

Waterfront Square Townscape and Visual Appraisal Addendum

Packaged Living Ltd

29 October 2025

LICHFIELDS

67133/02/MLW/JL
40167109v2

Contents

1.0	Introduction	1
	The amended scheme	1
2.0	Policy context	3
3.0	Baseline conditions	5
4.0	Townscape and visual appraisal	6
	Review of effects on townscape character	6
	Review of Visual effects	6
5.0	Conclusion	10

Appendix 1	Visualisations
-------------------	----------------

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This Addendum to the Townscape and Visual Appraisal (July 2024) has been prepared to consider amendments made during the determination of planning application reference PL/24/0958 for:

Demolition of existing office and substation buildings and residential-led site redevelopment within 1-11 storey buildings comprising residential (Class C3) and ground floor commercial uses (Class E), together with various associated works including replacement pedestrian and vehicle access routes, car/cycle parking, hard and soft landscaping and a public open space adjacent to the river”

- 1.2 This Addendum reviews changes to:

- 1 The planning policy context and baseline conditions since the assessment was prepared in 2024 and,
- 2 whether the changes to the application scheme alter the conclusions of the Townscape and Visual Appraisal.

The amended scheme

- 1.3 The scheme has been amended to respond to comments from officers and following a post-submission design review. The following changes to the scheme are relevant to the assessment of townscape and visual effects:

- 1 Alteration in the massing and materials the marker building at the junction of Vastern Road and Norman Place to reduce its extent along Norman Place.
- 2 Alteration to articulation, detailing and materials of the lower elements along Norman Place to break down the massing and introduce a set back along Norman Place to provide additional width at street level.
- 3 Reduced width of building to east of podium to allow a wider podium courtyard space combined with chamfered western façade and reduction of the projection to the north by one storey.
- 4 Architectural design amended to include finer fluting to upper floors of marker building, introduction of decorative brickwork to window heads to create more vertically proportioned window bays and an adjustment to the materials to include grey and white brickwork for different blocks to reinforce the articulation of the massing.
- 5 Metal balustrading to replace brick parapets along the river to provide a lighter ‘top’ along the river.

- 1.4 A limited number of visualisations have been updated to reflect the amended scheme. These are included at Appendix 1 and comprise:

- View 4 from Reading Bridge
- View 10 from Vastern Road/ Trooper Potts Way
- View 11 from Christchurch Meadows (Thames Path)

- View 12 (b) from Christchurch Meadows

1.5 These updated representative views have, together with the amended application drawings and CGIs informed this Townscape and Visual Appraisal Addendum.

2.0 Policy context

2.1 There have been no changes to adopted policy since the Townscape and Visual Appraisal was completed in July 2024. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was updated in December 2024 and further progress has been made on the Local Plan Update.

2.2 The Reading Local Plan partial update was submitted for examination in May 2025 and has some weight as a material consideration. The Site is allocated for residential development (ref CR14v) in the emerging Plan. The proposed allocation requires that development should (amongst other things):

“... Include tree planting on the Vastern Road frontage to enhance the treed corridor... and set buildings back at least ten metres from the top of the bank of the river”

2.3 The Site remains outside of the Tall Building Cluster on the proposed amended policies map. It is within an area of ‘less suitability for tall buildings’ where tall buildings could be justified providing that the cluster approach is not undermined when an assessment of significant views is provided.

2.4 In the National Planning Policy Framework, December 2024, policy relating to design and character remains broadly the same. The changes included removing some of the references to ‘beautiful’ as well as paragraph 130. The renumbering of NPPF paragraphs is reflected in the summary below:

- 1 Is the proposal a Tall Building? Is site in an accessible location where change or increased densities are encouraged? (RLP CC6, CR10 and H2; NPPF Paragraphs 131 and 135);
- 2 Would proposals be sympathetic to local character within this area? Is the development well integrated with the context including surrounding townscape and landscape setting? Has regard been had to factors including topography; layout, form, scale, appearance, details and materials, views and uses? Would it contribute to local distinctiveness or create a positive new identity or sense of place? (RLP CC7, CR2, H2 and EN5, NPPF Paragraph 131, 135, NDG);
- 3 Would proposals create a well-defined public realm and high-quality place that is attractive, safe and functions well. Would a positive contribution to urban design objectives including continuity and enclosure, permeability and legibility be made? Have existing trees and natural features been retained and street trees introduced where possible? Does the scheme have appropriate and effective landscaping? (RLP CC7, CR2, CR3 and EN14, NPPF Paragraphs 135 and 136, NDG);
- 4 Would development be sensitive to nearby open spaces and waterspaces with no adverse effect on the setting, character and appearance of the River Thames as a major landscape feature? Would the relationship of buildings and spaces to the watercourse be enhanced having regard to distinct character, views and public realm (RLP EN7, EN11 and EN13);
- 5 The proposal is of high architectural design quality? Is the scheme attractive? Has consideration been given to the relevant requirements local and/or national design guidance? Has the design evolved as a result of effective engagement? (RLP policy CR2; NPPF Paragraphs 131, 135, 137 and 139); and

6 Does the proposal optimise the use of land? (RLP policy CR2 and H2; NPPF Paragraph 124, 135).

2.5 The policy requirements that are relevant to the consideration of townscape and visual effects remain broadly the same as set out in July 2024.

3.0 Baseline conditions

- 3.1 There have been no changes to the baseline conditions since the application was submitted in 2024, other than progress on the construction of schemes within the town centre that were already under construction. Work has also since begun on the 55 Vastern Road (Old Power Station) scheme (located to the north-west of the Site), though this has not sufficiently progressed to result in a discernible change to the baseline condition.

4.0 **Townscape and visual appraisal**

Review of effects on townscape character

- 4.1 The Site remains of Low to Medium sensitivity to change as set out in the TVA (para 5.5). The amended scheme would also continue to result in a High degree of change to the townscape character of the Site.
- 4.2 The amended scheme has refined the architectural response to the Site and context and would continue to maintain and reinforce the benefits to townscape character that were previously proposed. The development would continue to mark the junction of Norman Place and Vastern Road, and the link through to the River, with a distinctive building with a reduced massing to the flank elevation. There would be an increased sense of space along Norman Place with the step in along the frontage and the built form would continue to step down towards the River. Adjacent to Clearwater Court, the further step down and more slender form would reduce the massing on the riverside and increase the separation between the building forms. The additional articulation and changes to the architectural detailing would provide further visual interest and distinctiveness resulting in a proposal of excellent architectural quality.
- 4.3 The amended scheme would continue to have a Major Beneficial effect on the townscape character of the site.
- 4.4 The Site lies within Townscape Character Area (TCA) 1: Vastern Road. The amended massing would be seen in views from the west and have improved articulation at the upper levels. The design changes would reinforce the distinctiveness of the corner and provide additional visual interest in the architectural detailing. Further enhancement to the frontage of Norman Place would be provided by the increased width and articulation of the frontage. Along the Thames Path adjoining the Site, the wider podium and addition of the chamfer would combine with the amendment to the parapet detailing to reduce the apparent height and massing. Additional visual interest and vertical emphasis would be provided by the decorative brickwork. There would continue to be a High degree of change to TCA1 and a Moderate Beneficial townscape effect.
- 4.5 From Townscape Character Areas to the south, TCA2: Station Hill and TCA3: Reading Station East the change to the architectural treatment and increased interest at the top of the 11 storey building would be seen from a limited number of locations. There would continue to be a Very Low degree of change and a Negligible effect on townscape character.
- 4.6 From the King's Meadow Townscape Character Area (TCA4) to the north, the amended massing and changes to parapet treatment would reduce the height of the elements on the river frontage and increase the separation between the blocks. The white brickwork and amended architectural detail would provide further articulation of the massing. There would continue to be a Low change and a Minor Beneficial townscape effect.

Review of Visual effects

- 4.7 The visual effects of the amended scheme have been revisited with reference to the amended application drawings and a limited selection of updated key representative views

together with CGIs showing materials and details. The updated visualisations are contained in Appendix 1.

4.8

The assessment and commentary on the changes is set out in Table 1 below. Detailed analysis of the visual effects is in the submitted Townscape and Visual Appraisal.

Table 1: Updated visual assessment

Ref.	Location	Sensitivity	Nature (Magnitude) of Change	Visual Effect	Commentary on changes
1	Vastern Road (east)	Low (pedestrians/ cyclists/ motorists)	High	Moderate Beneficial	Some limited change to architectural detailing would be seen.
2	Vastern Road (west)	Low (pedestrians/ cyclists/ motorists)	Medium	Minor Beneficial	Altered massing would lead to a more vertically proportioned marker building and increased articulation of the western elevation.
3	Southern Thames Path (west)	High	Medium	Moderate to Major Beneficial	Reduced height of northern ends due to a combination of replacement of brick parapets with railings and lower storey height to eastern block. There would be increased articulation from the chamfer and return of lower element which will combine with amended architectural detailing including vertical proportions to window bays to provide visual interest.
4	Reading Bridge	Low (people in vehicles) to Medium (pedestrians)	Medium (summer and winter)	Minor Beneficial (people in vehicles) to Moderate Beneficial (pedestrians)	The amended massing would slightly alter skyline profile with a reduced extent of the 11 storey building, lower northern ends and narrowing of the closest block. The amended architectural detailing will reinforce vertical emphasis of window bays.
5	Christchurch Bridge	Medium (cyclists) to High (pedestrians)	Medium	Moderate Beneficial (cyclists) to Major Beneficial (pedestrians)	Less of the marker building would be seen. Increased articulation of massing from the chamfered form and widening of podium garden together with reduced height of northern ends and increased variation provided by architectural details and materials. Metal balustrading would tie in well

Ref.	Location	Sensitivity	Nature (Magnitude) of Change	Visual Effect	Commentary on changes
					with adjacent residential building.
6	Caversham Bridge	Low (people in vehicles) and Medium (pedestrians)	Low	Minor Beneficial (all receptors)	The reduced width of the marker building would be seen.
7	Station Hill	Low (people in vehicles) and Medium (pedestrians)	Nil/ Very Low	Negligible (all receptors)	The reduced width of the marker building would be seen in winter.
8	Thames Path (Caversham Lock)	High	Very Low (summer) and Low (winter)	Negligible (summer) to Minor Beneficial (winter)	The marker building would be screened and there would be slight reduction in the massing of the frontage elements.
9	Baltimore Walk	High	Low	Minor Beneficial	The reduced width of the marker building would be seen.
10	Vastern Road/ Trooper Potter Way	Low	High	Moderate Beneficial	The reduced width of the marker building and increased fluting at the upper levels would reinforce distinctiveness and enhance visual interest. Increased articulation and variety of materials and treatments along the Norman Place frontage would break down the massing of the frontage.
11	Christchurch Meadows/ footpath along Thames	Medium (cyclists) to High (pedestrians)	Medium	Moderate to Major Beneficial	Less of the marker building would be seen in some of the kinetic views. There would be an increased articulation of stepped massing due to the chamfered form and widening of podium garden together with reduced height of northern ends and increased variation provided by architectural details and materials. Metal balustrading would tie in well with adjacent residential building.
12	Christchurch Meadows (16) (s)	High	Medium (winter) and Low (summer)	Minor to Moderate Beneficial	Changes to kinetic views will vary depending on location. They will include a reduction in the massing including reduction in the extent of the marker

Ref.	Location	Sensitivity	Nature (Magnitude) of Change	Visual Effect	Commentary on changes
					building, reduced height of northern ends, additional chamfered form and widening of the podium. The visual interest provided by the additional architectural detailing will be seen from closer views.
13	Caversham War Memorial (17)	High	Low (winter) and Very Low (summer)	Negligible (summer) to Minor Beneficial (winter)	The reduced width of the marker building would be seen.
14	McIlroy Park (18)	High	Very Low	Negligible	Changes not perceptible
15	Forbury Gardens (25)	High	Low (winter) and Very Low (summer)	Negligible (summer) and Minor Neutral (winter)	Changes not perceptible
16	Reading Railway Station North entrance (1)	Low	Medium	Minor Beneficial	The reduced width of the marker building would be seen on the skyline as well as the increased articulation of Norman Place frontage.
17	Southern Thames Path near Reading Bridge (14)	High	Very Low (summer) to Medium (winter)	Negligible (summer) to Moderate Beneficial (winter)	Reduction in the development seen along the frontage from this position in summer, effect reduces to Negligible.
18	Hills Meadow (18)	Low	Very Low	Negligible	The reduced width of the marker building would be seen.

5.0 Conclusion

5.1 The changes to the scheme would provide an enhancement to its architectural quality and improve its contribution to the character of the surrounding townscape. Overall, the nature of change would remain of the same order of magnitude; this would result in no changes to the townscape or visual effects as previously assessed, with the exception of view 17 – where a Minor Beneficial summer visual effect would become a Negligible summer visual effect due to the reduction in the height of the frontages to the River Thames.

5.2 The changes to the policy context are limited and the same broad requirements apply. The assessment of the amended scheme is provided below

Is the proposal a Tall Building? Is site in an accessible location where change or increased densities are encouraged? (RLP CC6, CR10 and H2; NPPF Paragraphs 131 and 135);

5.3 All of the proposed development is under 12 storeys and under 36m above ground level. It does not therefore fall within the definition of a tall building as set out within policy CR10. The Site is within a highly accessible location within Central Reading close to public transport at Reading Station and to shops and facilities within Reading town centre.

5.4 It is a previously developed site within an urban area. There are no heritage assets on or adjoining the site. It is an appropriate and sustainable location to seek to optimise the use of urban land to deliver new homes.

Would proposals be sympathetic to local character within this area? Is the development well integrated with the context including surrounding townscape and landscape setting? Has regard been had to factors including topography; layout, form, scale, appearance, details and materials, views and uses? Would it contribute to local distinctiveness or create a positive new identity or sense of place? (RLP CC7, CR2, H2 and EN5, NPPF Paragraph 131, 135, NDG);

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

5.6 The amended scheme has been designed to integrate well with the surrounding context in its form, scale, design and materials. It has been designed to respond to the differing townscape character to the north and south of the site and this difference has been reinforced by the changes.

5.7 The building form step down to a greater extent and breaks up the massing along the river frontage with a slightly wider single storey podium between the wings. They tie in well to the scale of adjacent buildings with the adjustments to the parapet detailing further responding to the residential building to the east. The creation of an area of public realm on the riverside, retaining existing trees where possible and integrating new tree and other planting, as well as providing a prominent piece of public art, would complement and

enhance the wider landscape setting. The pattern of buildings enclosing space that opens up to the river is a pattern that is seen along the southern bank.

- 5.8 The proposed development would introduce a route along the eastern edge of the site creating a separate urban block, referencing the grid structure consistent with policy CR2 and increasing permeability. The building forms would address adjacent streets, with increased width to Norman Place, and would create active frontages and defining the routes to the river.
- 5.9 The existing stepping up in height away from the river is further reflected in the adjusted building forms. The tallest elements would relate to the broad main route of Vastern Road, marking the junction with Norman Place and enhancing the legibility of the route through to the river. The amended scheme reinforces the distinctiveness of the marker building through an adjustment to its form and design. The proposed heights are compatible with the varied character of the townscape which includes other 11 storey elements at the eastern end of Vastern Road. It is also consistent with the pattern of future change to the townscape which will include buildings of similar scale and form at 55 Vastern Road and Vastern Court.
- 5.10 The white brickwork ties in with buildings and structures at the eastern end of Vastern Road and the grey brick references the traditional bricks within Reading. The use of green pre-cast concrete elements with fluted and undulating details reference the verdant corridor of the River Thames and street trees extend the existing tree lined character of Vastern Road further to the east.
- 5.11 The amended scheme is compatible with the varied character of the Vastern Road TCA and would be a positive element within the townscape. The architecture and landscape has been designed with reference to local character and would reinforce the existing sense of place and local distinctiveness.

Would proposals create a well-defined public realm and high-quality place that is attractive, safe and functions well. Would a positive contribution to urban design objectives including continuity and enclosure, permeability and legibility be made? Have existing trees and natural features been retained and street trees introduced where possible? Does the scheme have appropriate and effective landscaping? (RLP CC7, CR2, CR3 and EN14, NPPF Paragraphs 135 and 136, NDG);

- 5.12 Compatible with good urban design principles, the orientation of the building, and their placement, provides continuous frontages to the new urban block. This would improve the permeability of the area. The legibility of the existing route via Norman Place to the river would be considerably enhanced by the building form, its set back, providing improved width and visibility. The amended design and the materials of the building at the junction which would enhance legibility.
- 5.13 A variety of entrances and windows would provide activity and natural surveillance helping to foster a sense of ownership and perception of safety. Set backs and planting provide a threshold to ground level residential units and reinforce the definition of public and private space.

- 5.14 The amended scheme would introduce a new area of well-designed public realm along the river frontage. The area incorporates seating and would be activated by ground level uses and entrances and overlooked by residential development on the upper floors.
- 5.15 Along Vastern Road, the landscaped public realm would provide an attractive setting for the building and two new street trees would reinforce and enhance the character of the street. Existing trees have been retained where possible and replacement and additional trees planted within the scheme.
- 5.16 The design of the landscape and public realm would be of very high quality and is considered to be both appropriate and effective in integrating the development within the local townscape.

Would development be sensitive to nearby open spaces and waterspaces with no adverse effect on the setting, character and appearance of the River Thames as a major landscape feature? Would the relationship of buildings and spaces to the watercourse be enhanced having regard to distinct character, views and public realm (RLP EN7, EN11 and EN13);

- 5.17 The development is in a location where there is an existing urban setting to the River Thames along its southern bank. The amended scheme is compatible with that existing urban setting and would enhance the relationship to the river in a number of ways.
- 5.18 It has responded sensitively and positively to its setting by providing an area of publicly accessible space with seating, public art and additional tree and other planting that would increase the extent of trees and greenery along the frontage and reinforce the verdant character along the river. In addition, the building forms step down to four and five storeys on the frontage to the River responding sympathetically to the scale of adjacent buildings. The refined articulation of the massing with the widened podium and chamfered form provides greater variation in massing and sense of space viewed from the north.
- 5.19 The updated visual assessment has confirmed that the amended would have a beneficial effect on views from along the River and from adjacent open spaces.

The proposal is of high architectural design quality? Is the scheme attractive? Has consideration been given to the relevant requirements local and/or national design guidance? Has the design evolved as a result of effective engagement? (RLP policy CR2; NPPF Paragraphs 131, 135, 137 and 139)

- 5.20 The amendments to the scheme further improve the architectural design which is well-designed and would comply with the relevant requirements of the National Design Guide. As set out in the DAS it has evolved as a result of engagement with key stakeholders with further changes through officer comments during the determination period.
- 5.21 The amended design would respond sympathetically to its context, stepping down further in height and breaking up the massing on the river frontage and along Norman Place, defining streets and pedestrian routes with active frontages and locating the tallest elements on Vastern Road, reinforcing legibility.

- 5.22 Further steps in the massing have been introduced and these would combine with the chamfer to successfully break up the massing into distinct elements, reinforced by the variation in the architectural design and materials.
- 5.23 The vertical arrangement of the fenestration and the updated detailing of the facades, including bands and the grouping of windows creates balanced and well-proportioned elevations. The grouping of windows breaks down the elevations and reduces the apparent scale on the tallest buildings.
- 5.24 The use of white and grey brick reflects the colours and tones of materials in the context and is appropriate to Reading. The detailing has drawn reference from River, introducing curved and undulating motifs that have been refined to add further texture, modelling and express the hierarchy of the facades. These combine together to create a highly distinctive building that is appropriate for its context.
- 5.25 The variety of materials and tones break up the elevations, their application – in conjunction with expressed breaks along the frontages – providing an improved articulation of the building's form as a series of distinct elements, particularly along Norman Place. The contrast and interest created by the use of green coloured concrete, the circular columns and glazing clearly define the base, taking cues from the wider landscape. The middle of the building is well composed with a balance of horizontal and vertical elements and modelling provided by reveals and the decorative brickwork. The tops of the buildings are subtle, appropriate to the scale of the development, with banding defining the parapet on taller elements and by railings adjacent to the River.
- 5.26 Overall, the amended design would be distinctive and positively reinforce the sense of place.

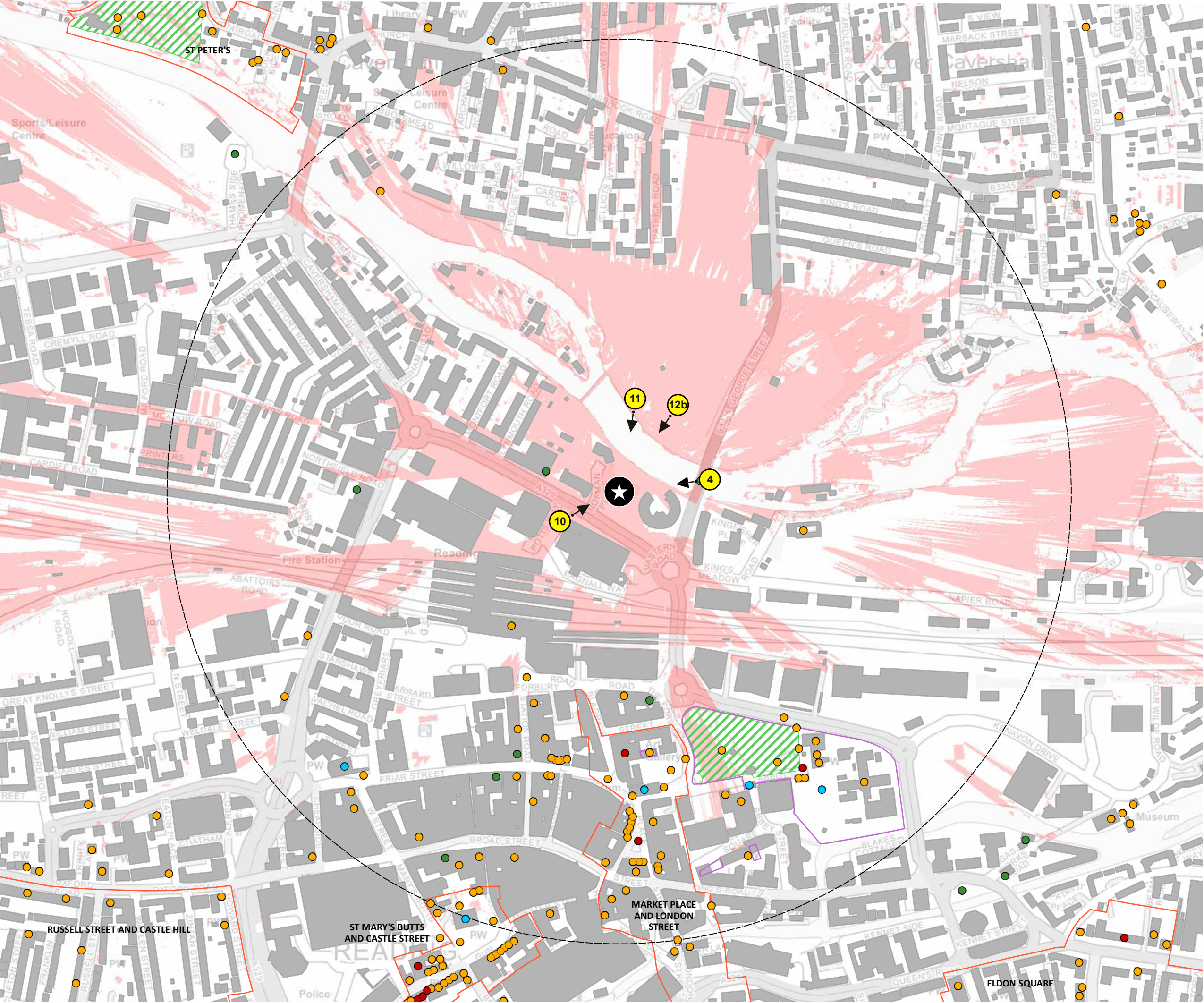
Does the proposal optimise the use of land? (RLP policy CR2 and H2; NPPF Paragraph 124, 135).

- 5.27 The addendum assessment has found that development of the scale and form proposed can be comfortably accommodated without any adverse townscape or visual effects. The massing has been further refined through engagement with officers and the Design Review Panel and in that context, is considered to have been optimised in townscape and visual terms.

Conclusion

- 5.28 The Townscape and Visual Addendum has considered the effects of the amended scheme on the townscape of the site and surrounding area. It has been found that the scheme is acceptable in townscape and visual terms and complies with the relevant planning policy context.

Appendix 1
Visualisations



Key

Site Location



View location



ZTV Key



Proposed development visible

Heritage Assets:



Conservation Area



Registered Park & Garden



Scheduled Ancient Monument



Statutorily Listed Building: Grade I



Statutorily Listed Building: Grade II*



Statutorily Listed Building: Grade II



Locally Listed Buildings

LICHFIELDS

Project Waterfront Square

Title Zone of Theoretical Visibility with Viewpoint Overlay (750m)

Client Packaged Living (London)

Date 15.10.25

Scale NTS

Drawn by CS

Drg. No. IL67133/02-010 rev0

© Ordnance Survey 2023



LF67133/02

View 4: Existing



View 4: Proposed



View 10: Existing



View 10: Proposed



Placeholder - to be updated with fully rendered AVR

View 10: Proposed



View 11: Existing



View 11: Proposed



Placeholder - to be updated with fully rendered AVR

View 11: Proposed



CGI (produced by Assael) provided for indicative purposes pending update to AVR

View 12b: Existing



View 12b: Proposed (illustrative - non verified)



