

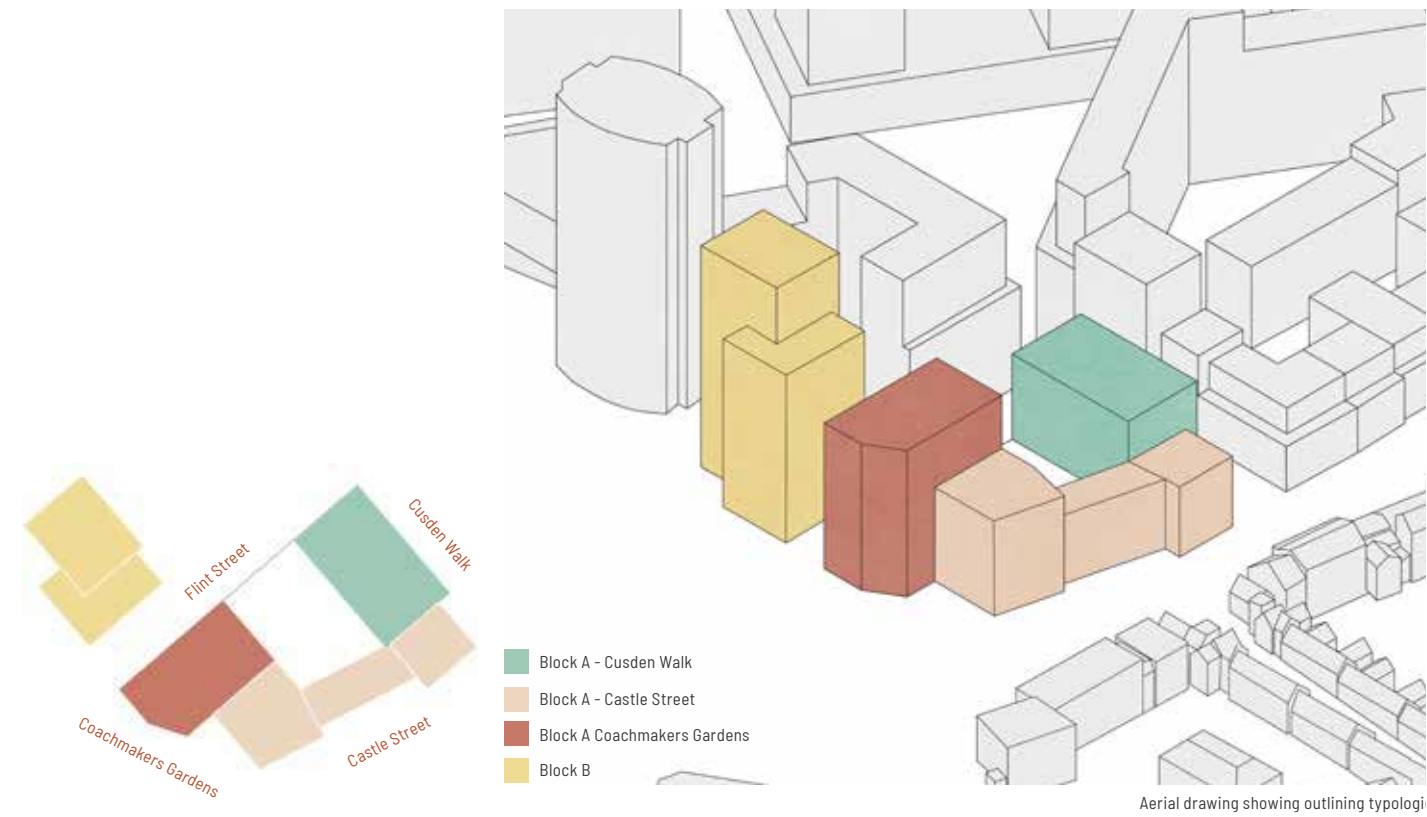


Figure 9.1 Axonometric showing distribution of massing across Blocks A and B (JTP)



Figure 9.2 Plan showing building heights (JTP)

PUBLIC SPACES AND LANDSCAPE DESIGN

- 9.16
- The Proposed Development would contribute to animating Castle Street and softening the impact of the IDR. Retained and new trees would create a buffer along the western site boundary and the busy road. Residential amenity outdoor space, play spaces and seating areas would be located away from cars and road noise. Carparking and servicing has been relocated to the rear of the Site, accessed by Hosier Street, reducing the number of vehicles accessing the Site on Castle Street and from the IDR interchange.
- 9.17
- Active frontages along the ground floor along both Castle Street and Fleet Street would activate the surrounding public space and provide a safe and welcoming pedestrian route from the town centre to the neighbourhoods to the west.

USES

- 9.18
- The Proposed Development would deliver efficient, high performing buildings providing high-quality mixed-use accommodation. The Site is considered appropriate for a building of the proposed scale and uses, which would complement and reinforce the existing functions of Reading town centre. In doing so, the Proposed Development would enhance the overall attractiveness of the area, activate Castle Street, and make a positive contribution to the local economy.



Figure 9.3 Diagram showing ground floor uses (JTP)

DIRECT TOWNSCAPE EFFECTS

TOWNSCAPE CHARACTER AREA 1: CIVIC CENTRE

- 9.19 TCA 1 comprises the buildings of Reading’s civic core, the Magistrates’ Court, the Hexagon and the now vacant police station. The Site falls within TCA 1. The existing building underutilises the Site and does not make best use of the potential that the location at the interface of TCA 1, TCA 2, TCA 3 and the IDR offers. The Site’s condition compromises the pedestrian experience between the residential neighbourhoods to the west of the IDR (TCA2), the town centre and the historic core (TCA3). Architectural devices such the boundary walls, planting and setback windows give the current building an impenetrable, defensive appearance which is synonymous with its previous use.
- 9.20 Given the location of the Site within this TCA and considering the policy aspirations for the area, the susceptibility of the TCA to the Proposed Development is judged to be **Low**. As the townscape value is **Low**, its sensitivity is judged to be **Low**.
- 9.21 The Proposed Development would introduce a mixed-use building to TCA 1. This would contribute to a diversification of uses in the Civic Centre, which, while constituting a change, would bring greater vitality to an area which is presently underutilised and fragmented.
- 9.22 Located at the meeting point of TCA 1, TCA 2 and TCA 3, the Proposed Development has been designed to address and integrate into each of these different areas. This is achieved through variation in building scale and form, and the incorporation of fenestration and active ground floor uses on each elevation. This ensures that there is not a “back of house” elevation which turns its back on the surrounding townscape.
- 9.23 The 16-storey element of Block B acts as a gateway building, marking the presence of the Civic Centre and town centre to road users and pedestrians on the IDR and within the residential areas to the west. This function is enhanced through the introduction of the improved pedestrian route of Flint Street, which provides greater permeability and connectivity. Pedestrian movement through the Site is encouraged by active ground floor uses and high-quality public realm. The urban edge of the development to the IDR, Castle Street and the north would be softened through the incorporation of a comprehensive landscaping scheme, including additional street trees,

soft planting and seating. These elements, in combination with the emerging Minster Quarter site to the north, will contribute to creating a destination of the currently underutilised area.

- 9.24 The magnitude of impact would be **Medium**, due to the small size of the TCA and the increase of density on the Site. This gives rise to a likely effect of **Minor/Moderate**. The Proposed Development offers an opportunity to bring significant enhancements to TCA 1 through the optimisation of the Site, improvement of pedestrian routes, introduction of high-quality landscaping and active ground floor uses. For these reasons, the nature of this effect would be **Beneficial**.

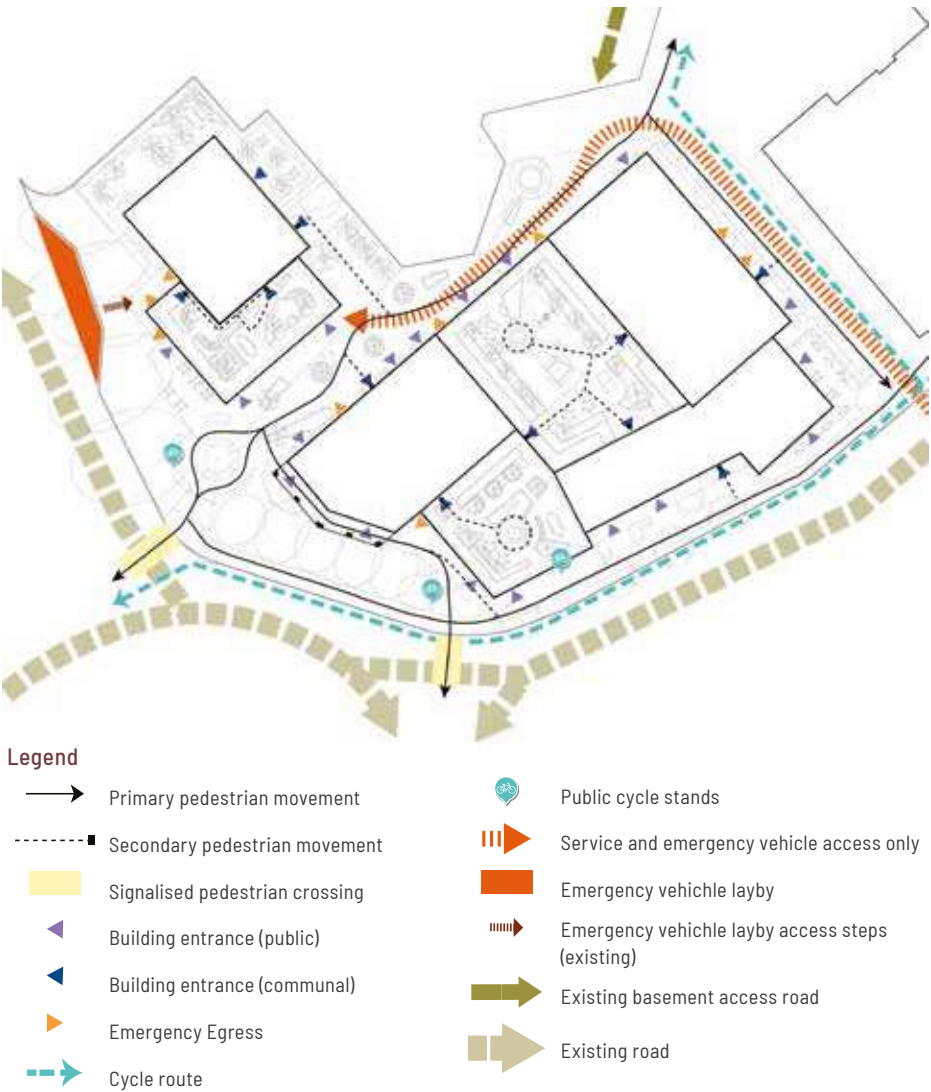


Figure 9.4 Diagram showing movement through the Site (JTP)



Figure 9.5 CGI showing character of Flint Street (JTP)

INDIRECT TOWNSCAPE EFFECTS

TOWNSCAPE CHARACTER AREA 2: RESIDENTIAL

- 9.25 The Site is located close to a number of residential areas to the north, south and west. The IDR and Castle Street separate the Site and the town centre from these neighbourhoods. Despite the separating nature of the road infrastructure, the large-scale developments within TCA1, specifically the tall buildings to the north and the commercial buildings along Broad Street are highly visible from within the residential areas to the west of the IDR. The residential area to the south of Castle Street is adjacent to The Oracle shopping centre. The current building on the Site is visible from the western portion of TCA 2 across the IDR, which is a significant detracting element in this part of Reading.
- 9.26 Given the location of the Site adjacent to the TCA and considering the policy aspirations for this part of the town centre, the susceptibility of the receptor to the Proposed Development is judged to be **Low**. As the receptor's townscape value is **Medium**, its sensitivity is judged to be **Low/Medium**.
- 9.27 The Proposed Development would introduce a mixed-use development to the east of the TCA, which would be visible to varying degrees throughout the residential areas to the south and west of the Site. The form of the Proposed Development, comprising two mid and high rise blocks with rectilinear articulation, would continue to differentiate the Site from the low-scale residential areas to the west and south. Where seen from within the areas, the Proposed Development would be understood as being part of the town centre, functionally and visually distinct from TCA 2 (see View 10).
- 9.28 The Proposed Development seeks to provide better permeability and integration with TCA 2, through the introduction of the new, activated pedestrian route of Flint Street. This function is enhanced through the 16-storey element, which acts as a gateway to the town centre, particularly from the IDR interchange which separates Castle Hill from Castle Street (see View 9). In providing connectivity between TCA 1 and 2, the Proposed Development would contribute to repairing the fragmented townscape of Reading, created by the laying out of the IDR in the late 20th century.

- 9.29 Considering its location in Reading town centre, the existing character of midrise and tall buildings and the visual separation created by the IDR, the increase in density and height on the Site is contextual in the wider town scape context. The magnitude of impact to the residential areas to the west and south is therefore **Low**. Combined with the **Medium** sensitivity of TCA, the likely effect would be **Minor/Moderate Neutral**.

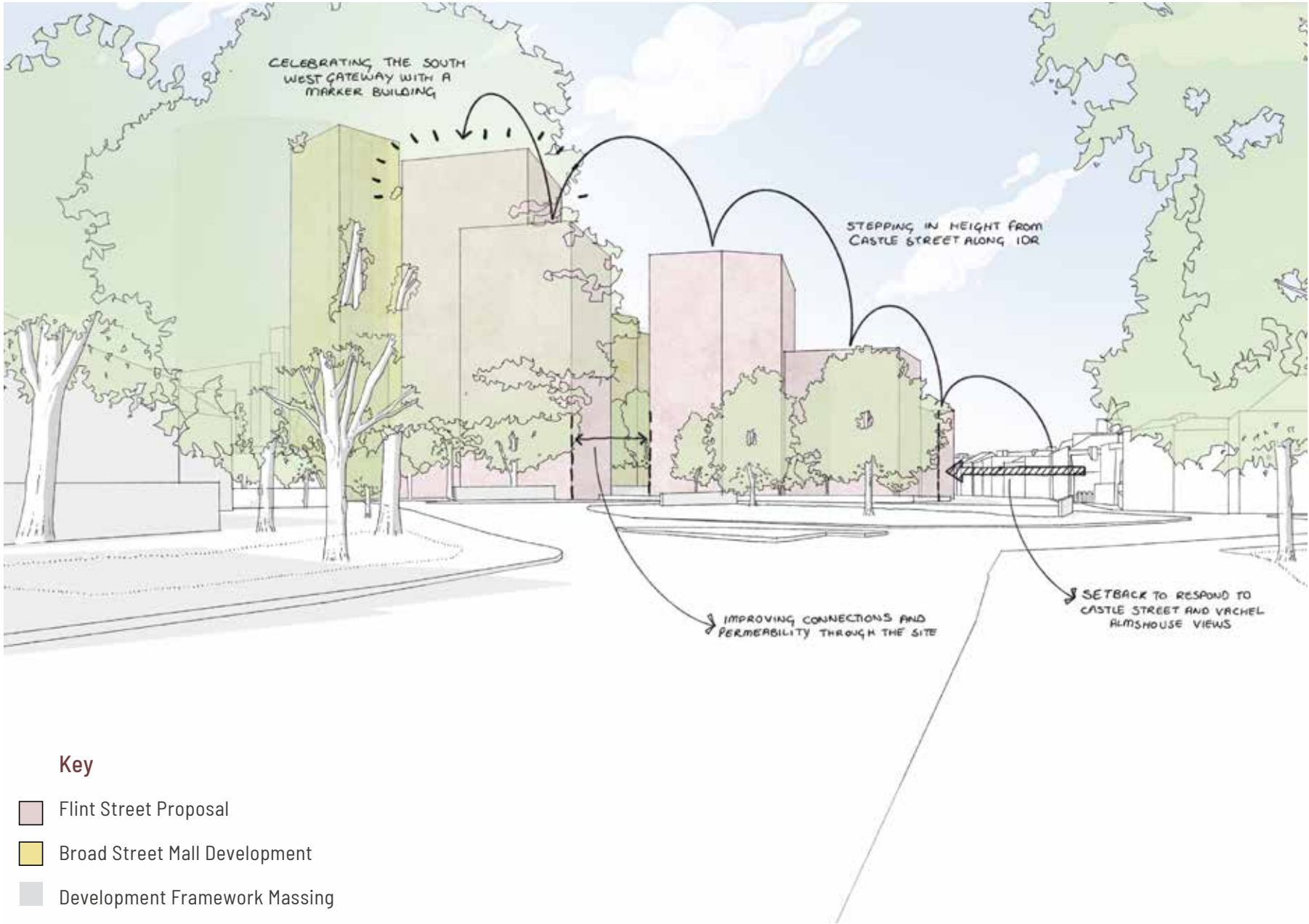


Figure 9.6 Diagram of stepped form and gateway building, viewed from Castle Hill (JTP)

TOWNSCAPE CHARACTER AREA 3: HISTORIC CORE

- 9.30 TCA 3 is aligned with the StMBCSCA and centred around Reading Minster. Castle Street forms part of the StMBCSCA. Its western end lies opposite the Site. The current building on the Site and the Magistrates Court detract from the townscape quality of Castle Street. Its car park and red brick enclosure walls which act as a defensive barrier make the building appear inaccessible and private. The fragmented nature of the townscape along the north and west ends of Castle Street means that there is an awareness of tall and modern development from with historic core.
- 9.31 The presence of the IDR, which runs along the western border of TCA 3, and other modern developments to the west are noticeable from within TCA 3 further undermine the areas historic townscape character. Considering the existing character of the areas surroundings the TCA, and the policy aspirations for this part of the town centre, the susceptibility of the receptor to the Proposed Development is judged to be **Low**. As the receptor's townscape value is **High**, its sensitivity is judged to be **Medium**.
- 9.32 As described, the Proposed Development offers the opportunity to repair the fragmented townscape along the north side of Castle Street, including the reinstatement of some historic characteristics.
- 9.33 The densification of development on the Site would be a notable change within TCA 3, with both Block A and B seen throughout the historic core. The impact of the taller element is reduced through the stepping down in building height to the south, to meet the low-scale terraced development of Castle Street. At four storeys, the lowest element of Block A would relate to the three-storey historic development on the south side of Castle Street.
- 9.34 The existing building line within the Site would be brought forward to meet the historic thoroughfare, which is characteristic of the 16th to 19th century ribbon development which lines Castle Street. The elevation of Block A would further integrate into the townscape character of TCA 3 through the articulation of Block A to appear as a series of connected buildings, rather than a single block. The architectural detailing of Block A reflects that of Castle Street, with decorative brick work, regular fenestration, defined window surrounds and a clear hierarchy to the elevation. These elements reflect the fine grain and narrow frontages of the historic high street.
- 9.35 In views west on Castle Street in particular (illustrated by Views 6 and 7) the Proposed Development would create a greater sense of enclosure, helping to reduce the impact of the IDR. Landscaping, although not

historically present on Castle Street, would further soften the modern urban edge of the Site.

- 9.36 The introduction of residential uses with retail or ancillary uses at ground floor is in keeping with the historic character of Castle Street. The incorporation of retail units, and resultant increase in residents, pedestrians and visitors to the Site would bring greater vitality to Castle Street and contribute to creating a lively and animated high street. This would be further enhanced through the design of the shopfronts, detailed in the DAS, which has been developed to reflect the character of existing and historic shopfronts along Castle Street and Gun Street.

- 9.37 The magnitude of impact arising from the Proposed Development would be **Medium**, considering the proximity of the Site to the historic thoroughfare and also the existing character of TCA 1 and TCA 4, visible from Castle Street. The likely effect would therefore be **Moderate**. While there would be a considerable increase in scale and density on the Site, the nature of this effect would be **Beneficial** due to the form of the development mitigating visual impact and the enhancements to the appearance and function of the Site.



Figure 9.7 CGI of Castle Street elevation of Block A (JTP)



Figure 9.8 CGI of Cusden Street (JTP)



Figure 9.9 View 5: St Mary's Butts / Gun Street – proposed (EB7)

TOWNSCAPE CHARACTER AREA 4: COMMERCIAL CORE

- 9.38 Reading town centre is characterised by 20th century large-scale shopping malls and more traditional commercial buildings with shops on the ground floor and flats above. TCA 1, comprising the Site, lies to the rear of the Broad Street Mall. From Düsseldorf Way and San Francisco Walk, the existing building and adjoining green space are visible. Vacant since December 2025, the Site contributes to a lack of vitality and low-quality public realm in the Commercial Centre. TCA 4 is identified for further transformation in the Local Plan and the Minster Quarter Area Development Framework. Furthermore, the building is proposed within the Western Grouping of Reading's Tall Building Strategy (2018) preferred locations and thus meets policy aspirations relating to height and scale of buildings.
- 9.39 Given the location of the Site close to TCA 4, and considering the policy aspirations for the town centre, the susceptibility of the receptor to the Proposed Development is judged to be **Low**. As the receptor's townscape value is **Medium**, its sensitivity is judged to be **Low/Medium**.
- 9.40 Throughout key areas of TCA 4, such as Oxford Road, Broad Street and Friar Street, the Proposed Development would be occluded by the intervening development, including the large-scale blocks of the Broad Street Mall, Fountain House and Queens Court. From within TCA 4, the Proposed Development would principally be experienced from its southern boundary, on Queens Walk and Hosier Street. From this orientation (illustrated by View 4), the northern elevations of Blocks A and B of the Proposed Development would come into view, appearing as a contextual grouping of buildings. The scale of the Proposed Development would correspond with the existing and emerging built form of TCA 4, with building heights stepping up to the north.
- 9.41 Seen across the fragmented townscape and open space of the TCA 1, the comprehensive public realm improvements and active ground floor of the Proposed Development would enhance the quality of the area and encourage pedestrian movement between TCA 4 and 1.

- 9.42 Considering the size of TCA 4 and the limited extent of intervisibility, the magnitude of impact of the Proposed Development would be **Low**. This gives rise to a likely effect of **Minor/Moderate**. The nature of this effect is judged to be **Beneficial**, due to the removal of a low-quality and underutilised building and its replacement with a high-quality mixed-use development that would introduce greater vitality to the south of the TCA. The incorporation of retail uses at ground floor would act as an extension of TCA 4, encouraging pedestrian movement between the two areas.



Figure 9.10 View 4: Queens Walk – proposed (EB7)

CUMULATIVE

- 9.43

The cumulative schemes set out at **Section 2.0** have been considered in terms of potential effects on the TCAs within the study area.
- 9.44

Across the local and wider area, the Proposed Development would be visible in conjunction with these cumulative schemes. Those cumulative schemes would be read and understood alongside the transformation of the Minster Quarter Area and the wider town centre. The susceptibility of the TCAs to the Development in the study area would remain the same in the cumulative context. For the cumulative condition, the effects would remain the same as in the proposed scenario.

SECTION SUMMARY

- 9.45

The assessment on townscape receptors is summarised in **Table 10.1** below.

REF	TOWNSCAPE CHARACTER AREA	VALUE	SUSCEPTIBILITY	SENSITIVITY	MAGNITUDE	LIKELY EFFECT
1	Civic centre	Low	Low	Low	Medium	Minor/Moderate Beneficial
2	Residential	Medium	Low	Low/Medium	Low	Minor/Moderate Neutral
3	Historic core	High	Low	Medium	Medium	Moderate Beneficial
4	Commercial core	Medium	Low	Low/Medium	Low	Minor/Moderate Beneficial

Table 9.1 Summary of likely effects on townscape receptors.

10.0 ASSESSMENT: VISUAL

FLINT STREET - 53 CASTLE STREET, READING, RG1 7TH

ASSESSMENT: VISUAL

- 10.1 The section assesses the likely effect arising from the impact of the Proposed Development on visual receptors identified in **Table 7.1**. For ease of reference, the View Location Plan is provided at the start of this section, with the ZTV overlaid.
- 10.2 The AVRs are shown from static positions. This section analyses these views in the round, with a focus on experience. Viewing positions are chosen based on the requirement to have immediate, middle- and long-distance views to assess, and have considered a range of directions and orientations. The choice of viewing positions is based on professional experience as well as the understanding of the local area.
- 10.3 The assessment considers 14 AVRs to determine changes in visual amenity for each of the identified receptor groups. A selection of images is included in this section, with the full suite of AVRs provided at **Appendix 2.o**.