and limited provision to the east on Broad Street too. The roof extension and amended use of the building is not considered to cause a detrimental impact on nearby occupiers, in respect of Policy CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity) considerations, including privacy and overlooking, daylight and sunlight, visual dominance and outlook. A series of conditions, as recommended (particularly from Environmental Protection and Transport), will have the effect of assisting in the protection of amenity too, such as preventing flat roof areas being used as terraces.

7.18 It is also considered that the proposed use of the upper floors is not judged to inherently compromise the continued occupation and use of the ground floor units (or other nearby units to the site) by the current or any future similar occupiers. Whilst mindful that serviced apartments introduce an element of living accommodation, which is more sensitive in amenity terms to the existing office use (e.g. noise sensitivities), the short-term nature of the accommodation and the Environmental Protection recommended condition for an internal noise mitigation scheme will suitably address this potential future harm. When this is coupled with the long-established characteristics of the immediate area (such as being within the Central Reading area and primary shopping frontage, as referenced in section 1), combined these factors downplay the likelihood of legitimate noise complaints from future serviced apartment occupiers arising. Put another way, the proposed use is not considered to cause unreasonable burdens on existing/future commercial premises.

v. Transport and Highways

7.19 As per the RBC Transport comments above at section 5.1 of this report, there are no transport-based objections to these proposals. The reduction in car parking provision at the site (as shown below in Figure 15) is welcomed in providing additional space for refuse storage and newly created cycle parking on site. The provision of secure cycle parking within a dedicated facility is particularly welcomed, encouraging possible future use by staff and guests. This dovetails with the on-going security improvements to the off-site wider servicing area to the rear of St Mary's Butts and Broad Street. The development will essentially be car free, barring the small number of existing parking spaces future guests will have access to, with no parking permits being able to be applied for (secured via informative). Car and cycle parking, together with refuse storage will be secured via recommended compliance conditions.

Figure 15 - Existing (left) & proposed (right) rear access, servicing and car & cycle parking area

7.20 Finally from a transport perspective, it is essential for a Construction Method Statement to be secured via pre-commencement condition in this case. Not only will this protect the

amenity of neighbouring and nearby occupiers/users, but also the highway safety of the many pedestrians who continuously pass this busy town centre location. Subject to these conditions being secured, there are no Transport objections to this application.

vi. Sustainability

7.21 The application is classified as a 'minor' development and therefore, in line with Policy CC2 (Sustainable Design and Construction), the proposals are required to meet the BREEAM 'Very Good' standard as a minimum. In support of the proposals, the applicant has submitted a sustainability report, which includes a BREEAM pre-assessment. This aligns with the requirements detailed within the Sustainable Design and Construction SPD. The submitted report demonstrates that the scheme shall definitely achieve the required 'Very Good' rating, while it is also plausible that if all the 'possible' credits are also incorporated within the final design an 'Excellent' rating could be achieved. The submission follows the required methodology of both policy and the SPD, demonstrating how it has been designed to incorporate measures to adapt to climate change.

7.22 Two planning conditions are recommended to secure the BREEAM 'Very Good' rating in practice. The first relates to securing an Interim BREEAM 'Very Good' rating Certificate at the pre-commencement, final design stage of the project. The second will secure a Final BREEAM 'Very Good' rating Certificate prior to the first occupation of any serviced apartment. These conditions are necessary to ensure the development is carried out in accordance with sustainable building standards, adhering to both Policy CC2 and the guidance within the SPD. To clarify, as the development is classified as a 'minor' development, no energy statement is required as part of this application.

vii. Ecology / Natural Environment

7.23 As per the GS Ecology consultation response summarised at section 5 above, there are no ecological objections to the proposals. The development is subject to the de-minimis exemption from biodiversity net gain (BNG). Notwithstanding this, details of bird and bat boxes, as recommended within the ecology technical note accompanying the application, will be secured via condition. Furthermore, GS Ecology and the RBC Natural Environment Officer consider that the flat roof area of the proposed roof extension should include either a green, brown or blue roof, in line with Policies CC7 (Design and the Public Realm), CR2 (Design in Central Reading), EN12b (Biodiversity and the Green Network) and EN14 (Trees, Hedges and Woodlands). This will help enhance an otherwise very urban environment, as specifically referenced by Policy CR2c. At the outset of the application no greening of the flat roof area was proposed. However, following officer feedback, the applicant has amended the proposals to indicate a generously sized green roof on the available flat roof (see Figure 14 above). This is welcomed and supported, with exact details of the green roof recommended to be secured via condition.

viii. Other matters – legal agreement and pre-commencement conditions

7.24 In addition to securing the Class C1 serviced apartments use via legal agreement, as already referenced above, it is also required for an Employment and Skills Plan (ESP) (construction and end user phases of development) to be secured via S106 Legal Agreement. The applicant agreed to the principle of the ESP, in line with Policy CC9 (Securing Infrastructure) and the Employment, Skills and Training SPD, from the outset of the submission. During the course of the application it has been agreed that this will be secured on a flexible basis, either as a contractor-led ESP to be progressed on site, or the payment of an equivalent financial contribution, as per the SPD formula. The legal agreement will be worded flexibly to enable either eventuality. This is supported by the REDA consultation response at section 5.8 above.

7.25 These obligations are considered to comply with the National Planning Policy Framework and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) in that they would be: i) necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms, ii) directly related to the development and iii) fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development. A S106 Legal Agreement is therefore in the process of being advanced, pending the outcome of the Planning Applications Committee meeting.

7.26 In terms of pre-commencement planning conditions, these have been minimised as far as possible, in line with the NPPG. They are limited to the construction method statement, the site access and security strategy, the external material details, the internal noise mitigation scheme and the interim BREEAM certificate, which have all already been referenced separately above. The wording of these conditions have been agreed with the applicant, as per section 100ZA(5) of the Town and Country Planning Act.

8. Equality implications

8.1. Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to—

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

8.2. The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation. It is considered that there is no indication or evidence that the protected groups have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular application

9. Conclusion & planning balance

9.1 This application is required, as per all applications considered by the Local Planning Authority, to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. This is as per Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

9.2 Any harmful impacts of the proposed development are required to be weighed against the benefits in the context of national and local planning policies, as detailed in the appraisal above. Officers consider in this instance that whilst there are some shortfalls in the quality of accommodation for future guests (e.g. lack of outdoor amenity space and some supporting facilities), when compared with other similar recent proposals in the Borough, and the proposals would result in the loss of some currently occupied Class E floorspace, the benefits of the proposals substantially outweigh these relatively very minor shortfalls. The proposed use is broadly welcomed in this Central Reading location, with this being secured via legal agreement, together with an employment and skills plan. The design of the additional massing and alterations to the existing building are considered to be appropriate and represent positive moves from both design and heritage perspectives. The proposals have benefitting from some improvements following input from the Reading Design Review Panel at application stage. An overall good standard of accommodation would be provided, including the provision of accessible rooms. Furthermore, the proposals would not significantly impinge on the amenity of any neighbouring / nearby occupier/use, whilst also meeting the required sustainability and ecology standards too. Accordingly, it is evident in this case that the benefits of the proposals significant outweigh any possible harmful impacts.

9.3 In reaching this conclusion it is considered that officers have applied a suitable planning balance of all material considerations. As such, this application is recommended for approval, subject to the completion of a S106 legal agreement and conditions, as stated at the outset of this report.

Appendix 1 - Plans (those marked with a strikethrough have been superseded during the course of the application)

1065-PL-001 - Site location plan
1065-PL-010 - Existing Block Plan
1065-PL-020 - Existing Basement Floor Plan
1065-PL-021 - Existing Ground Floor Plan
1065-PL-022 - Existing First Floor Plan
~~1065-PL-023 - Existing Second and Third Floor Plan~~
1065-PL-024 - Existing Fourth Floor Plan
1065-PL-025 - Existing Roof Plan
1065-PL-030 - Existing Elevation 01 (west facing)
1065-PL-031 - Existing Elevation 02 (north-west facing)
1065-PL-032 - Existing Elevation 03 (north facing)
1065-PL-033 - Existing Elevation 04 (east facing)
1065-PL-034 - Existing Elevation 05 (south facing)
~~1065-PL-110 - Proposed Block Plan~~
1065-PL-120 - Proposed Basement Floor Plan
~~1065-PL-121 - Proposed Ground Floor Plan~~
~~1065-PL-124 Rev A - Proposed Fourth Floor Plan~~
~~1065-PL-125 - Proposed Roof Plan~~
~~1065-PL-130 - Proposed Elevation 01 (west facing)~~
~~1065-PL-131 - Proposed Elevation 02 (north-west facing)~~
~~1065-PL-132 - Proposed Elevation 03 (north facing)~~
~~1065-PL-133 - Proposed Elevation 04 (east facing)~~
~~1065-PL-134 - Proposed Elevation 05 (south facing)~~
~~1065-PL-136 - Proposed Street Elevation 01 (St Mary's Butts)~~
~~1065-PL-137 - Proposed Street Elevation 02 (Broad Street)~~
As received 27/11/2024

1065-PL-036 Rev A - Existing Street Elevation 01 (St Mary's Butts)
1065-PL-037 Rev A - Existing Street Elevation 02 (Broad Street)
1065-PL-040 Rev A - Existing Section 01
~~1065-PL-041 Rev A - Existing Section 02~~
~~1065-PL-122 Rev B - Proposed First Floor Plan~~
~~1065-PL-123 Rev B - Proposed Second and Third Floor Plan~~
~~1065-PL-140 Rev B - Proposed Section 01~~
~~1065-PL-141 Rev A - Proposed Section 02~~
As received 17/12/2024

1065-PL-023 Rev A - Existing Second Floor Plan
1065-PL-026 - Existing Third Floor Plan
1065-PL-035 – Existing Elevations 06-07
1065-PL-041 Rev B - Existing Section 02
~~1065-PL-110 Rev A - Proposed Block Plan~~
1065-PL-121 Rev A - Proposed Ground Floor Plan
1065-PL-122 Rev C - Proposed First Floor Plan
1065-PL-123 Rev C - Proposed Second Floor Plan
1065-PL-126 - Proposed Third Floor Plan
1065-PL-124 Rev B - Proposed Fourth Floor Plan
1065-PL-125 Rev A - Proposed Roof Plan
1065-PL-130 Rev A - Proposed Elevation 01 (west facing)
1065-PL-131 Rev A - Proposed Elevation 02 (north-west facing)
1065-PL-132 Rev A - Proposed Elevation 03 (north facing)
1065-PL-133 Rev A - Proposed Elevation 04 (east facing)
1065-PL-134 Rev A - Proposed Elevation 05 (rear part elevations)
1065-PL-135 - Proposed Elevation 06-07 (south facing)
1065-PL-136 Rev A - Proposed Street Elevation 01 (St Mary's Butts)

1065-PL-137 Rev A - Proposed Street Elevation 02 (Broad Street)
1065-PL-140 Rev C - Proposed Section 01
1065-PL-141 Rev B - Proposed Section 02
~~1065-PL-150 – Proposed Cycle and Bin Store~~
As received 10/02/2025

1065-PL-110 Rev B - Proposed Block Plan
1065-PL-150 Rev A – Proposed Cycle and Bin Store
As received 12/02/2025

- Planning application form (including ownership certificate)
- CIL form 1, Woolf Bond Planning
- Covering letter by Woolf Bond Planning Ref DB/8532 dated 26/11/2024
- Air Quality Assessment by SLR Ref 416.065616.00001 Revision 2.0 dated 18/10/2024
- ~~Noise Impact Assessment by KR Associates (UK) Ltd, Ref KR07645 Version 1.3~~
- Heritage, Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment by Turley, Ref 01454, dated October 2024
- Transport Statement by Peter Evans Partnership dated November 2024
- Technical Note: Ecology, by Aae Environmental Consultants Ref 243297 dated October 2024
As received 27/11/2024

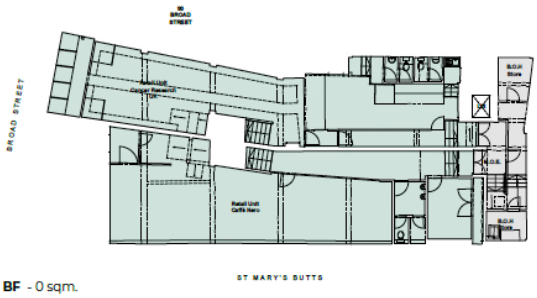
- Supporting Planning Statement (Rev A) by Woolf Bond Planning Ref DB/8532 dated December 2024
- ~~St Mary's House, Reading Design & Access Statement by Rutter Architects, Ref RA-1065-PL-Dec 24~~
- 1434_StMarysHouse_CornerView CGI
- 1434_StMarysHouse_SideView CGI
As received 17/12/2024

- BREEAM Accredited Professional Stage 2/3 Sustainability & Pre-assessment Report by The PES, dated 10/01/2025
~~- CIL Area Calculations – Existing~~
~~- CIL Area Calculations – Proposed~~
As received 10/01/2025

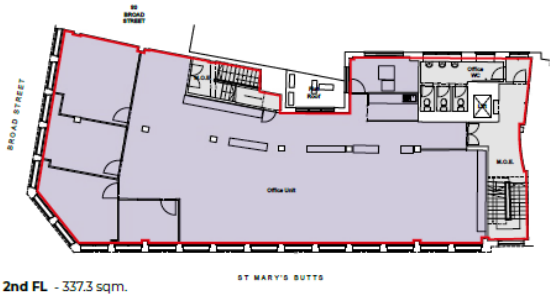
- St Mary's House, Reading Design & Access Statement by Rutter Architects, Ref RA-1065-PL-Feb 25 – Rev B
- CIL Area Calculations Rev A – Existing
- CIL Area Calculations Rev A – Proposed
- Noise Impact Assessment by KR Associates (UK) Ltd, Ref KR07645 Version 1.4 dated 05/02/2025
- 1065-PL – Schedule of Accommodation Rev A
- 1065_St Mary's House, Reading Planning Drawing Amendments by Rutter Architects dated 10.02.25
- 3865/220 - Block and Location Plan
- 3865/222 – Site Plan – AMENDED
- Photographs of the existing bin store x3
- Email from Woolf Bond Planning Ltd 'St Mary's House, 66-68 St Mary's Butts, Reading (PL/24/1593) (email 1 of 2)', dated 10/02/2025
- Email from Woolf Bond Planning Ltd 'RE: St Mary's House, 66-68 St Mary's Butts, Reading (PL/24/1593) (email 2 of 2)', dated 10/02/2025
As received 10/02/2025

- Email from Woolf Bond Planning Ltd 'RE: St Mary's House, 66-68 St Mary's Butts, Reading (PL/24/1593)', dated and received 12/02/2025

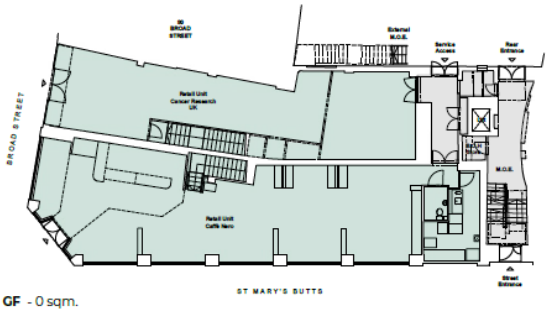
Appendix 2 - Other plans, elevations, viewpoints, aerial views & photographs



BF - 0 sqm.



2nd FL - 337.3 sqm.



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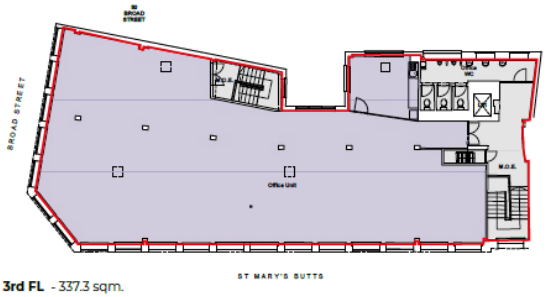
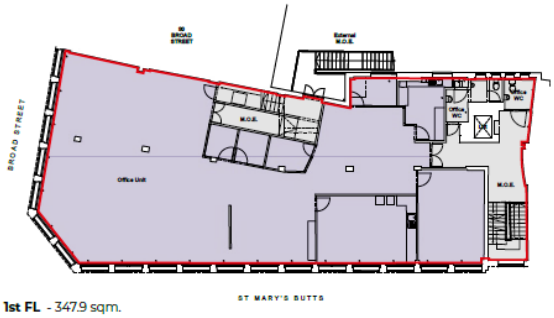
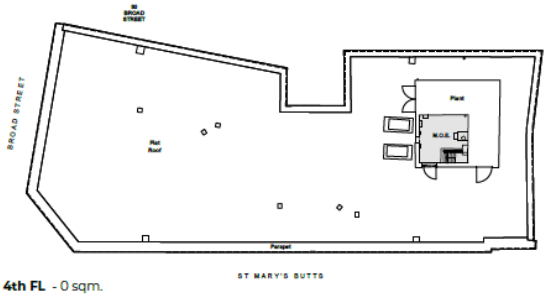


3rd FL - 337.3 sqm.

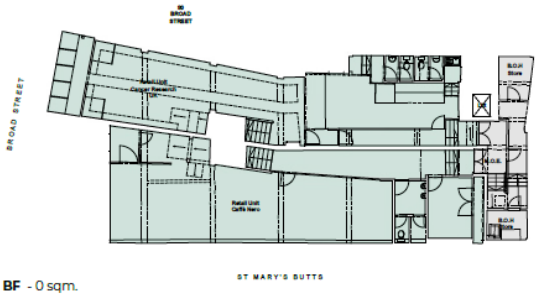


1st FL - 347.9 sqm.

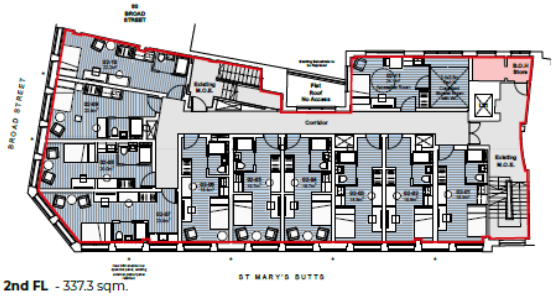


4th FL - 0 sqm.

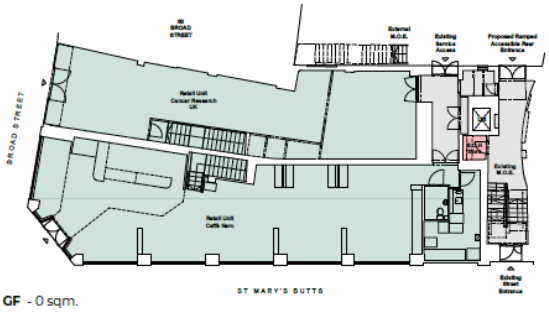
Existing floor plans above and proposed floor plans below.



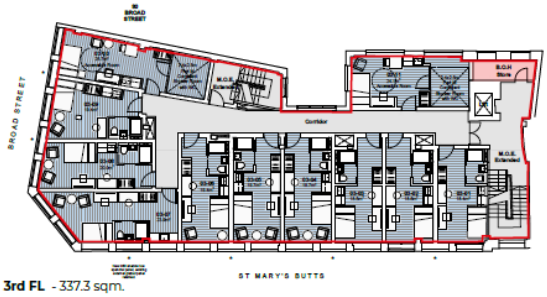
BF - 0 sqm.



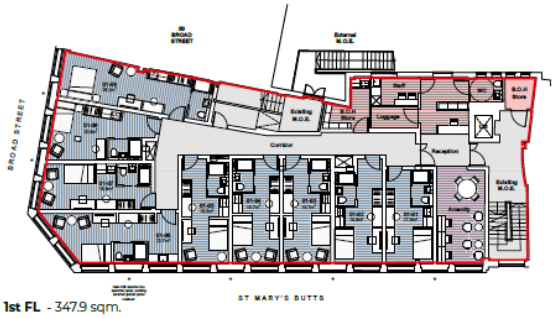
2nd FL - 337.3 sqm.



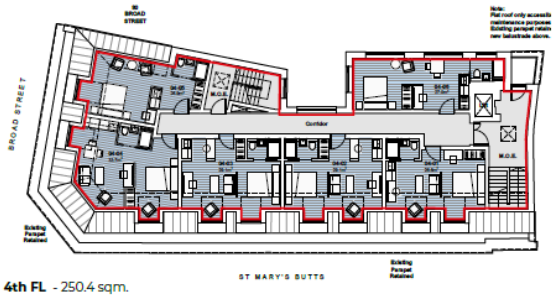
GF - 0 sqm.



3rd FL - 337.3 sqm.



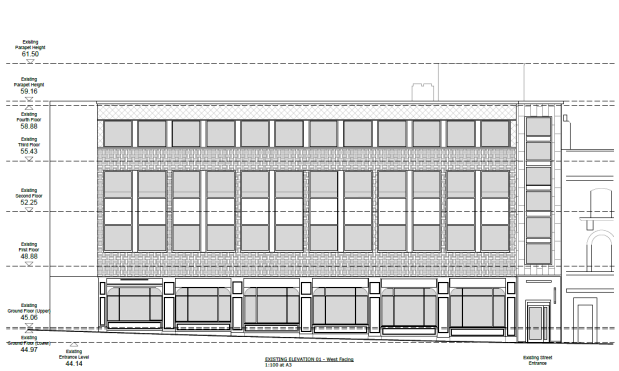
1st FL - 347.9 sqm.

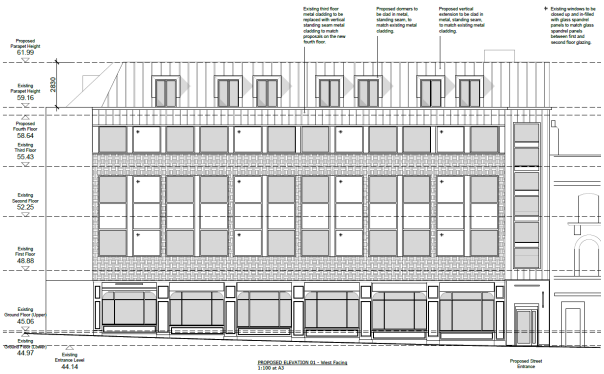


4th FL - 250.4 sqm.

View 05 - Existing Massing - View looking north down St Mary's Butts.

View 06 - Existing Massing - View looking south from the corner of West Street.

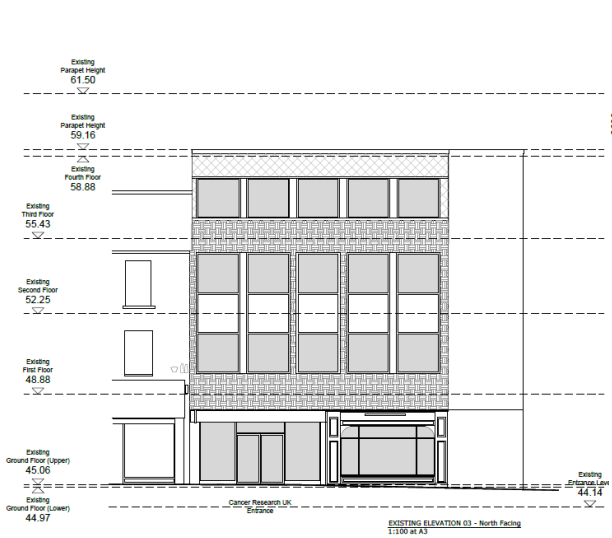


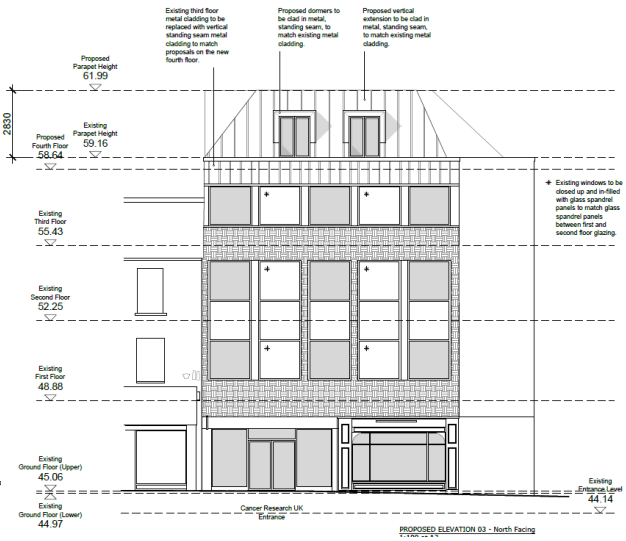


Existing (left) and proposed (right) St Mary's Butts west elevation plans

View 01 - Existing Massing - View looking south down West Street.

View 02 - Existing Massing - View looking west down Broad Street.

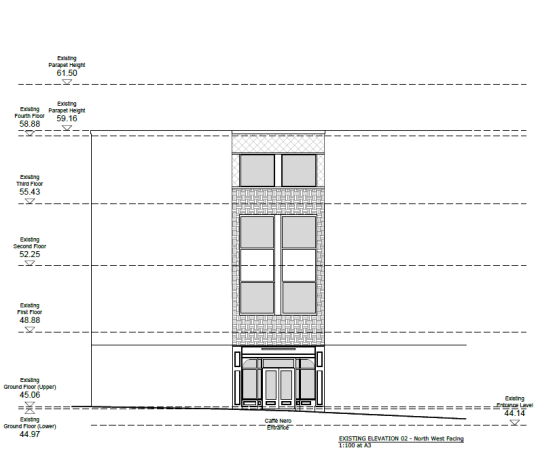


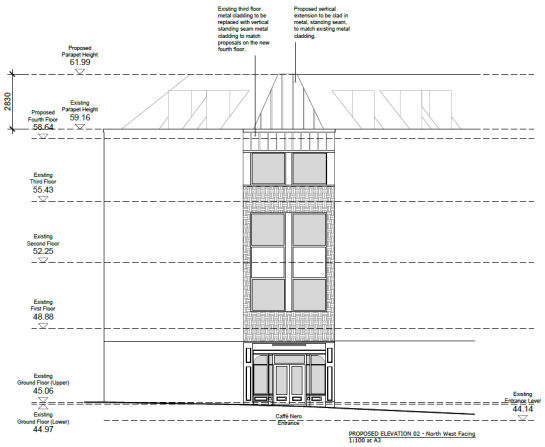


Existing (left) and proposed (right) Broad Street elevation plans

View 03 - Existing Massing - View looking north down St Mary's Butts.

View 04 - Existing Massing - View looking east down Oxford Road.

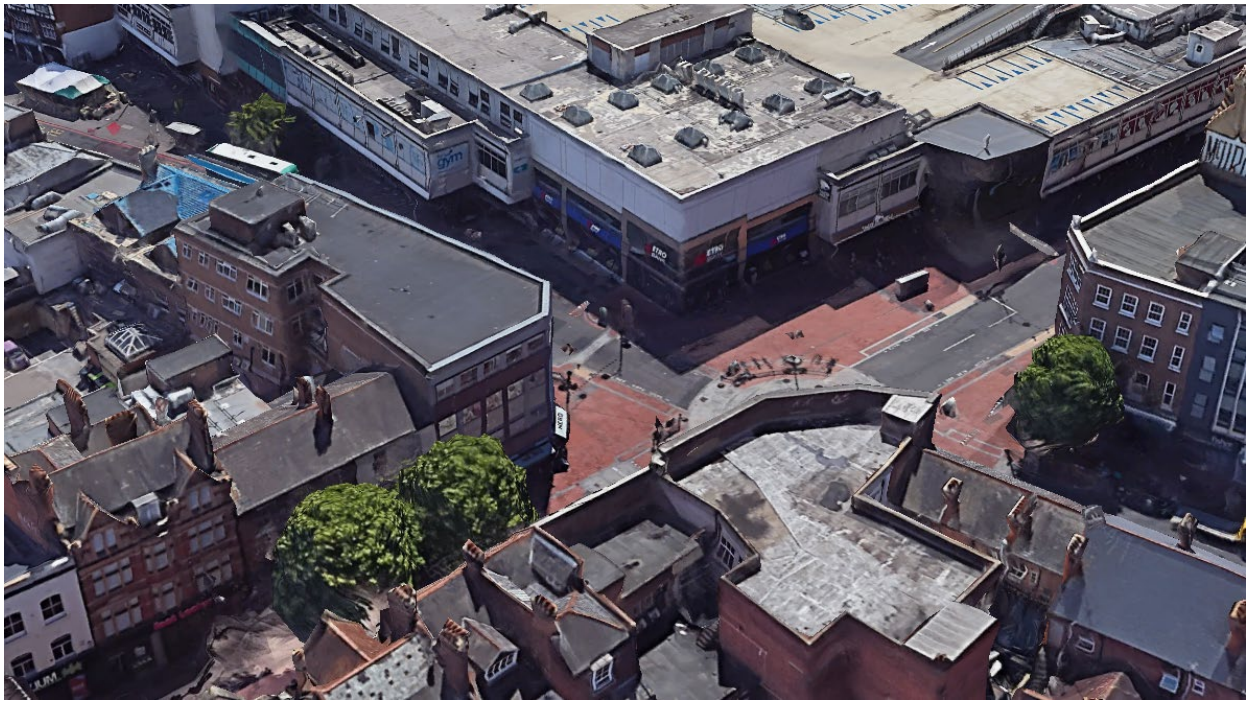




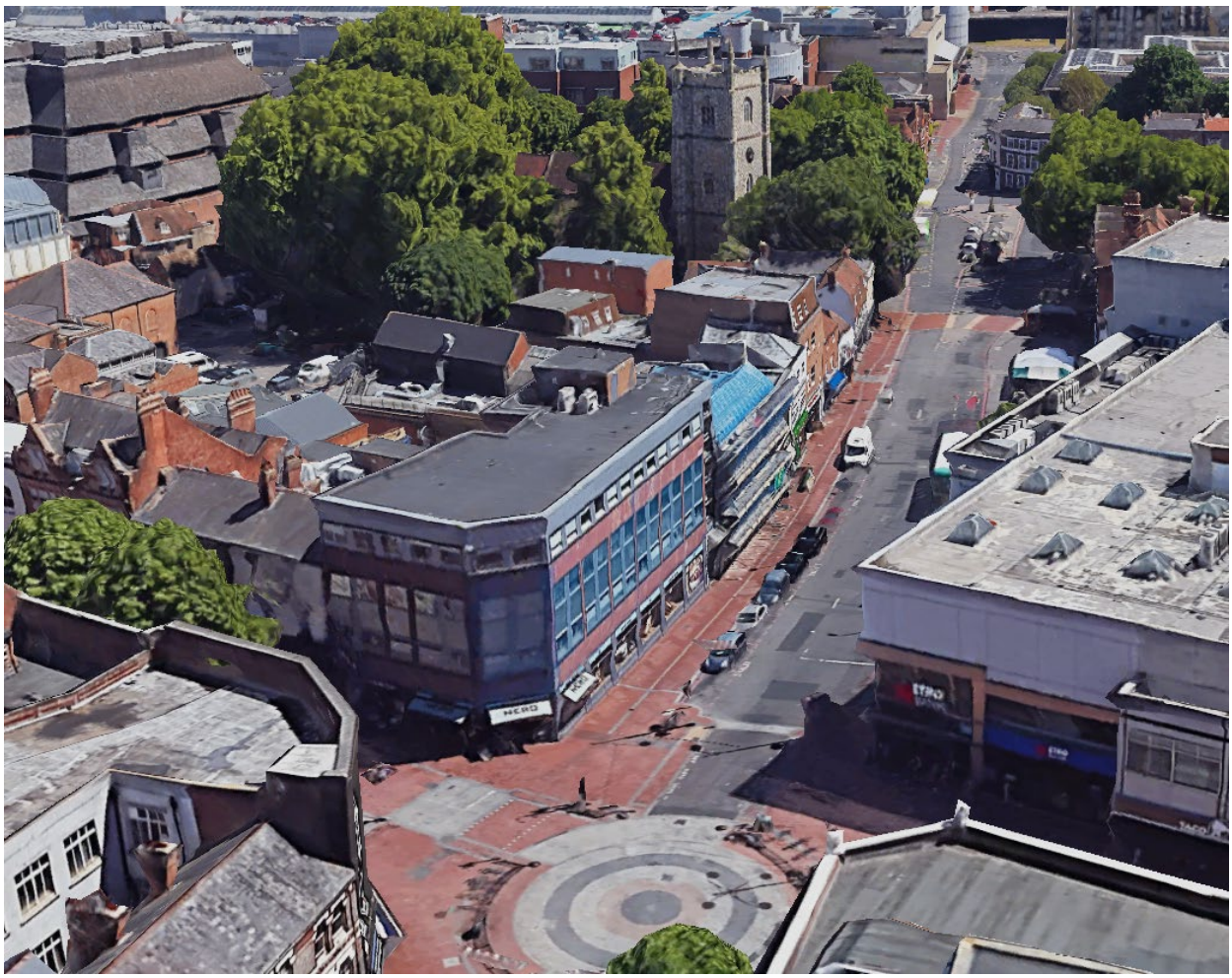
Existing (left) and proposed (right) St Mary's Butts / Broad Street corner elevation plans

Google Maps aerial viewpoint from the south looking north towards West Street

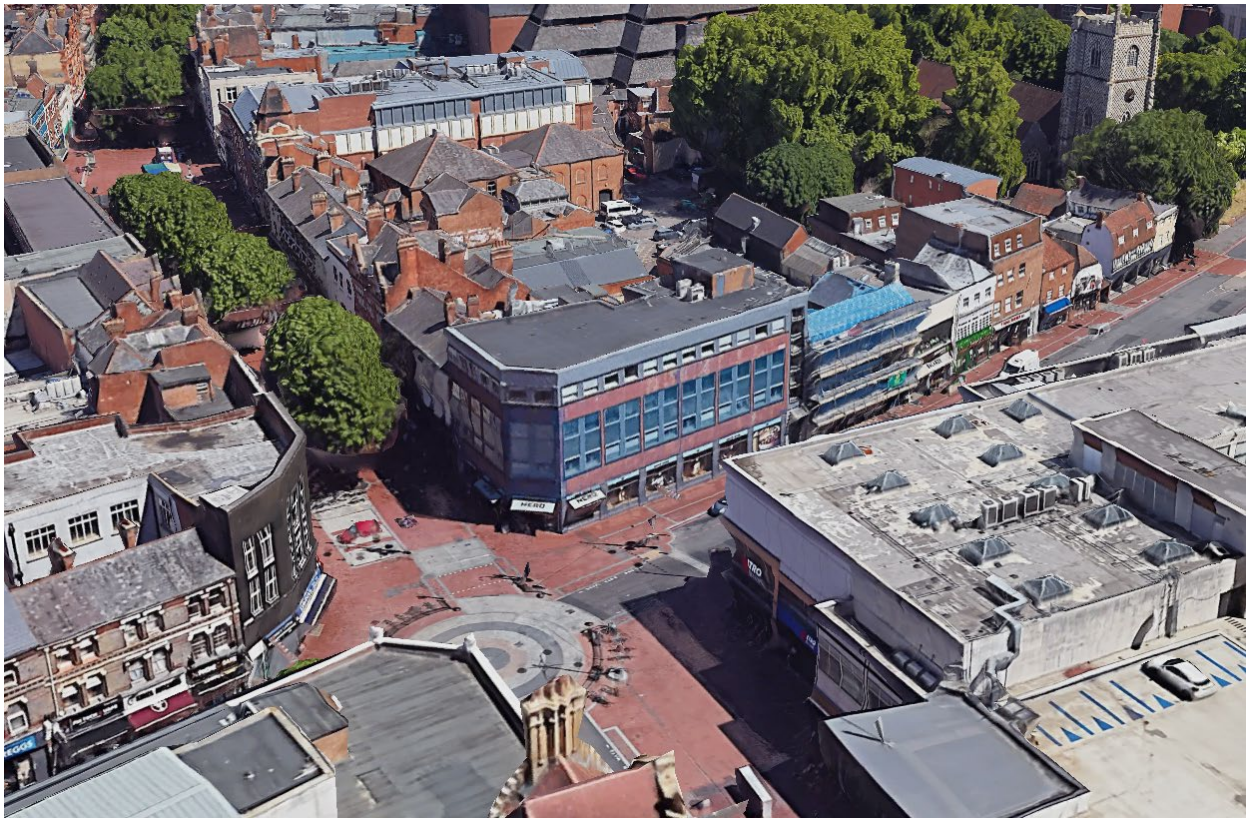
Google Maps aerial viewpoint from the south-east, showing the rear elevation and parking area



Google Maps aerial viewpoint from the north-east looking south-west, showing the Broad Street elevation and towards Broad Street Mall as existing



Google Maps aerial viewpoint from the north looking south showing both street elevations and towards the landmark Grade I Listed Church of St Mary's



Google Maps aerial viewpoint from the north-west, looking south-east.

Google Maps aerial viewpoint from the west, showing the St Mary's Butts street elevation

Google Maps aerial viewpoint from the south-west, showing the Grade I Listed Greyfriars Church (left) and the Grade I Listed Church of St Mary's (right)