Design & Access Statement

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Item or image label

Location: 13-15 Station Road, Reading
Site Area: 0.016 Ha
Applicant: Faye and Yara Limited
Architects: iB Architects

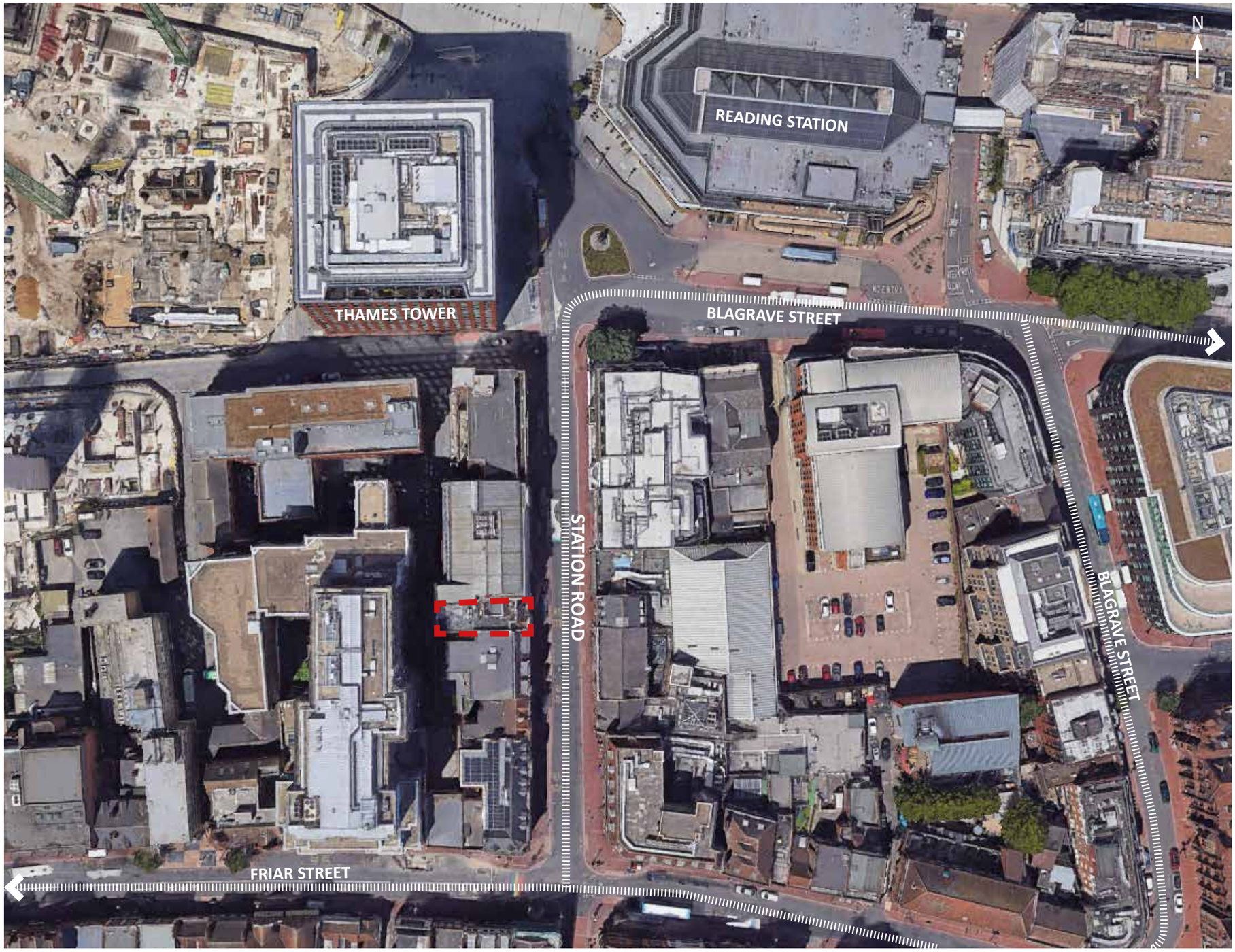
This Design and Access statement (DAS) has been prepared to support a full planning application for this site know as 13-15 Station Road, Reading. The site is in Reading town centre and fronts onto Station Road. The building is grade II listed and covers an approximate area of 167sqm, with a combination of retail, commercial and residential properties neighbouring it.

This application is for the change of use of the first, second, third and fourth floors from office space to residential accommodation, with the retention of the ground floor and lower-ground floor as commercial offices for the building's existing tenant.

The existing tenant have reduced their office space requirement during their tenancy and now only require two of the building's six storeys. The floors that will remain are no longer attractive to the office market (with plenty of modern desirable office space available elsewhere in the town) and therefore the applicant is seeking to occupy these floors with alternative uses – residential being the marketable use.

Please read this DAS in conjunction with.

- Planning Statement by Bell Cornwell
- Heritage Statement by Bell Cornwell
- Transport Statement by Evoke Transport Planning
- Air Quality Assessment by Hawkins Environmental
- Noise Assessment by Hawkins Environmental



Front street elevation

13-15 Station Road is in Reading Town centre, less than two-minutes' walk south of Reading Railway Station. It is located halfway along Station Road on the western side of the street and is between two buildings of six-storeys in height.

This fully accessible town-centre site has multiple bus stops lined along the street outside it, as well as a taxi rank located between it and the railway station. The site does not include private car parking provision.

In the centre of Reading Town Centre, there are many amenities near the site, including, food-stores, The Oracle Shopping Centre, Reading Station, the Town Hall, open spaces such as Forbury Gardens and multiple restaurants and bars.

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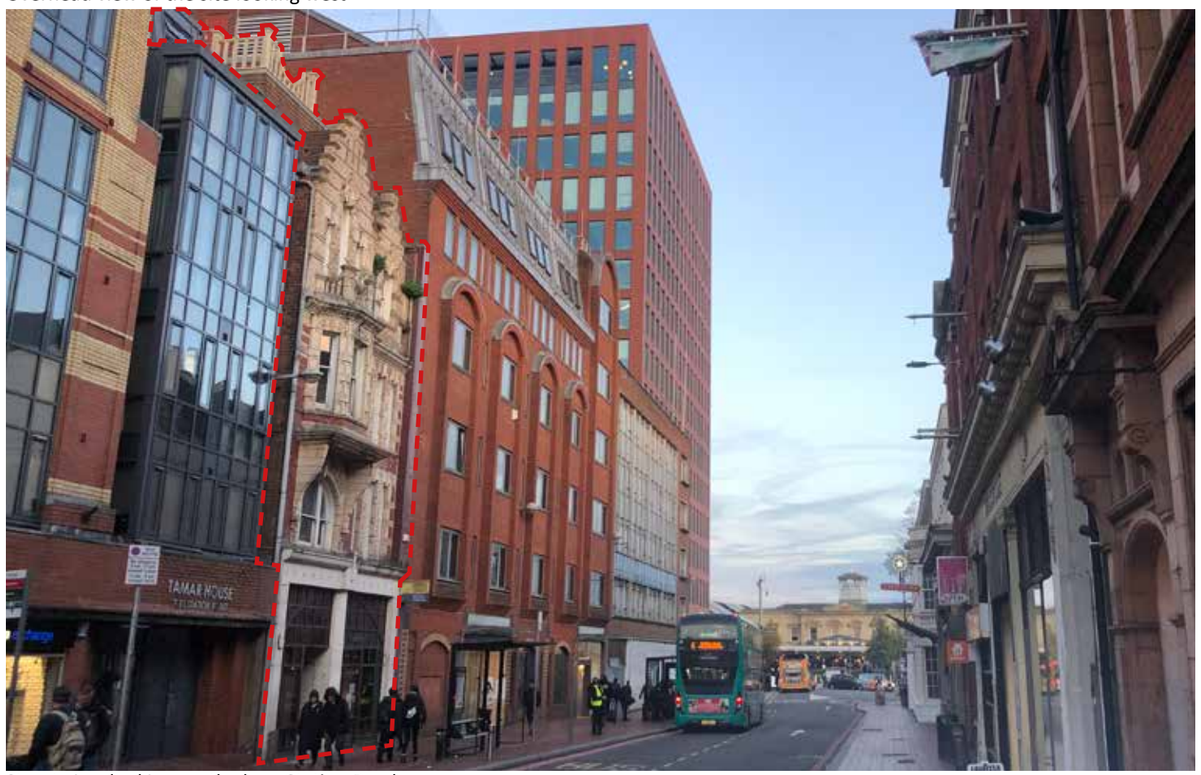
Overhead view of the site looking west



Street view looking north along Station Road

The site currently occupies a grade II listed office building an impressively decorated late Victorian brick and terracotta façade that sits hard up against the rear of the public footpath. Behind it's listed facade, the building is a 1970's office block, that has five above ground storeys, plus a lower-ground floor that has full height glazing at the rear. The rear has access into a small courtyard, with external stepped access to the back of the Station Road buildings.

The adjoining building to the north is a six-storey brick office building dating from the 1980s, with the top level accommodated behind a standing-seam mansard roof. The Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS) currently occupy this building.

To the south is another similarly aged brick building, Tamar House, six storeys in height also with the top floor accommodated behind a mansard roof. The architectural character of this building is different to RBS in that it is very much an attempted pastiche of the application site and the adjoining building to its south, 3-5 Station Road. 3-5 Station Road is of a similar age, design, and proportion to the application site.

The owner of Tamar House has already converted the upper levels of this building to residential accommodation, together with the adding an extra floor on top – contained within the mansard.

Listed front elevation

View of site looking North-East on Station Road

Secure access to the back of the building

Opposite the site, on the eastern side of Station Road are a mixture of Victorian and Edwardian brick buildings that are less decorated and contain fewer elements of stone detailing. They range between two to four storeys in height. All buildings along the street are directly against the rear of the pavement and contain either retail, office or food and beverage uses at ground floor level.

To the west, at the rear of the application site is a small amenity courtyard that it is enclosed by a 1.8m high brick wall and a secure access gate. There is rear access to this courtyard that runs behind the buildings to the north of the site and links onto the public highway at Garrard Street. The buildings to the west of this are a combination of modern structures that are between ten to 15 storeys high and contain residential apartments and a hotel.

More widely, the modern 15-storey office building, Thames Tower is located just to the north of the site and the redevelopment of Station Hill into a new high-rise scheme of offices, residential and leisure is currently under construction behind it.

Modern rear elevation

Existing courtyard space at rear of the site

Residential development opposite the rear of Station Road

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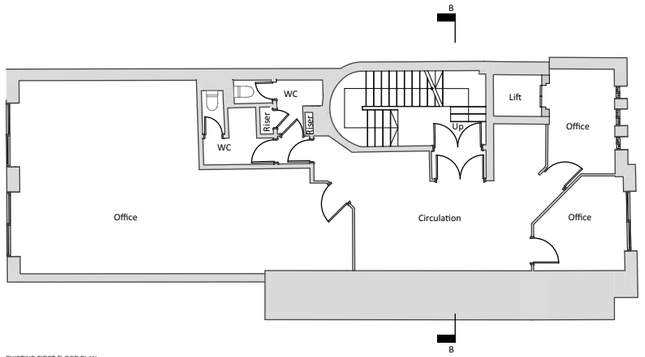
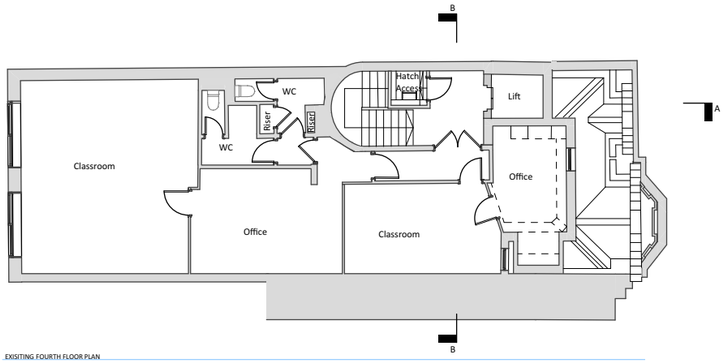
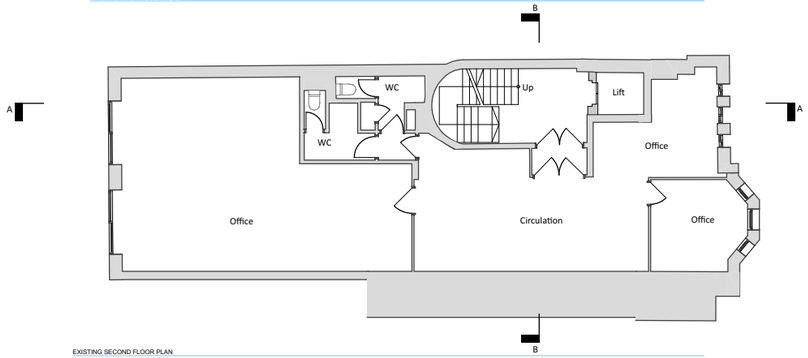


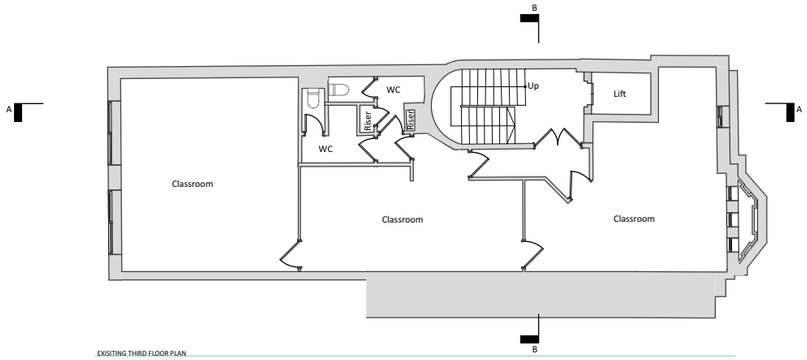
EXISTING FIRST FLOOR PLAN



EXISITING FOURTH FLOOR PLAN



EXISTING SECOND FLOOR PLAN



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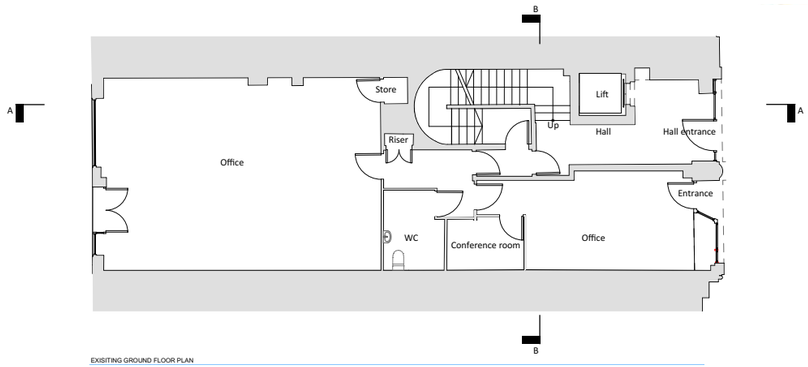
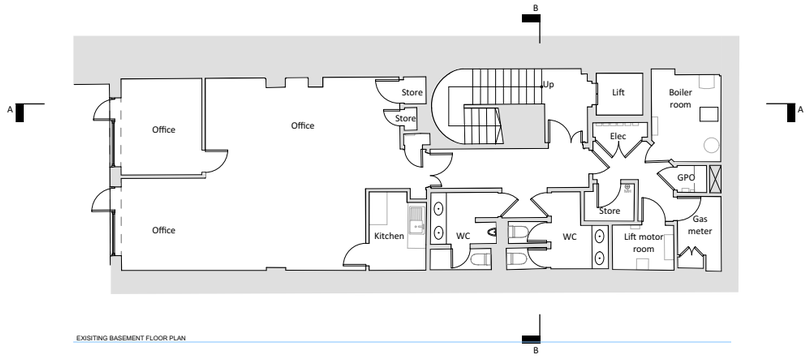


EXISITING GROUND FLOOR PLAN



EXISITING BASEMENT FLOOR PLAN

Existing floor plans

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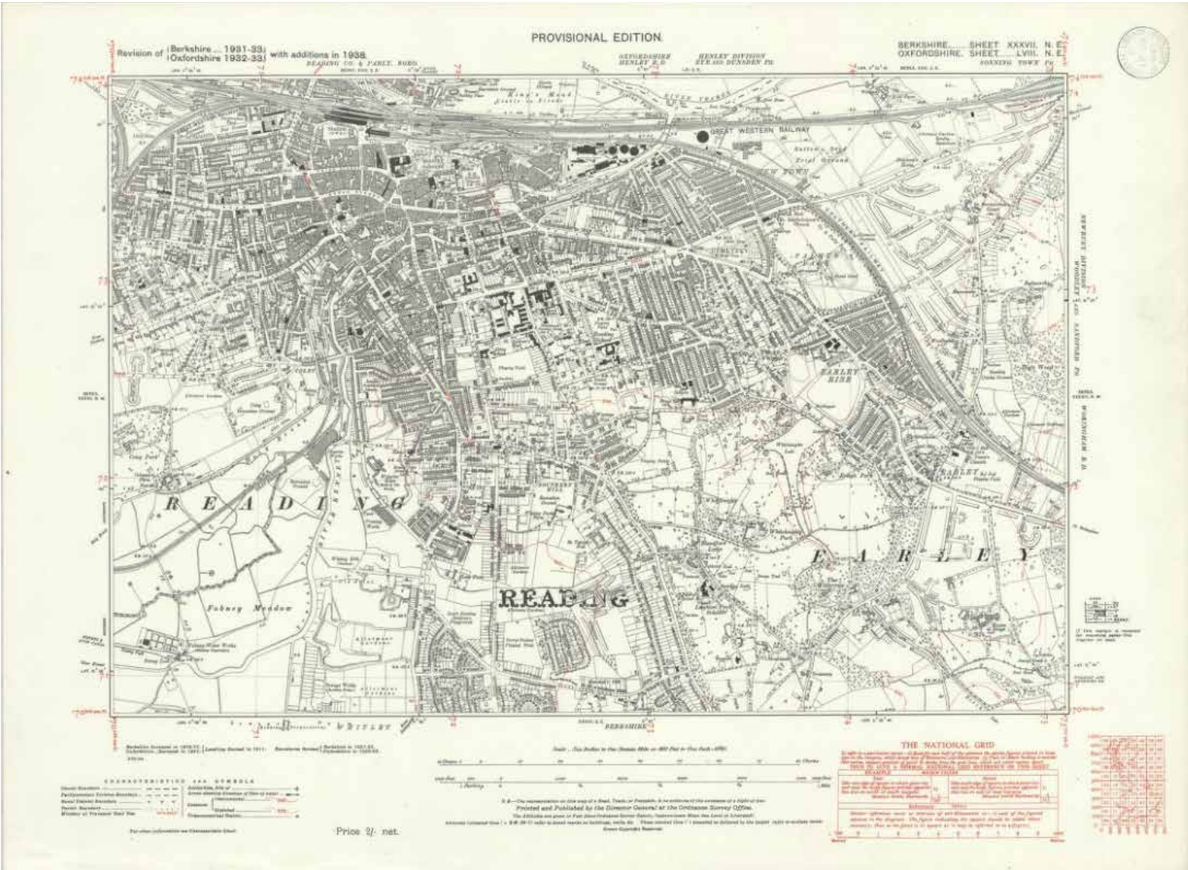
Existing front and rear elevations



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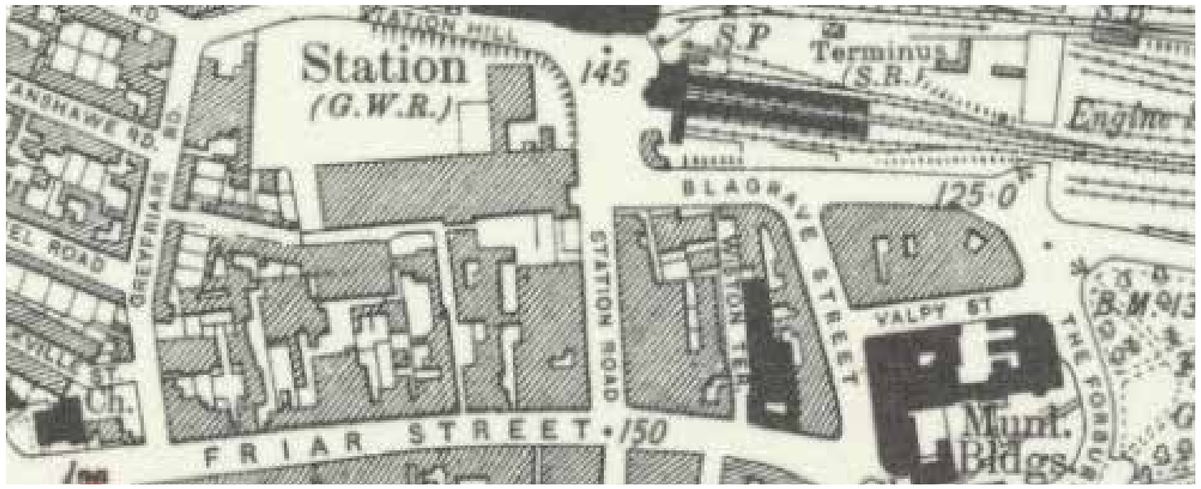

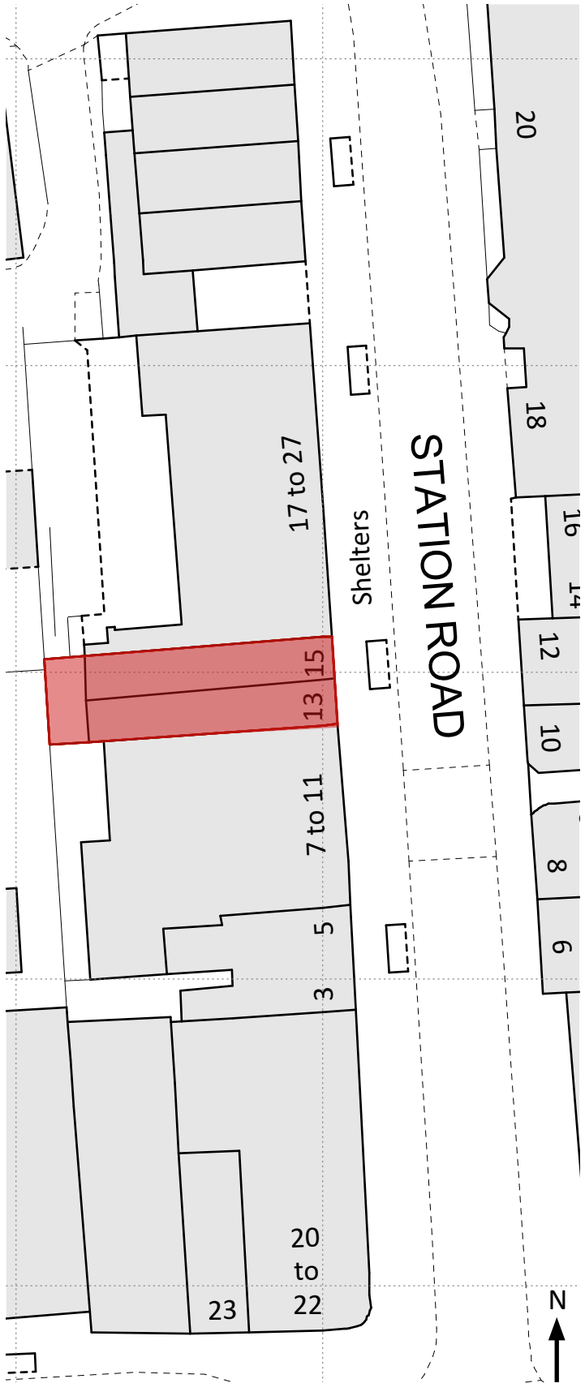

2022

Reading is a town and borough in Berkshire, historically known as a manufacturing centre and for the Great Western Railway. It continued to expand well into the 20th century making it one of the largest urban settlements in the United Kingdom without city status. Reading has grown to become a major railway link for the country and a commercial centre for information technology and insurance.

We estimate that 13-15 Station Road was built in 1903 and believe it was designed by Joseph Morris. The façade of the five above ground storeys carries a mixture of Baroque and Art Nouveau styles, with red and yellow glazed brick and terracotta mouldings embellishing the design. The front facade became Grade II listed in 1978 with the rest of the building behind it replaced by a modern reinforced concrete framed structure.

Despite its listed status, the building has a modern shop-front at street level at the front of the building and the entire rear facade is a replacement formed in a contemporary manner.

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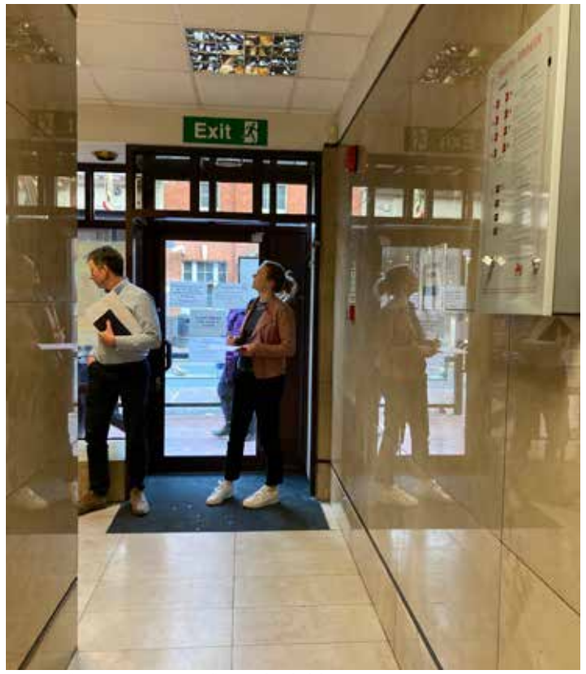
KEY

- Site Boundary
- Sun Path
- Pedestrian access
- Vehicular Movement
- Facing distances
- Buildings with 3 storeys or less
- Buildings between 4 and 7 storeys
- Buildings 8 storeys and above

Constraints and opportunities on site

Two main entrances at front elevation

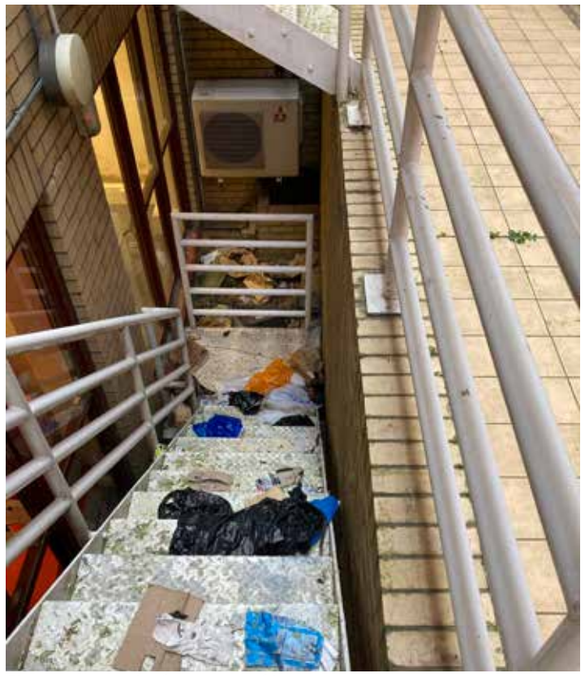


View of main entrance from the lobby

Secure access to the back of the building

Access route to the other floors

Typical office floor-plate


Fire escape stairs from rear of basement

The key constraint for this building is its narrow and deep floor plate configuration that makes it unattractive to potential office occupiers. Larger floor-plates with open plan configurations that can accommodate all personnel within a flexible workplace are currently in demand and unfortunately this inflexibility is a constraint to finding new office occupiers for the application building.

The current accommodation is in reasonable but slightly tired and dated condition and sadly no longer forms the type of property that modern office occupiers are looking for and therefore the applicant is seeking an alternative use for these buildings.

There are several opportunities available to this building. Whilst the narrow floor plates might restrict attraction to potential office occupiers, with a centralised access core, they will conveniently divide into apartments – one with aspect onto Station Road and the other out through the full-height glazing of the rear elevation. The building is column free as the concrete floor slabs span across the narrow width of the building.

The change of use of the upper floor of 13-15 Station Road will enable the following opportunities to be realised:

- Efficient reuse of a much under occupied building.
- Provide new rental homes in a town centre location.
- Enable the restoration of an attractive listed building and retain it for the future.
- Retain a local business on site, with facilities and accommodation that meet the changing needs and requirements of their business.

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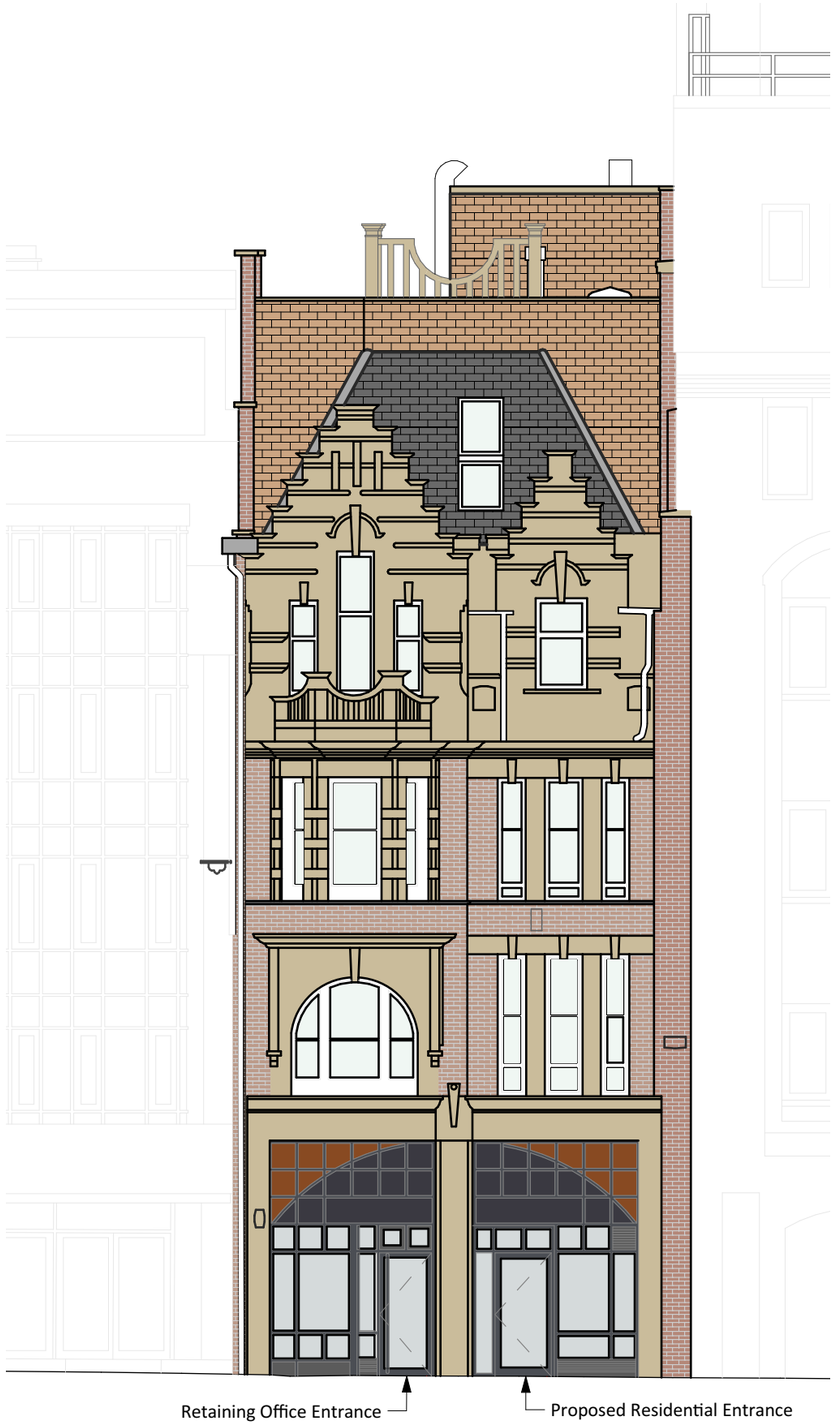
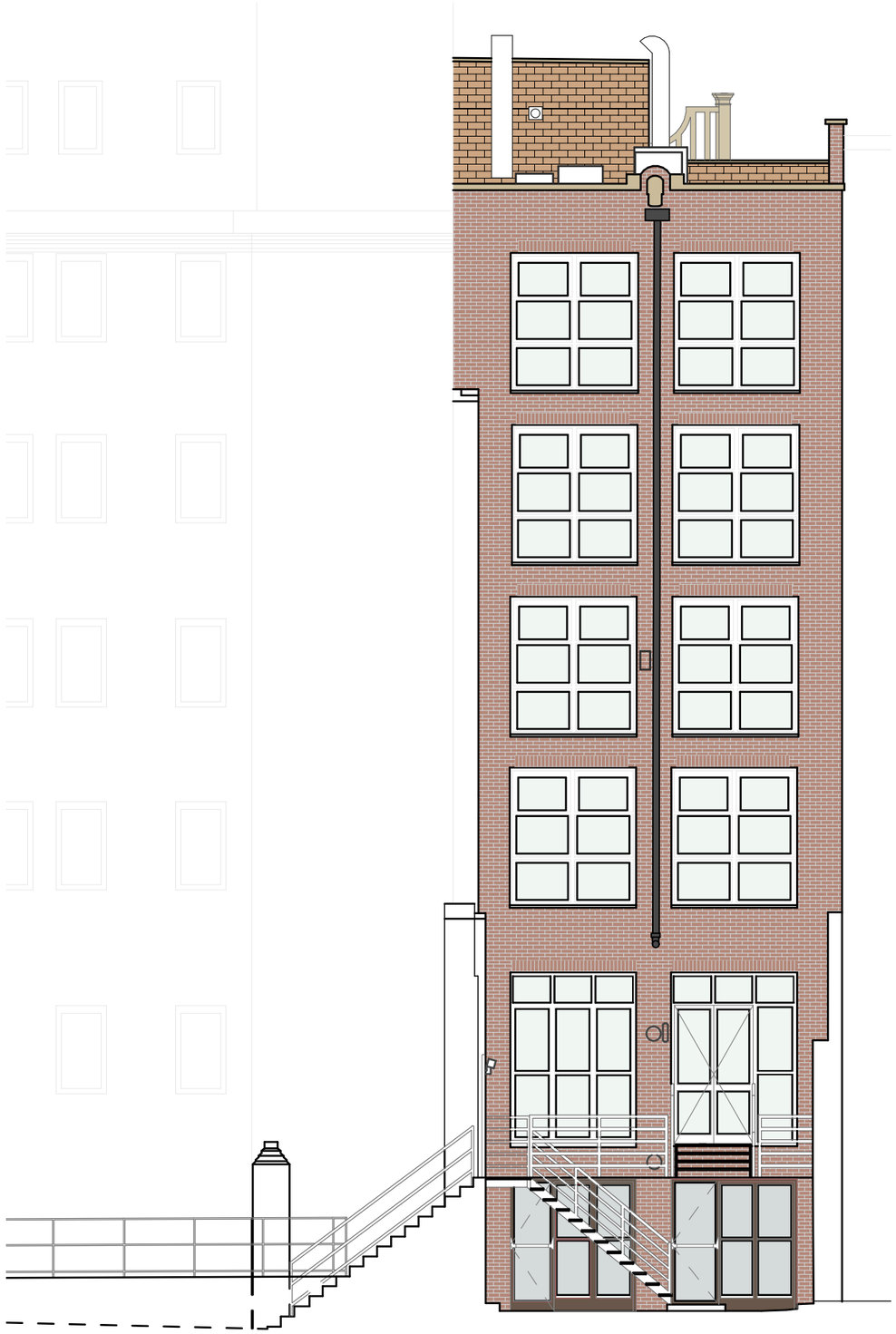
6.0: DESIGN PRINCIPLES



Front street elevation



Rear elevation

The intention of the scheme is to retain the existing fabric of the building and conserve and maintain its listed façade. There are no changes proposed to the external fabric, other than necessary repair or conservation work. Internally the building contains office partitioning and numerous examples of nondescript fit-out material from the past few decades, which will be stripped out to make way for new residential accommodation.

Each floor will accommodate two apartments, one at the rear and one overlooking Station Road, except for the top floor which is partly within the roof pitch of the front gable on the listed façade and will contain only one flat. Principle rooms such as living rooms and bedrooms will be located against the windowed façades, with secondary spaces such as bathrooms and storage areas occupying space closer to the centre of the plan.

The existing lift and stair core will remain and be adapted for the new use. All apartments will have lift and stair access via this core, which will also serve the two floors that are to remain as office space. The stair to the lower ground floor is separate, therefore keeping residential uses and office occupiers separate with individual access is straightforward. Access from the street for individual users will be through the existing separate entrance doors – one direct into the office, with residents using the existing lobby that is on the right-hand side of the street facing elevation.

We have applied the following design principles and underlying objectives to the scheme.

- Optimum use of the site. This is a brownfield development, to be converted, refurbished, and modernised into dwellings.
- The site is in a sustainable location and will contribute positively to the mixture of town centre uses.
- Good place-making. Heritage buildings, amenity location and existing patterns of development have informed this scheme to ensure a sense of place and character.
- Character and Context. The proposal will sensitively convert the existing buildings ensuring that their integration retains the character and context of the site whilst complimenting the listed status.
- Strategic Development. Residential use is the most appropriate for this site, given the surrounding context and building constraints, and will provide essential new homes - consistent with local, regional, and national requirements.
- Accessibility. The site is in the town centre with the respective amenities within a short walking distance. The building includes a lift to provide access to all levels.

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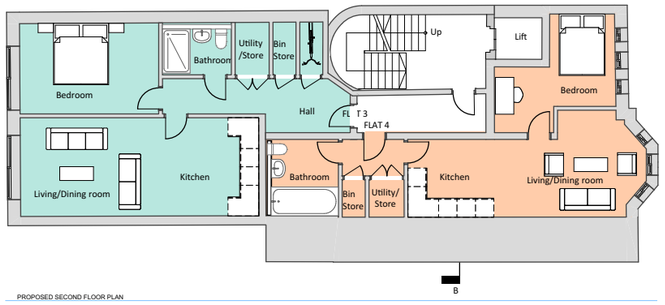
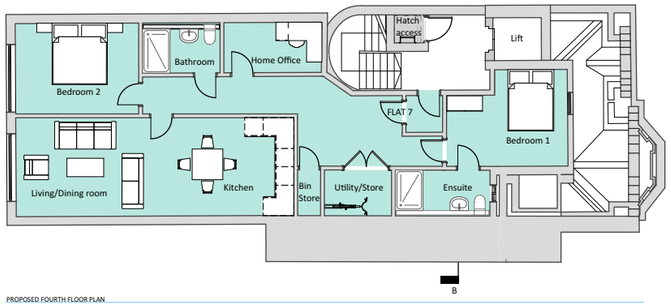
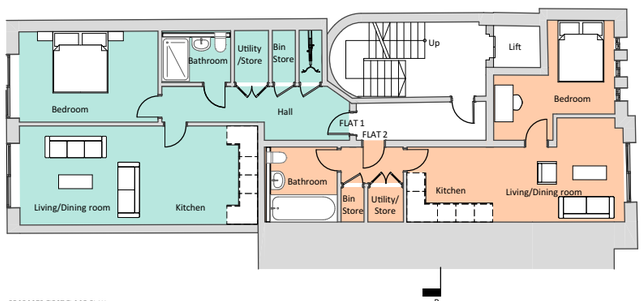
7.0: PROPOSED SCHEME



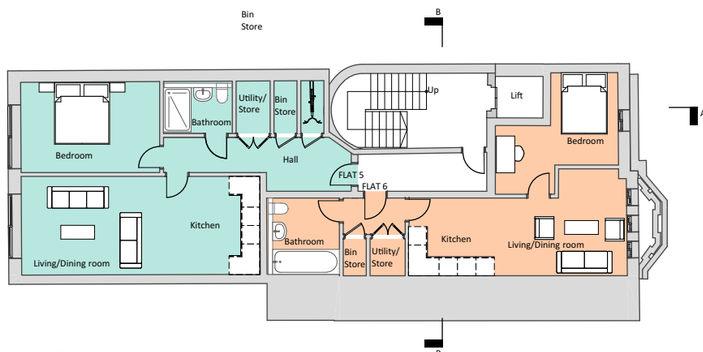
PROPOSED SECOND FLOOR PLAN



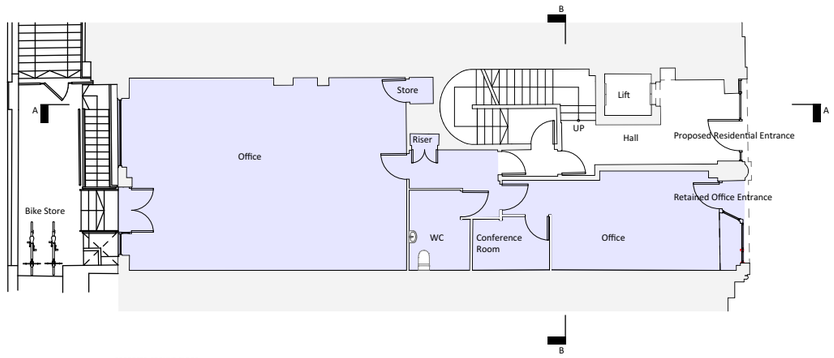
PROPOSED FOURTH FLOOR PLAN



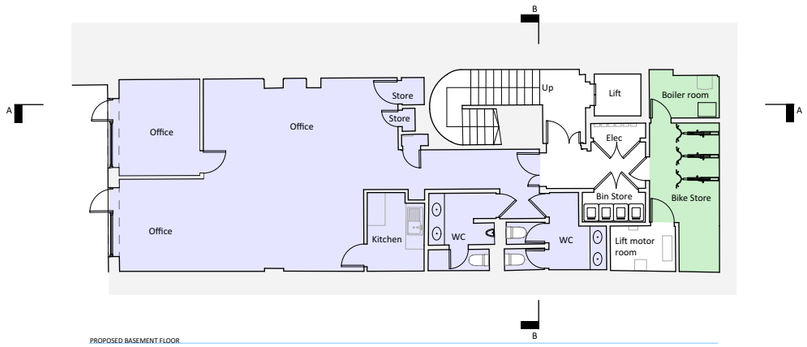
PROPOSED FIRST FLOOR PLAN



PROPOSED THIRD FLOOR PLANS



PROPOSED GROUND FLOOR



PROPOSED BASEMENT FLOOR

Proposed floor plans

The scheme consists of two 1-bedroom flats on each of the first, second and third floor levels, with a single 2-bedroom flat occupying the whole of the fourth floor. Office use is retained on the lower-ground and ground floors, with the addition of secure cycle storage and refuse store in the part of lower-ground floor that formerly accommodated the boiler plant and coal store – which have long since been removed.

The site area is 0.016 Ha in size, with seven residential units proposed in this scheme and a single commercial office space.

The proposed change of use application includes the following accommodation, all sized to meet the National Described Space Standards (NDSS):

- Unit 1: 1B2P flat at 58 sqm
- Unit 2: 1B1P flats at 42 sqm
- Unit 3: 1B2P flat at 58 sqm
- Unit 4: 1B1P flat at 42 sqm
- Unit 5: 1B2P flat at 58 sqm
- Unit 6: 1B1P flat at 42 sqm
- Unit 7: 2B4P flat at 93 sqm
- Ground and lower ground floor office is 199 sqm

Legibility and Navigation
We have retained the two entrances at the street front and to separate the different uses of the building, the right-hand entrance to the lift lobby has been allocated for residents, whilst the other will be retained for access to the offices.

Pedestrians and Cyclists
The building has direct pedestrian access onto the public highway and the town centre footpath and cycle routes. Secure cycle storage is provided either within a specific store within each flat or, a dedicated storage area within the lower-ground floor, and an external store in the exisiting courtyard at the rear of the bulding for the offices. There is also access to the rear of the property via a secure route behind The Royal Bank of Scotland – accessed from Garrard Street.

Vehicular Access
Access into the site is via the existing adopted Station Road. There is currently no on-site car parking or any proposed car parking to be added.

Cycle Parking
Each of the new dwellings will have secure cycle storage provided either within the flat or in the lower ground floor communal spaces. For the offices, an external cycle storage will be provided in the exisiting courtyard at the rear of the bulding.

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Refuse and Recycling
Refuse collection will be as per the existing regime in Reading town centre and along Station Road. A designated space for refuse will be provided within each flat (in accordance with the relevant standards for the collection of domestic waste and recycling) and will be brought to the highway kerbside on collection day for collecting – in accordance with the existing system.

Accessibility
The building will retain the current passenger lift to ensure that all flats are accessible and have level entrances through the building to them. They will comply with part M1 of the Building Regulations.

Sustainability
To ensure a comfortable and compliant living environment within the proposed dwellings, secondary glazing is to be added inside the front elevation windows. Together with a mechanical ventilation system for ventilating and filtration of air quality to the apartments.

This scheme will achieve its sustainability criteria through delivering the following:

- A strong competitive economy by providing new homes that support the local area and existing amenities. The location enables future residents to easily access all the town centre amenities and public transport options.
- Refurbish the existing listed building and preserve its future. The existing use falls below expected standards for office accommodation and therefore is not sustainable.
- Located close to sustainable transport links that will encourage residents to change behaviours and use alternative forms of transport.
- Deliver high-quality homes that address future lifestyle flexibility and the principles of Secure by Design.
- Delivering clever design through the efficient use of land and building densities, as well as the reuse of a brownfield site, integrating it sensitively into the local community.
- Promoting healthy communities by providing access to pedestrian and cycling routes.
- Meet the challenge of climate change by employing exacting standards of sustainable design and construction that look to exceed current Building Regulation requirements where possible and adopt a “fabric first” approach to energy conservation.

Conclusion
This DAS demonstrates that the design will successfully refurbish and enhance 13-15 Station Road through the consideration of existing constraints, together with its development using principles of best practice and town centre design.

In conclusion, we have designed the change of use to integrate with the existing context and support the retention of a listed building, within a vibrant town centre context.

Significant importance is placed upon the design of the built environment and clever design is key to sustainable new homes, with the application satisfying the following criteria.

- Provides new housing on a previously developed site and now tired and unwanted building.
- Functions well and will add to the overall quality of the area throughout the lifetime of the development.
- Establishes a keen sense of place, retaining street-scape and buildings that create an attractive and comfortable place within which to live, at the same time as retaining a building of heritage interest.
- Optimises the potential of the redundant building by creating a sustainable mix of flat types.
- Creates a safe and accessible environment, where the quality of life and community cohesion can prevail, and opportunities for crime and disorder are minimised.
- Complies with relevant Reading Borough Council policies.