

SUPPORTING PLANNING STATEMENT

YEOMANRY HOUSE, 131 CASTLE HILL, READING

The conversion of the former Council offices of the Registry and Bereavement Service to 8 residential dwellings (5 apartments and 3 houses), associated tree works, internal and external alterations, repair works, removal of existing external staircase and extension to the eastern side of the Grade II Listed Property.

Prepared by:

Woolf Bond Planning Ltd

WBP REF: 9133

March 2026



Woolf Bond Planning
Chartered Town Planning Consultants

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	Page 1
2. THE PROPOSAL	Page 3
3. PLANNING HISTORY	Page 9
4. HERITAGE MATTERS	Page 10
5. DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICY	Page 14
6. MAIN ISSUES	Page 20
7. CONCLUSIONS AND PLANNING BALANCE	Page 29

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. This Statement has been prepared by Woolf Bond Planning Ltd in support of a joint Listed Building Consent and planning application at Yeomanry House, 131 Castle Hill, Reading. The application proposals the conversion of the former Council offices used by the Registry and bereavement Service to 8 dwellings (5 no. apartments and 3 no. houses). The specific description of development is as follows:

The conversion of the former Council offices of the Registry and Bereavement Service to 8 residential dwellings (5 apartments and 3 houses), associated tree works, internal and external alterations, repair works, removal of existing external staircase and extension to the eastern side of the Grade II Listed Property.

- 1.2. As Yeomanry House is also a Grade II Listed Building, this Planning Statement also covers the relevant matters for this element of the scheme. The proposed conversion includes sensitive internal and external alterations to the buildings, including provision of landscaping and other works which contribute towards enhancements to the setting of the building.
- 1.3. The site comprises offices which were operated by the Borough Council for Registry and Bereavement Service and storage uses. Whilst permission was granted for conversion of Yeomanry House to a Children's Nursery in 2022, this has subsequently expired.
- 1.4. As indicated in this Statement, the site forms the majority of that identified in the Local Plan as an allocation under reference WR3e. The allocation of the site in the Local Plan indicates that a variety of uses, including residential use could be provided. This is explored further in the statement.
- 1.5. The site lies within an established residential area, with the Berkshire Archives Office immediately to the southwest. Castle Hill which forms the northern boundary to the site is part of the Borough's classified highway network and is listed as the A4155 which forms a main arterial route into Reading from the west (from M4 Junction 12).
- 1.6. The site has an existing access which is shared with the records office with parking currently provided to the north and south of the existing building.

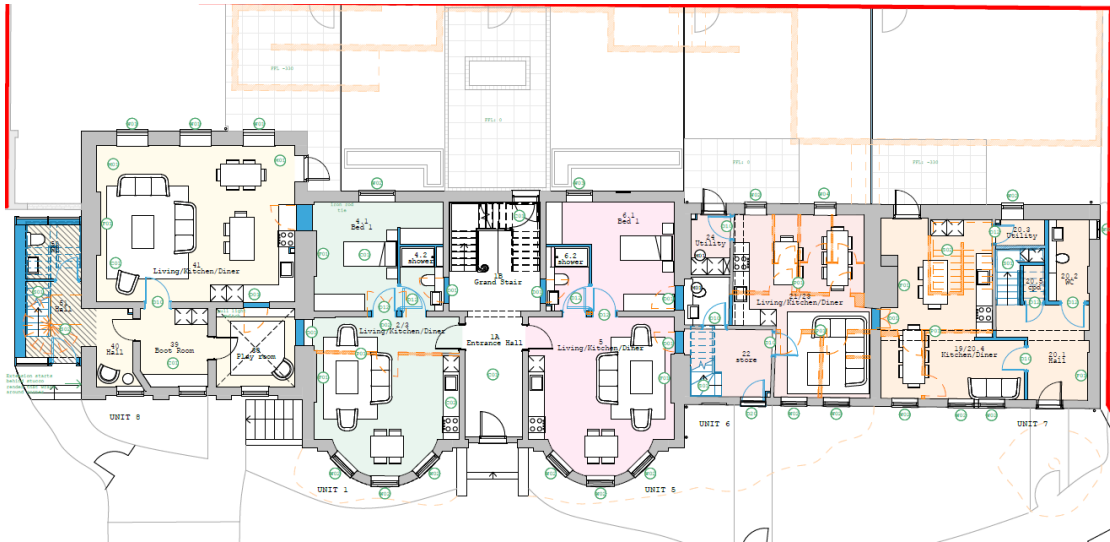
- 1.7. The extent of the site and its relationship with other buildings is illustrated on the aerial photo, below.



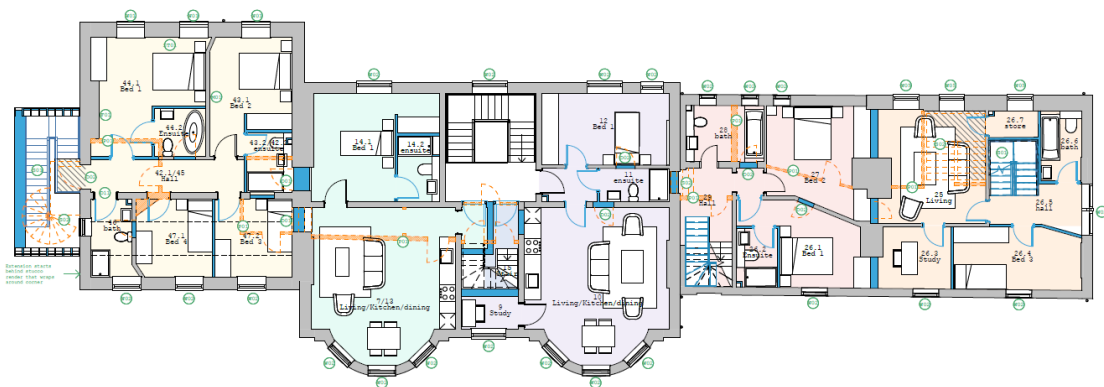
Aerial Image of the site (approximate boundary in red) (Source: Design & Access Statement)

2. THE PROPOSAL

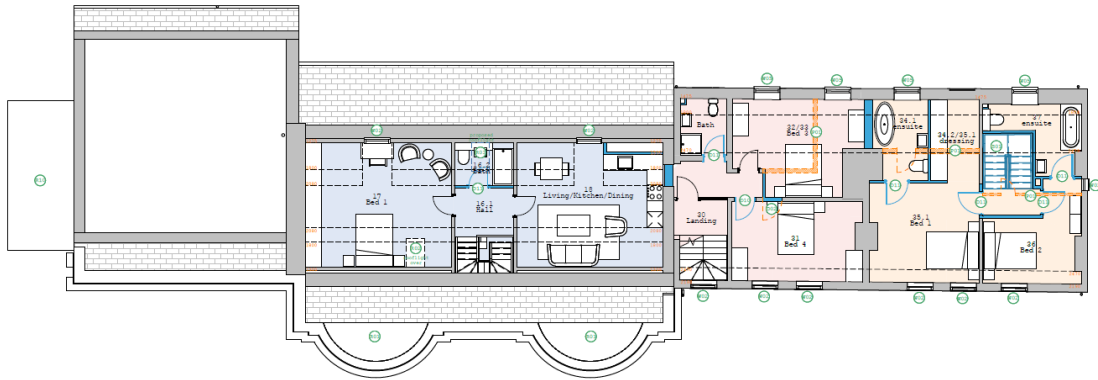
- 2.1. The proposals for the redevelopment of the site reflect the policies contained within the existing Local Plan which includes the site as an allocation (site reference WR3e) for which residential is one of the potential uses identified as being appropriate. The proposed conversion of the building enables the productive use of this heritage asset alongside increasing housing provision, in a sustainable location.
- 2.2. As outlined, the proposal entails the conversion of the former Council offices into 8 dwellings, (5 no. apartments and 3 no. houses). The proposed ground, first and second floor layouts are shown below. The houses are in the eastern and western wings with the apartments in the central part of the building, around the original staircase.



Proposed Ground Floor



Proposed First Floor



Proposed Second Floor Plan



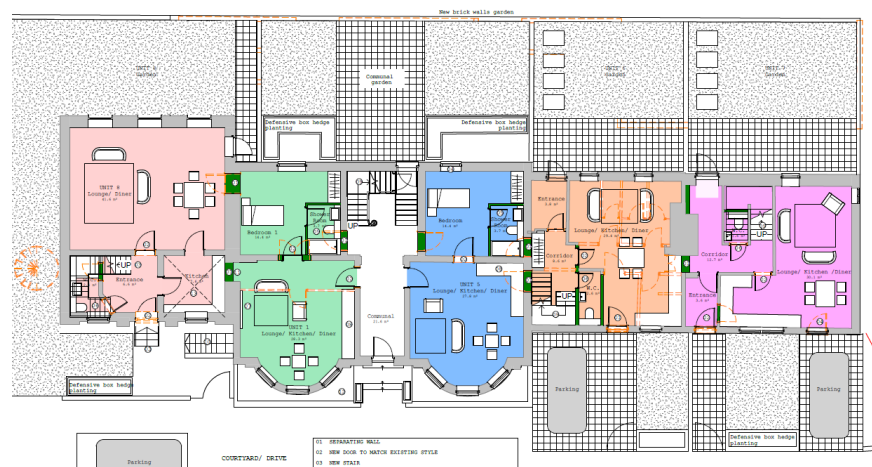
Illustrative View

- 2.3. As indicated in the elevational drawings alongside the floor plans, the scheme entails the removal of the existing external emergency spiral staircase at the eastern end of the building and its replacement with a modern addition which includes the stairs to access the proposed house at this end of the building. The design and materials for the proposed staircase are explored further in the Design & Access Statement together with the Heritage Statement.

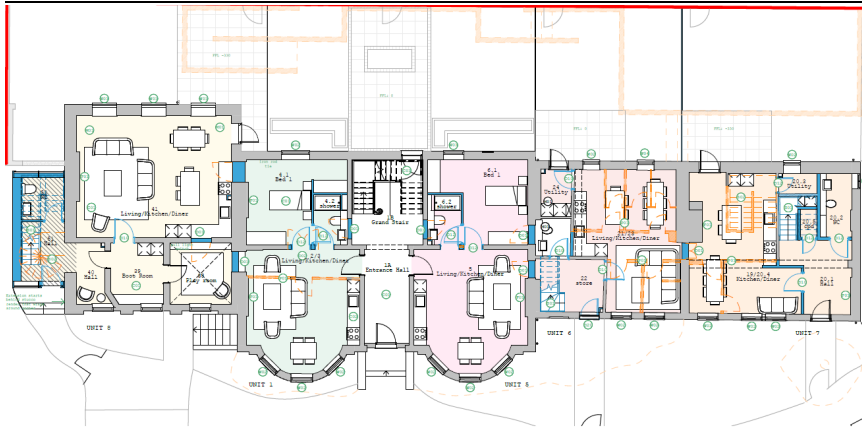
Evolution of the proposals

- 2.4. As indicated in the accompanying Design & Access Statement, the applicant engaged in pre-application discussions with the Council prior to the submission of this application.
- 2.5. The earlier submissions at pre-application stage like the current proposal had envisaged the conversion of the former Council officers to 8 dwellings, of which 5 were apartments and 3 were houses. The scheme as now submitted has had regard to the feedback received through the process which has resulted in refinements to the internal layout together with the landscaping and associated parking areas.
- 2.6. The specific changes between the pre-application submission and that now envisaged are outlined below but are primarily as a result of the advice with respect to how the scheme can be refined to minimise the internal and external alterations to the building to retain the important features which contribute to its heritage value.

Revisions to ground floor



Pre-application submission for ground floor

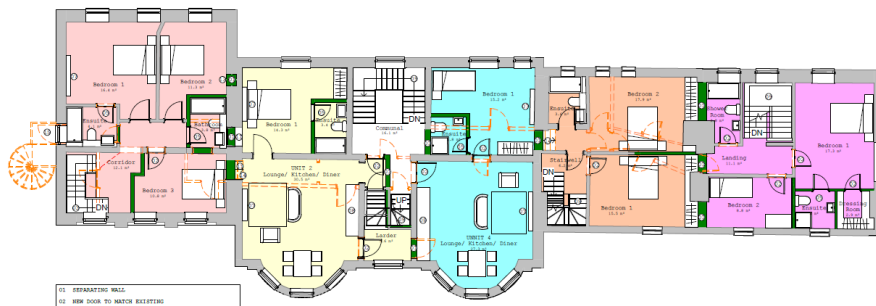


Application scheme for ground floor

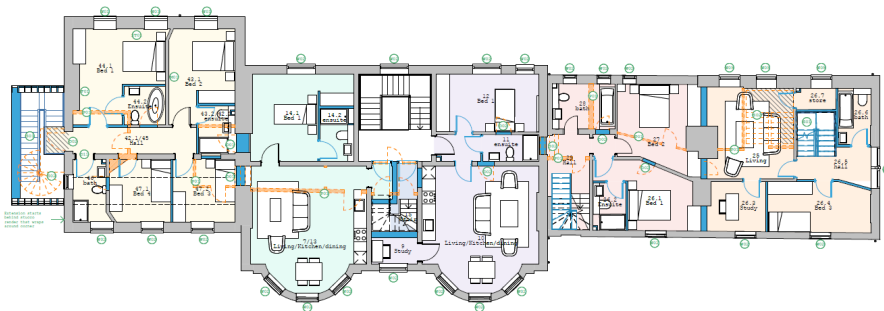
- 2.7. The changes in the scheme from that envisaged in the pre-app submission include:
- a) Provision of staircase for the dwelling in the eastern part of the building as an extension rather than through internal works. The new staircase replaces the existing external metal spiral emergency stairs.
 - b) Removal of the parking areas adjoining the northern wall and replacement with landscaping. Parking to be provided in reconfigured external hardstanding area to north of building.
 - c) Associated with the refinement of the parking provision, the internal arrangement of the two houses proposed in the western wing of the building has been made. The entrance door for both dwellings has been switched from the southern to northern sides of the building.
 - d) Refinement to the landscaping scheme proposed to the south of the building, especially with respect to the proposed dwelling in the eastern wing. The refinement of the landscaping strategy together with the reorientation of the dwellings in the western wing now ensure that the private amenity areas for the proposed houses in the conversion are located on the southern side. This increases the extent of natural light.
 - e) The revised internal arrangement of the house at the most western part of the building also includes refinement of the staircase.

Revisions to the first floor

- 2.8. As the extracts of the plans below indicate, the main changes are a direct consequence of the changed solution for providing the staircase from the ground floor, especially with respect to the houses proposed in the eastern and western parts of the building.



Pre-application submission first floor



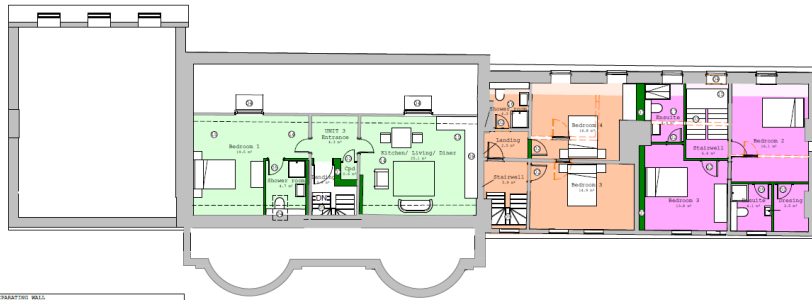
Application scheme for first floor

- 2.9. Alongside the changes to first floor which arise from the inclusion of an alternative solution for the staircases in the eastern and western parts of the building, there is also an adjustment to the internal layout and access arrangements to the proposed apartment to the west of the existing stairwell. This is through the re-use of the existing doorway rather than the creation of a new doorway as had been advanced. This refinement therefore reduces the extent of change to the building from the layout of the existing building.
- 2.10. Alongside the refinement to the access arrangements to the proposed apartment west of the existing stairwell, this application indicates that the “front door” to the second floor flat is provided on the first rather than second floor.

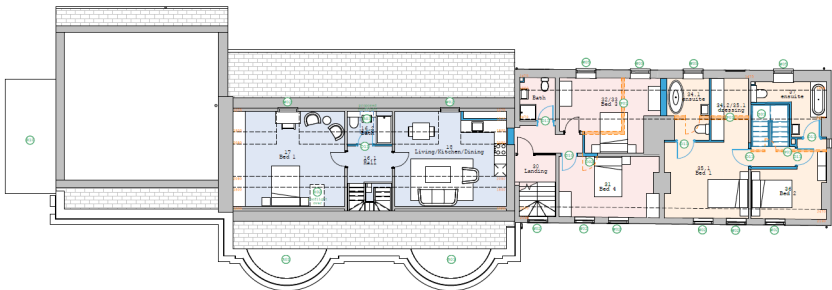
Revisions to second floor

- 2.11. As with the analysis concerning the refinements to the ground and first floors, the statement also details those amendments in the scheme at second floor level compared to that advanced in the pre-application submission. As the extracts of the plans below indicate, the main changes are a direct consequence of the changed

solution for providing the staircase from the ground floor, especially with respect to the houses proposed in the eastern and western parts of the building.



Pre-application submission second floor

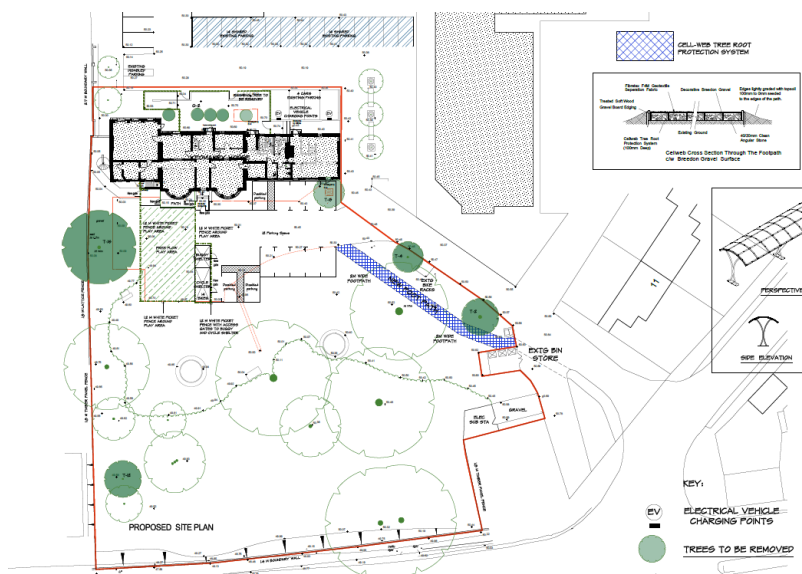


Application scheme for second floor

- 2.12. The analysis of the refinements to the layout on the first floor noted that the “front door” to the top floor apartment has been moved to that level. This has enabled a reconfiguration of the second floor apartment, especially enlarging the living accommodation area.
- 2.13. The Design & Access Statement also outlines how the materials palette further contributes towards minimising any impact upon the setting of the Listed Building together with the wider Castle Hill Conservation Area. It is therefore consistent with the philosophy outlined in Local Plan Policy EN3.

3. PLANNING HISTORY

- 3.1. The site is subject to limited planning history. The main scheme of relevance is the approved conversion of the former Council offices (operating as a registry office) to a children's nursery (LPA ref 190629) with the associated Listed Building consent (LPA ref 190722). These applications were approved on 16th May 2022. The site plan approved for the conversion to children's nursery application is shown below. The permission was not implemented and has now expired.



Extract from Approved Site Plan

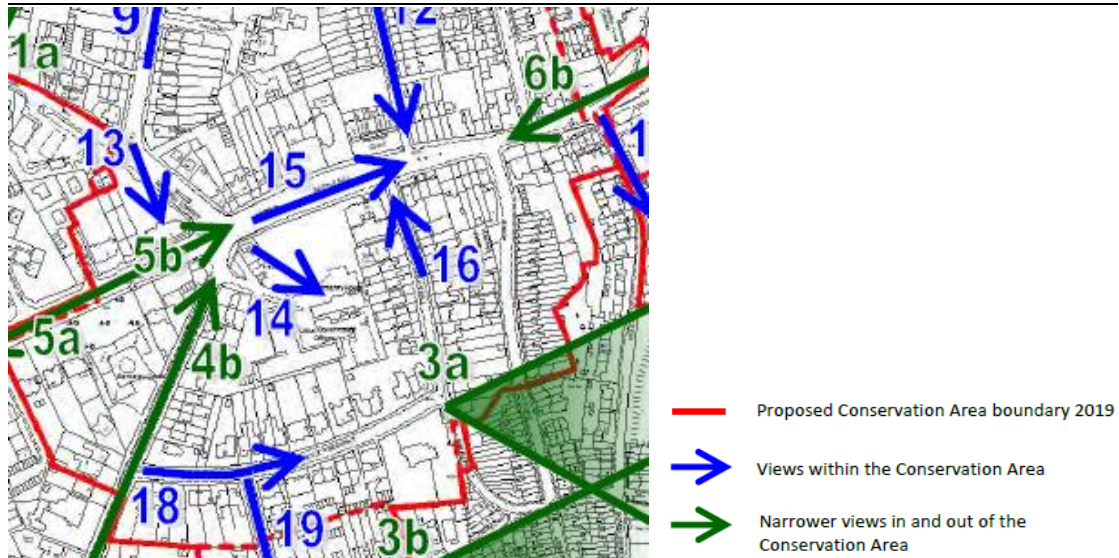
- 3.2. Although the permission for conversion of the former Council offices has expired, it nonetheless provides a context for this scheme, especially with respect of how any alterations would be considered, especially with respect to hard and soft landscaping and the impacts of these on the setting of the Listed Building together with the wider Russell Street / Castle Hill Conservation Area, which includes the site.

4. HERITAGE MATTERS

- 4.1. As Yeomanry House is a Grade II Listed building within a Conservation Area, alongside the detailed consideration of heritage matters is set out in the accompanying Heritage Report.
- 4.2. Whilst a copy of the listing of Yeomanry House is included in the Heritage Statement, of copy of the official list entry is provided below.

Known as Castle Hill house. Early C19 with modern extensions and adjoining buildings. Original front 2 storeys, stucco with moulded cornice and balustrade carried right across. Slate roof. Wide central 6 panel door flanked by rusticated side panels, in recessed arch with key pattern ornament to door head; wide radiating fanlight. Glazing bar sash windows, 1 over door, flanking full height segmental bows with 3 windows each. Wing to left handy 2 storeys, 3 windows, ground floor windows in arched recesses. 3 storey later (late C19) wing to right.

- 4.3. Yeomanry House was included as a Listed Building on 14th December 1978 and its reference is 1321962.
- 4.4. The site also lies within the Russell Street / Castle Hill Conservation Area. This was originally designated in 2004 with revised agreed in 2019. Yeomanry House has been consistently within the Conservation Area.
- 4.5. A Conservation Area Appraisal (CAA) was prepared in March 2020. Where this specifically references Yeomanry House, these are referenced in this section of the Planning Statement.
- 4.6. The CAA Appraisal highlights the importance of the views from Coley Avenue of the north elevation (principal) of Yeomanry House (View 14 as indicated below) with this followed by the specific guidance for the building in this document.



Extract of Figure 4.2.1 of the Conservation Area Appraisal



Figure 4.3.5 The historical, open front garden space in front of Yeomanry House (Karen Rowland)



Figure 6.1.6 Yeomanry House at 131 Castle Hill - house, front drive and garden, (Karen Rowland)

- 4.7. The specific qualities of Yeomanry House are referred to within the CAA. This includes at page 34, which indicates:

The front garden of Yeomanry House is part of the site recently sold and changed into a nursery. It is noted in the 2004 appraisal as a much-needed green space for the area which at the time was publically accessible, although never an official “public open

space". The garden is important to retain in terms of its historical relationship to Yeomanry's House's original layout.

- 4.8. The CAA continues its references to Yeomanry House on page 46. This confirms:

Yeomanry House, Grade II, and its associated gatehouse, at 131 and 133 Castle Hill comprise the most significant remaining example of the grand houses built at the junction of Castle Hill, Russell Street and Coley Avenue for the wealthy and prominent businessmen of Reading. It exemplifies the layout of these properties with its c.1840 gatehouse and large front garden facing directly onto Castle Hill. The footprint of its original drive is still in situ. The gatehouse is notable for its early and extensive use of salmon-coloured brick.

The modern, purpose-built Berkshire Record Office was built on the site of the Berkshire Yeomanry's Riding School (built 1911). The Record Office's minimalist design, appropriate massing and footprint allows it to fit well within its setting.

- 4.9. The CAA (page 52) indicates that amongst the positive characteristics / features in the defined area is **"Yeomanry House with its original footprint of front garden, drive and gatehouse."**

- 4.10. The Conservation Area Appraisal continues (page 126) by indicating:

On the streets south of the Castlehill House on the eastern side of Coley Hill are further evidence of that early development. Castle Crescent also saw the building of several large homes in the 1830s and 1840s. Yeomanry House, early 19th century, is the finest remaining example of the grand houses surrounded by large gardens built for the wealthy and prominent businessmen of Reading.

- 4.11. Page 127 of the CAA further references Yeomanry House. This states:

Archaeological investigation around Yeomanry House, known during part of the 19th century as Castlehill House, identified several ditches and discrete post-medieval features. These ditches could have been related to the documented nursery and market gardening on the site prior to the building as shown on Coates' map of 1802 or they may be military defensive ditches.

- 4.12. Page 132 of the CAA includes a site plan which had been retrieved from the Records Office. This is shown below.

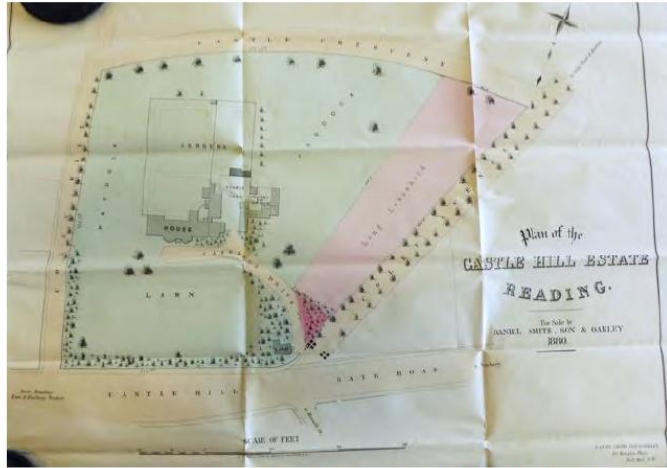


Figure A1.11 The Yeomanry House site map for its sale in 1880 (Berkshire Record Office)

- 4.13. The CAA clearly references the value of Yeomanry House and especially the gardens to its north (front) which provide connections and illustrate its history as one of the grand houses surrounded grounds. As detailed in the Planning Statement and associated technical reports, this has informed the application, together with how these matters also influenced the layout.
- 4.14. As section 2 of this statement indicates, the external layout of the scheme has been refined from that envisaged in the pre-application proposal to increase the separation of vehicular parking from Yeomanry House and the wider reconfiguration of the parking area to contribute towards the “grand house in a garden” setting as referenced in the CAA.
- 4.15. The scheme’s impact upon the listed building is detailed further in the Heritage Impact Assessment. This concludes that the proposed works would result in an overall beneficial effect on the heritage asset.

5. DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICY

5.1. It is well established planning law that the development plan is to be read as a whole. Furthermore, when considering a plan in its entirety, there will be instances where there are either conflicting statements / policies or policies pulling in different directions. The Courts have expressed this issue in the follow passages.

5.2. In *R. v Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council, ex parte Milne* [2000] EWHC 650 (Admin) paragraph 48 stated:

“48. It is not at all unusual for development plan policies to pull in different directions.

A proposed development may be in accord with development plan policies which, for example, encourage development for employment purposes, and yet be contrary to policies which seek to protect open countryside. In such cases there may be no clear cut answer to the question: “is this proposal in accordance with the plan?” The local planning authority has to make a judgment bearing in mind such factors as the importance of the policies which are complied with or infringed, and the extent of compliance or breach. ...”.

5.3. The observations to this effect were made by Lord Clyde in *City of Edinburgh Council v Secretary of State for Scotland* [1997] 1 W.L.R. 1447 (at p.1459D-F):

“... [The decision-maker] will ... have to consider whether the development proposed in the application before him does or does not accord with the development plan. There may be some points in the plan which support the proposal but there may be some considerations pointing in the opposite direction. He will require to assess all of these and then decide whether in the light of the whole plan the proposal does or does not accord with it. ...”.

5.4. Sullivan J. in *R. v Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council* went on to say (in paragraphs 49 to 51):

“49. In the light of that decision I regard as untenable the proposition that if there is a breach of any one policy in a development plan a proposed development cannot be said to be “in accordance with the plan”. Given the numerous conflicting interests that development plans seek to reconcile: the needs for more housing, more employment, more leisure and recreational facilities, for improved transport facilities, the protection of listed buildings and attractive landscapes etc., it would be difficult to find any project of any significance that was wholly in accord with every relevant policy in the development plan. Numerous applications would

have to be referred to the Secretary of State as departures from the development plan because one or a few minor policies were infringed, even though the proposal was in accordance with the overall thrust of development plan policies.

50. For the purposes of section 54A it is enough that the proposal accords with the development plan considered as a whole. It does not have to accord with each and every policy therein.

51. ... I accept that the terms of the policy – how firmly it favours or sets its face against ... the proposed development [–] is a relevant factor, so too are the relative importance of the policy to the overall objectives of the development plan and the extent of the breach. These are essentially matters for the judgement of the local planning authority. A legalistic approach to the interpretation of development plan policies is to be avoided”

- 5.5. The policies of the Local Plan and their application need to be considered in this way. It is therefore important not to look at the individual policies in isolation to one another.
- 5.6. In considering this context, the following policies of the Adopted Reading Borough Local Plan (November 2019), the following are considered to be relevant for the application.

Policy	Title
CC1	Presumption in favour of Sustainable Development
CC2	Sustainable Design & Construction
CC3	Adaptation to Climate Change
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
EN6	Development in a Historic Context
EN9	Provision of Open Space
EN12	Biodiversity and the Green Network
EN14	Trees, Hedges and Woodlands
EN15	Air Quality
EM3	Loss of Employment Land

Policy	Title
H1	Provision of Housing
H2	Density and Mix
H3	Affordable Housing
H5	Standards for New Housing
H10	Private and Communal Outdoor Space
TR3	Access, Traffic and Highway Related Matters
TR4	Cycle Routes and Facilities
TR5	Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging
WR3	Other sites for development in West Reading and Tilehurst (including at WR3e – Yeomanry House)

- 5.7. As noted in the above list, the site is formally allocated under reference WR3e. This indicates that the following is envisaged:

YEOMANRY HOUSE, CASTLE HILL

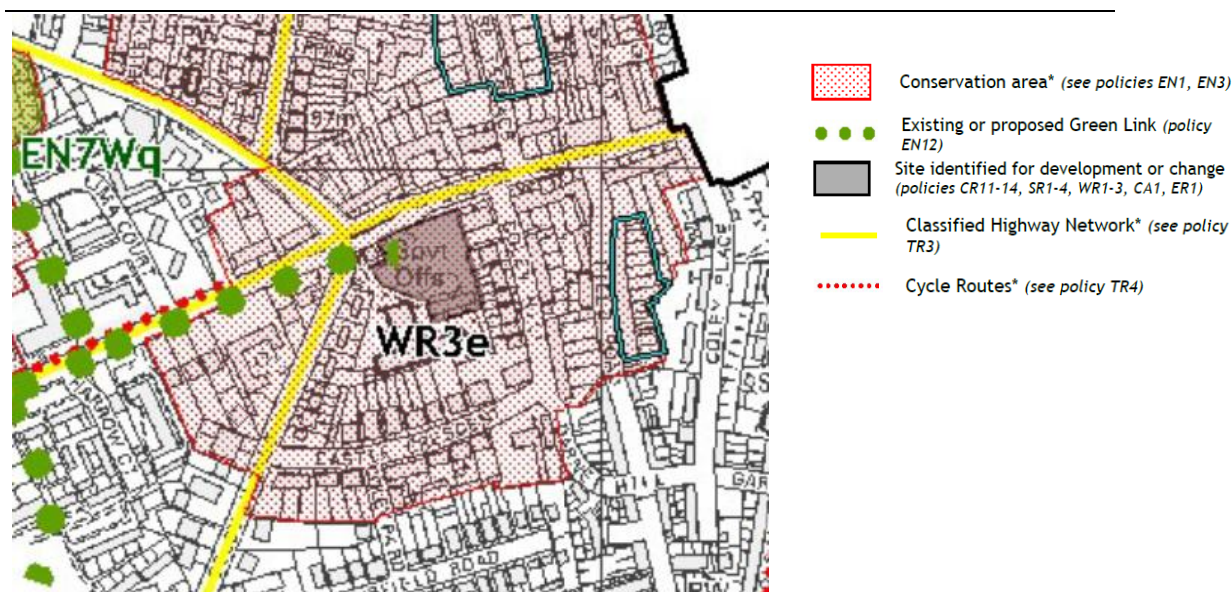
Change of use of listed building to residential use or to potential office or restaurant use.

Development should:

- **Avoid detrimental effects on the significance of the listed building and the Conservation Area;**
- **Address noise impacts on residential use;**
- **Address air quality impacts on residential use; and**
- **Retain the lawn and wooded frontage to Castle Hill as a key part of the setting of the building and conservation area.**

Site size: 0.44 ha 10-14 dwellings

- 5.8. Whilst the Local Plan indicates that between 10 and 14 dwellings could be accommodated on the site, the scheme includes the provision of 8 dwellings. This is considered appropriate as detailed in the technical reports submitted, including the need to ensure that the internal features and layout of Yeomanry House inform the principles and approach to the reconfiguration. This is further supported through the scheme's ability to introduce family sized dwellings this is rarely provided this close to the town centre.
- 5.9. The extent of the allocation in the Local Plan associated with reference WR3e is shown below, which also shows its relationship to the Conservation Area.



Extract from Planning Policy Map (Map Ref D)

- 5.10. As noted in section 3, since the Local Plan was adopted (November 2019), the Council has granted planning permission for the conversion of Yeomanry House to a Children's Day Nursery¹.
- 5.11. The Council has commenced work on an update to its Local Plan. This was submitted for Examination on 9th May 2025. As the permission for conversion to nursery was extant² during the preparation of the emerging Local Plan Update and consequently regarded as deliverable for this alternative use, the allocation of the site for the variety of uses as indicated in WR3e has not been carried forward into the now submitted document.
- 5.12. A response to the relevant development plan policy considerations is detailed in later sections of this statement.

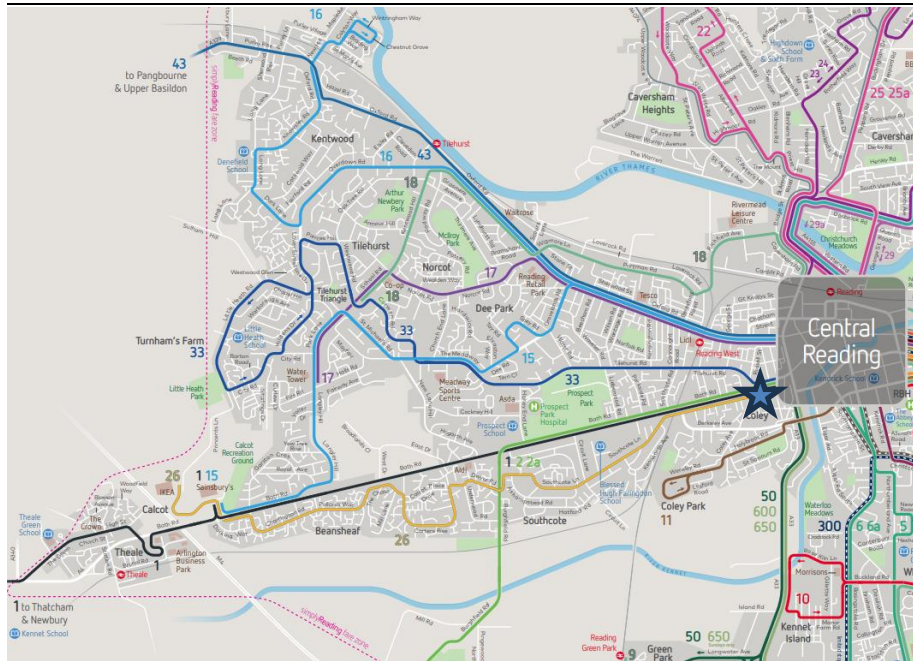
National Planning Policy Framework

- 5.13. The National Planning Policy Framework ("NPPF") is a relevant material consideration in assessing the application.

¹ Application ref 190629 for conversion to day nursery granted 16th May 2022 with the corresponding Listed Building works specifically approved in application 190722.

² Until May 2025

-
- 5.14. Paragraph 61 is clear that the Government's objective is to significantly boost the supply of homes, and in doing so, that the needs of groups with specific housing requirements are addressed. The standard methodology for assessing housing need, determines the minimum number of new homes needed. The housing need figure is not therefore a maximum, or ceiling figure, for the number of new homes required.
- 5.15. Paragraph 62 addresses how LPA's should determine the minimum number of homes needed.
- 5.16. Paragraphs 110 and 115 address sustainable locations and sustainable modes of transport.
- 5.17. The site is sustainably located within walking distance of a range of services and facilities including but not limited to:
- Extensive facilities in Reading town centre
 - Public transport options along Castle Hill, Bath Road and Tilehurst Road.
- 5.18. Bus services are available from around 100m of the site entrance from the stops on Castle Hill, Bath Road and Tilehurst Road. From the bus stops, frequent services are available into the centre of Reading, including direct to the railway station together with destinations on the edge of town towards Calcot and Tilehurst, using routes 1, 2, 2a, 26 and 33. These routes are shown on the extract of the map below and collectively provide around frequent regular services.
- 5.19. Whilst details of the bus services are outlined in the accompanying Transport Statement, the site's location on the network is illustrated on the extract of the route map below.



Extract of the Reading Bus Network with application site shown by asterisk

- 5.20. With the range of services and facilities accessible via means other than the private car, it is clear than the proposal meets the requirements of paragraph 110 of the NPPF.
- 5.21. Additionally, the submitted suite of plans show how safe access for all users can be achieved as part of these proposals, with policy compliant levels of parking and cycle storage facilitated on-site. Given the minor nature of the proposal, it is not considered that the development will give rise to any adverse impacts upon the wider highway network. The proposal therefore complies with paragraph 115 of the NPPF.
- 5.22. The scheme has been prepared in the context of the heritage value of the site, including its Grade II status within a Conservation Area. The scheme as demonstrated through the technical reports entails an overall beneficial impact upon the listed building.
- 5.23. Finally, it is noted that the site has been acknowledged as appropriate for a redevelopment comprising between 10 and 14 dwellings through its direct allocation in the existing Local Plan.

6. MAIN ISSUES

- 6.1. This section now considers the main issues relating to the proposal, including with appropriate regard to national and local planning policy and the site's planning history.
- 6.2. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 indicates that determination must be made in accordance with the relevant development plan(s) unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 6.3. The earlier sections of this statement summarised the key matters for the development of the site. Of particular importance is its inclusion as an allocation under site reference WR3e for between 10 and 14 dwellings, recognising that this application envisages 8 dwellings. The site's status as a Grade II Listed Building together with its inclusion in a Conservation Area are important matters for the application. Nonetheless, for the reasons detailed, given the scheme entails the sensitive conversion and refurbishment of a Grade II Listed Building, and reflects the objectives outlined in the site specific requirements of the policy, it should be approved at the earliest opportunity, consistent with the thrust and approach of the NPPF.
- 6.4. The site falls within the identified west Reading urban area, which is itself identified as a Sustainable Growth Area. An integral part of the provision of homes in west Reading is the inclusion of the site as a specific allocation for between 10 and 14 dwellings under Reference WR3e in Policy WR3. Although the proposed quantum of development is below that envisaged in the allocation, the scheme has been carefully designed to enable the retention and effective use of the Grade II Listed Yeomanry House whilst reflecting its importance as a heritage asset, thereby reflecting the expectations for the allocation as explained in the Local Plan. The sympathetic internal alterations alongside the landscaping works whilst providing 8 dwellings ensure that less than substantial (if any) harm occurs to both the Listed Building and the wider setting of the Conservation Area.
- 6.5. Based on the forgoing (and its specific site allocation), the proposed development must be considered acceptable in principle in this location (as confirmed at pre-app. stage).

Pre-App Stage

6.6. As mentioned in section 2, the scheme has been subject to a detailed pre-application exercise including 2 meetings and a written response. In addition, amendments were made to the scheme during the pre-app. process. The pre-app process established a number of key points:

- The building's change of use to residential is acceptable in principle, subject to addressing conservation comments.
- There is support for the overall design intent which seeks to create dwellings within the different vertical sections of the building.
- The information presented appears to be responding positively to the matters raised and the change of use to residential use offers high potential to enable the optimum viable use of the building.
- The provision of a modern glazed structure extension would be an acceptable approach and would form a new modern element without dominating or detrimentally affecting the significance of the heritage asset.
- Some additional parking areas should be replaced with additional landscaping.
- The scheme is acceptable in relation to housing mix.
- The provision of communal amenity space and private areas are acceptable.
- The scheme would not have undue negative impacts upon neighbouring properties.
- There is not a requirement to provide a footway that links to Coley Avenue for heritage reasons.
- No further archaeological investigation is required.
- If affordable housing cannot be provided in a viable manner, a viability assessment will be necessary.

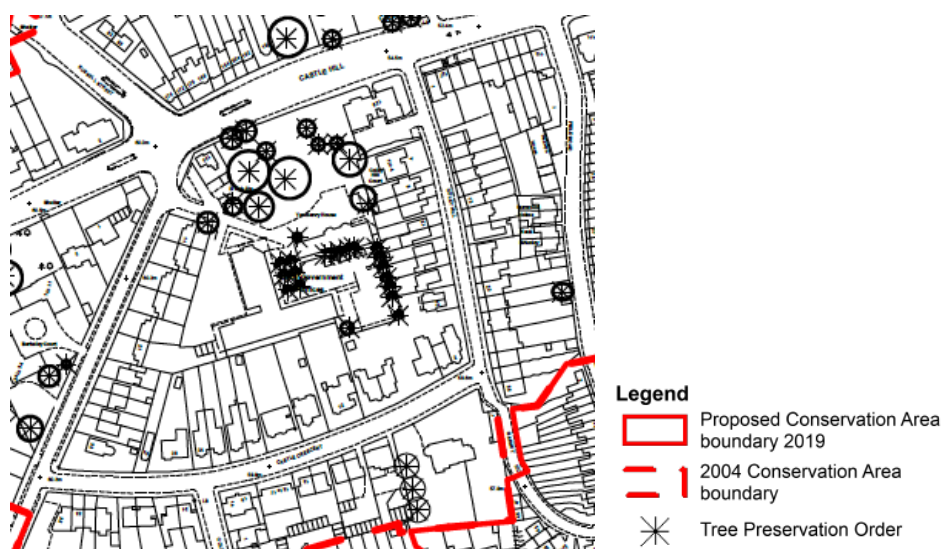
6.7. Overall, the scheme has been subject to a thorough pre-app process and it is anticipated that the scheme could be supported given it comprehensively responds to that process.

Trees and Landscaping

6.8. In relation to landscape considerations, the site is generally visually well-contained from public views. Whilst the CAA reference a key view across the site (no. 14), this is retained and enhanced albeit such views would primarily be accessible to the residents

of the scheme. Where glimpses are provided through the existing vegetation (subject to the seasons and the extent trees/shrubs are in leaf) along Castle Hill of the site, the reconfiguration of the car park with improved landscaping between enhances the ability to recognise and interpret its history as one of the grand houses with extensive grounds as emphasised in the CAA.

- 6.9. Notwithstanding this, the well vegetated site boundaries and surrounding built form limit views of the site to the relative immediate surroundings.
- 6.10. As the site lies in a Conservation Area, the trees are protected, although as indicated in the CAA, several are subject to TPO. An extract of the CAA which illustrates those trees covered by a TPO, notwithstanding their protection is ensured given that they are within the Conservation Area is shown below.



Extract from Figure 4.3.1 of the Conservation Area Appraisal

- 6.11. As confirmed in the Arboricultural Impact Assessment, the vast majority of trees on the site are retained as part of this scheme. The few trees that are to be removed can be replaced and are of low value.

Ecological Considerations

- 6.12. The scheme is supported by a comprehensive Ecological Assessment, that confirms the site has low ecological value and no further surveys are required. The scheme's BNG impact has been established and limited mitigation can be secured through the standard BNG condition.

Accessibility Considerations

- 6.13. As discussed above, the site is in an accessible location, within walking distance to a number of services, facilities and public transport options. As detailed in the Transport Statement, appropriate parking provision is secured. The proposal is therefore in an accessible location in accordance with Policy TR3 of the Local Plan and paragraphs 110, 115 and 116 of the NPPF.

Highway Considerations

- 6.14. The existing access onto Coley Avenue will be retained and will serve the scheme through the existing driveway which services both Yeomanry House and the Berkshire Records office. The driveway and parking area north of Yeomanry House (front) is to be (moderately) reconfigured. The overall parking provision is commensurate with the site's sustainable location in relation to key services and facilities and public transport infrastructure. In addition, the amount of parking is influenced by the site's relatively small size and the expectation to achieve efficient use of this allocated brownfield site. When set within these balanced considerations, the quantum of provided parking is appropriate.
- 6.15. Sufficient hardstanding is provided to serve the scheme with respect to vehicle parking and turning, as well as for waste storage. It is proposed that on collection day, waste bins are brought to the site frontage akin to the arrangement utilised by existing dwelling. For the reasons detailed in the supporting Transport Statement, the scheme is acceptable in all highway safety respects.

Design Considerations

- 6.16. Given the nature of this planning application, the design considerations are framed within the wider context provided by the heritage value of the site, and the various comments on the key aspects of the building and its grounds from the formal listing together with the quotes referenced in the CAA.
- 6.17. The accompany Heritage and Design & Access Statements provide further information which justifies the approach of the site, especially with respect to the retention and repair to the internal features (plasterwork, cornice, windows, etc) of the building and this has informed the arrangement of use of each room. As explained in section 2, the internal arrangement of the building has been refined from that advanced in the pre-

application submission in order to minimise the extent of alterations to the rooms in the building from its former use.

- 6.18. Section 2 also indicates that the arrangement of private amenity areas how they have been refined from those advanced in the pre-application submission. A notable change has been the relocation of the parking areas from adjoining the building to the wider forecourt. This has enabled the inclusion of the garden areas with landscaping along the northern elevation (front) of the building. This is a link to the history of the building through an increase in the extent of vegetation reflecting its role as a garden.
- 6.19. To the south of the building, private amenity areas are proposed which reinforces its separation from the wider parking areas associated with the Berkshire Records office.
- 6.20. The eastern end of the building includes the removal of the external spiral metal emergency staircase and its replacement with a modern metal clad frame which includes the staircase for the house in the east wing. The materials for the staircase provide a clear contrast to the render on Yeomanry House thereby ensuring the clear differentiation. The use of modern materials for the staircase is consistent with the approach on the Berkshire Records office on the same site, which likewise adopts a contemporary design to ensure the value and prominence of Yeomanry House is maintained.



Photo of Berkshire Records office and Yeomanry House (Source: Google Street view)

- 6.21. The overall scheme has therefore been cognisant of the expectations in the Local Plan policy associated with the allocation of the site and for the reasons detailed, this has

resulted in the current scheme for 8 dwellings, rather than the indicative allowance of 10-14 dwellings for the site under reference WR3e.

- 6.22. Turning then to wider matters regarding the layout of the scheme including plot widths and the sense of spaciousness. The layout of the site is shown below.



Proposed Landscape Plan

- 6.23. The private amenity areas ensure that sufficient amenity space is provided for the dwellings consistent with the requirements of the Local Plan.

Residential Amenities

- 6.24. The site is self-contained and the new dwellings would be located a substantial distance from adjoining dwellings and from each other. As previously indicated, the scheme provides for an appropriate side to side relationship with the existing dwellings in Coley Hill (to the east). Consequently, no adverse impacts will occur upon neighbouring residential amenities. The arrangement of the dwellings on the site which are on a north-south alignment will also ensure privacy, recognising that this is influenced by the form and layout of the existing building which has provide the parameters for the alterations as envisaged.

- 6.25. All the dwellings benefit from appropriate private or communal garden areas which are generously sized to serve the needs of relevant occupants. It is acknowledged that flats 1, 2 and 5 are slightly below the space standard expectations for a 1 bed, 2 person flat and would therefore normally be expected to comprise studio flats. Whilst this could be achieved within the scheme, it would require a greater level of internal wall removal to the detriment of the listed building. For these sound heritage reasons, the design decision has been made to include specific walls delineating the bedrooms within these flats. Accordingly, the scheme provides the appropriate balance between high quality internal living accommodation, and respecting the historic fabric of the building, including limiting the need for internal works.

Affordable Housing

- 6.26. The scheme entails the provision of 8 dwellings and since it is between 5 and 9 dwellings, Local Plan Policy H3 seeks a financial contribution which would enable the equivalent of 20% of the dwellings as affordable units elsewhere in the borough. This means that for the scheme of 8 dwellings, there should be a contribution equating to 2 affordable dwellings which can be provided elsewhere.
- 6.27. The scheme is supported by a Viability Assessment which confirms that it is not feasible or viable to provide any affordable units on the site. This is due to the costs associated with the works to convert and alter the existing building so to ensure that the heritage value of the site, especially the important internal features are retained.

Mix and Size

- 6.28. The Local Plan (Policy H2) require a mix of dwellings alongside a minimum density. Policy H5 details the internal space standards. This is achieved as illustrated below.

Mix of dwellings in scheme compared to that envisaged in Table 12 of the Local Plan

	1 bed	2 beds	3 beds	4+beds
Local Plan proportions	10.3%	29.6%	41.5%	18.5%
Scheme	5 (62.5%)	0 (0%)	1 (12.5%)	2 (25%)

- 6.29. As the above table indicates, the scheme includes a mix of dwellings with 62.5% comprising 1 bed roomed units and the 37.5% 3 / 4 bedroom units. The works envisaged to retain and alter Yeomanry House have influenced the mix of the dwellings

proposed, especially the approach to retaining the key elements of the existing layout of the building.

- 6.30. The scheme provides for family accommodation outside of the town centre, through the envisaged sensitive and sympathetic works to Yeomanry House. For the reasons explained in this Planning Statement and the accompanying technical reports, it is not feasible to increase the proportion of larger 3 and / or 4 bedroom units in the scheme, since this would be considered to impact upon the qualities of the heritage assets. In this context, the mix of dwellings is considered appropriate.

Sustainability & Energy

- 6.31. The Design & Access ("D & A") Statement includes a commitment to a variety of sustainability measures. These are detailed at page 50 the D & A. Policy H5 explicitly refers to it being applicable to new build housing. Given the proposal does not form new build and it is instead conversion, the requirements of the policy are not strictly applicable to the subject application. Notwithstanding (and noting the building is listed), a set of positive measures are proposed in the D & A.

Heritage

- 6.32. The supporting Heritage Impact Assessment considers the scheme's impacts upon the Grade II Listed structure of Yeomanry House together with the Conservation Area. It concludes that the proposals comprise a sympathetic redevelopment that retains much of the existing landscaping and allows the earlier phases of the building to be appreciated. Overall, it is concluded the scheme will result in an overall beneficial effect in heritage terms and that the scheme can secure the return of the site to its optimum viable use. Further, the scheme has evolved positively following feedback provided at pre-app. stage.

Summary

- 6.33. The application scheme is submitted following the receipt of comprehensive pre-app feedback.
- 6.34. The key theme arising from the pre-app response was to refine the scheme to ensure retention of the more valuable parts of the existing building by refining the approach to the internal arrangements of the units. Alongside this, changes to the layout of the wider site were advocated which would ensure that the aspirations in the CAA could

better be achieved, especially the provision of a hard and soft landscaping strategy which delivered an approach which showed its grand house in gardens origins. These objectives are firmly achieved through the revised scheme.

- 6.35. Turning to the respective expectations of Policy WR3e. The scheme provides for avoidance of determinantal effects upon the significance of the listed building and Conservation Area (point 1), addresses noise impacts through the residential use (point 2), addresses air quality impacts (point 4) and retains the lawn and wooded frontage to Castle Hill (point 4).
- 6.36. The scheme comprises a high quality and sensitive design which sympathetically retains and refurbishes the Grade II Listed Building. As outlined in the Heritage Statement, the scheme can secure an overall beneficial effect in heritage terms.
- 6.37. The scheme cannot viably provide the expected 20% off-site contribution towards affordable housing and accordingly, a Viability Assessment supports this application and is submitted for the Council's review.
- 6.38. Overall, the scheme forms one that has comprehensively responded to pre-app. feedback and accords with Policy WR3e and the wider approach of the Local Plan when considered as a whole.

7. CONCLUSIONS AND PLANNING BALANCE

- 7.1. Consistent with case law, it is necessary to assess the proposal against the development plan when considered as a whole. There is a positive requirement in the development plan to meet housing needs in Policy H1.
- 7.2. This support is reinforced by the allocation of the site for residential development. Whilst the allocation under Policy WR3e is for between 10 and 14 dwellings, the proposed development is considered to strike the right balance between efficient use of this brownfield site and securing the sensitive alterations to the designated heritage assets, especially the internal features of the Grade II Listed Yeomanry House.
- 7.3. For the reasons detailed within the supporting submissions, the scheme is acceptable in all arboricultural, highway, ecological, heritage and design respects.
- 7.4. The provision of housing generally, irrespective of the Council's position benefits from **substantial positive weight** when undertaking the planning balance. In addition, economic benefits will occur through the employment generated during the construction process and the role new additional households will play in supporting local services.
- 7.5. Further, economic benefits that will occur through the employment generated during the construction process and the role a new additional household will play in supporting local services benefits from minor positive weight. Minor positive weight is also attributed to the sensitive alterations to Yeomanry House which enable this Grade II Listed Building alongside the features highlighted in the CAA to be retained in a use which ensures its long term retention.
- 7.6. For the reasons detailed, that there are no disbenefits associated with the proposal. Notwithstanding, even if the decision maker felt that there were some forms of disbenefit associated with the proposals, such disbenefits could not come anywhere near outweighing the scheme's substantial cumulative benefits.
- 7.7. It follows that the scheme can be approved as one that is compliant with the development plan as a whole.
